



## A Comparative Study of the Master's Program in Educational Administration in a Saudi University and Four Similar Programs in the United States

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### ABSTRACT

The current study aimed to compare the master's program in educational administration at King Saud University (KSU) and four master's programs in the same discipline at distinguished universities in the United States. This study compared the admission requirements for master's programs, study plans, curricula, and graduation requirements for a master's program in educational administration at KSU and master's programs in educational administration and leadership offered by the four American universities. The study attempted to discover the similarities and differences in the previously mentioned topics. The researcher found some likenesses between the master's program at KSU and the four American universities, such as the agreement on the efficiency and the qualification of students who plan to study in the master's programs and the significance of preparing students with the essential skills and school principals with the necessary knowledge, in addition to the similarity of many conditions for graduation and obtaining a master's degree. On the other hand, the research likewise found multiple dissimilarities between the master's program at KSU and those of the four American universities in many areas, including the following: There are many admission prerequisites for the master's program at KSU compared to the four American universities. Furthermore, there are differences in the number of units KSU students have to complete at KSU compared to the four American universities. It is also noted that students in the KSU educational administration program are obliged to complete scientific research to complete graduation requirements, while students in the four American universities enjoy other options that serve as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Educational administration, educational leadership  
King Saud University.



## Introduction

In 2016, the Saudi government launched a strategic plan called Vision 2030. The vision aims to develop and bring about broad reforms in many areas, including cultural and economic reforms. Vision 2030 also includes broad reforms in the education sectors and seeks to make Saudi education outputs quality and competitive globally (Vision, 2030). In light of the country's vision 2030, several measures have also been taken to enhance public universities to develop these universities and make them more competitive and independent. Furthermore, among the initiatives taken by the government to improve the performance of public universities was the launch of the Universities Law in 2019 on a trial basis on three public universities, including King Saud University (KSU) in the capital, Riyadh (Albeshir, 2022). The primary objectives of the new law are to enhance the quality of education in public universities in the country and make Saudi universities among the best universities globally (University Affairs Council, 2019).

Transforming Saudi universities into distinguished universities at the global level requires a review of the practices, strategies, and methods followed by distinguished universities worldwide to learn from these practices and apply them in Saudi universities. According to major international rankings such as Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, many higher education institutions in the states are characterized by quality and are ranked among the best universities in the world (Shanghai Ranking, 2022). Therefore, it is essential for Saudi universities to benefit from the practices followed by the prestigious American universities in many aspects, including benefiting from the design of study programs and the conditions for admission and graduation from those universities.

Comparative studies are one of the most suitable methodologies that can be activated to discover the contrasts and likenesses in many practices related to education (Khalil, 2009). Also, one of the scientific ways to benefit from the experiences of American universities is to discover study plans and educational programs and compare them with the study programs in Saudi universities and then develop study programs in Saudi universities in light of educational programs in distinguished American universities.

This study attempts to compare some aspects of the master's program in educational administration at the King Saud University (KSU) with master's programs in the same discipline at four universities in the United States, namely Arizona State University (ASU), University of Florida (UF), Ohio State University (OSU), and University of Texas-San Antonio (UTSA). The study seeks to identify the most prominent points of similarity and difference in the study programs and ways to improve the Master of Educational Administration program at KSU.

The Master's Program in Educational Administration at KSU aims at several goals, including preparing competencies in the field of educational administration as they are leaders of change in educational work environments. The program also aims to provide students with theoretical foundations, modern administrative trends, and their



applications in educational work environments (Department of Educational Administration [DEA], 2022).

### **The significance of studying**

A good number of studies on evaluating master's programs in Saudi universities from the perspectives of students or professors have been published. However, the researcher did not find published comparative studies comparing master's programs in education disciplines, especially in educational administration offered in Saudi universities, and master's programs in educational disciplines in universities of developed countries, specifically the United States. Accordingly, the researcher believes that the results of this study will have a positive impact on the development of the master's program in educational administration at KSU after considering aspects related to admission requirements, curricula, and graduation requirements.

### **Study Questions**

There are three major questions for this study:

- 1-What are the admission requirements for the master's program in educational administration and leadership in the five universities? What are the similarities and differences between the admission requirements of KSU and the four American universities?
- 2-What are the courses and study plans in the master's programs in educational administration and leadership at the five universities? What are the similarities and differences between the courses and study plans in the Master's Program in Educational Administration at KSU and the four American universities?
- 3-What are the graduation requirements for the five master's programs? What are the similarities and differences between the requirements for graduation from KSU and those from the four American universities?

### **Objectives of the Study**

There are three main objectives of this study:

- 1-Knowing the conditions for admission to the Master of Educational Administration program at KSU and the four American universities and knowing their similarities and differences
- 2-Discovering the study plans and courses of the master's programs in educational administration in the five universities and identifying the similarities and differences between the courses and study plans between the KSU program and the four American universities
- 3-Discovering the graduation requirements in the five universities and comparing graduation requirements of the Master of Educational Administration program at KSU and those of four American universities



## The Study Methodology

The researcher selected the comparative studies method for this paper because it is the most appropriate methodology for answering the research questions. Comparative studies in education are applied to diagnose strengths and weaknesses in educational practices, programs, and plans by comparing them with effective programs and plans in another geographical zone (Khalil, 2009; Piovani & Krawczyk, 2017). After the comparisons are completed, modifications and reforms are made to or suggested for these practices and programs, which ultimately enhance the quality of education. Applying the comparative approach in this study is helpful in discovering the realities in the master's programs in the universities picked for the study and in discovering the similarities and differences in the practices and strategies tracked by those universities. In light of the results of the study, recommendations are made to improve the Master's Program in Educational Administration at KSU.

## Criteria for Selecting a Master's Program for This Study

The selection of master's programs was not random, as the study programs were chosen for comparison with the master's program according to strict criteria. The study programs in this study were selected based on three main criteria: First, the master's programs should be in administration or educational leadership in universities in the United States of America. The institutions of higher education in the United States are distinguished by quality and world leadership. According to the famous Shanghai Ranking for 2021, eight universities in the United States were on the list of the top ten universities globally, indicating the quality of academic and research practices in higher education in the United States. Also, in Shanghai Ranking's classification of the best colleges of education worldwide, American colleges of education dominated the list, occupying the first seven places in the world rankings. Therefore, the researcher believes that comparing and taking lessons from the practices followed in the master's programs of those prestigious universities would be very helpful and enriching to the study (Shanghai Ranking, 2022).

The second criterion is that the master's programs selected in this study shall be the best educational programs according to Shanghai and US news classifications (Shanghai Ranking , 2022; U.S. News & World Report,2022). The third criterion is that the master's program concentrates on preparing school principals, as some educational administration and leadership programs focus on preparing leaders for noneducational organizations. Thus, the selection was restricted to programs that focus on school principals' preparation for public schools. The reason behind choosing the master's programs that focus on preparing school leaders is that the master's program in educational administration at KSU aims to prepare leaders for public schools. Therefore, it is essential to choose educational programs with the same goal: to prepare principals and assistant principals in public schools.



After a careful review of selecting master's programs in educational leadership and administration that are consistent with the study criteria, the researcher chose four master's programs offered by four public research universities in the US in four states: Ohio, Texas, Arizona, and Florida. Master's programs in school leadership and management offered at the following universities were selected: Arizona State, the University of Florida, Ohio State and the University of Texas at San Antonio.

**First: The Master of Education in Educational Leadership at Arizona State University**  
The Master of Education in Educational Leadership at Arizona State University (ASU) aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become transformational administrators or teacher leaders committed to providing exceptional and equitable educational opportunities for all students. This program prepares students to facilitate school-wide and systemic change, as well as create and maintain a culture of innovation and collaboration. The master's program also aims to prepare future school administrators to lead curriculum development; interpret and use data to support student success; provide effective feedback, support, and evaluation for teachers; and build a community network to support students and schools (ASU, 2022).

**Second: The Master of Education Program in Educational Leadership at the University of Florida:**

The Master of Education Program in Educational Leadership at the University of Florida (UF) is designed to prepare students for careers in leadership positions in schools and in education management. The program aims to provide students with leadership experiences and skills and the application of information and skills in the educational field. Those enrolled in this program can also obtain an educational driver's license from the state of Florida after completing the study program (UF, 2022).

**Third: The Ohio State University Master of Arts Program in Educational Administration**

The Master of Arts in Educational Administration program at Ohio State University (OSU) aims to prepare distinguished school administrators who work on developing teaching and achievement in schools and educational districts. The program is designed as an innovative approach to developing the skills and knowledge of future school leaders. The study program also seeks to train and qualify students to be effective educational leaders and cooperate with educational leaders in educational districts to solve complex problems (OSU, 2022).

**Fourth: The Master of Education in Educational Leadership at the University of Texas at San Antonio.**

The Master of Education in Educational Leadership at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) aims to prepare educational leaders for educational organizations. The program is concerned with preparing students with important skills and





knowledge to deal with the challenges and problems that future school leaders will face in schools. The program designers also seek to provide students with the opportunity to learn and gain unique experiences related to effective and equitable educational leadership. The program highlights the role of cultural, legal, societal, and organizational practices in developing equal educational opportunities for all students. The program is also designed to comply with the Texas state standards for obtaining an in-state educational leadership license (UTSA, 2022).

### Literature Review

Higher education was formed in the United States in 1636 when the prestigious Harvard University was founded near Boston (Thelin, 2004). After the founding of Harvard, the number of higher education institutions gradually expanded until the higher education sector in the United States became one of the largest of its kind in the world. In the academic year 2018/2019, the number of post-secondary institutions reached 6,502. Nearly 3,700 higher education institutions are accredited to award degrees (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022). The number of faculty members working in higher education institutions in 2018 was nearly one and a half million, including both full-time and part-time, and the number of students in post-secondary institutions in the United States has grown remarkably in recent decades. The number in the fall of 2018 was about 19.6 million learners, compared to 16.8 million in 2000. The previous number includes students in all types of institutes, community colleges, independent colleges, and universities that are academically recognized in the United States. Between fall 2009 and 2019, total post-baccalaureate enrollment increased by eight percent (from 2.8 million to 3.1 million students). Post-baccalaureate degree programs include master's and doctoral programs and professional doctoral programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry (NCES, 2022).

#### Part I

##### The Significance of the School Principal's Roles

The school principal plays a critical role within the school and contributes to providing a positive learning environment for students and teachers (Alorainni 2019; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019).. Also, school leadership plays a vital function in enhancing students' positive academic experiences and improving their educational accomplishments (Hattie, 2012). Therefore, those responsible for education in the world's developed countries are attempting to develop bylaws, regulations, and practices that assure the appointment of effective school principals for schools. One of the practices of many developed countries of the world followed in order to ensure the best educational outcomes

is the establishment of many requirements for those applying for principal positions in schools. For instance, obtaining a position as a public school principal in the states of Arizona in the United States requires that candidates have some experience in teaching, participate in training programs on educational leadership, pass a standardized test for persons planning to work in administrative positions, and have a



master's degree in education administration and leadership (Arizona State Board of Education, 2022).

Study programs at many colleges of education in the United States have ensured that they are consistent with and meet the standards of academic accreditation institutions and the Department of Education in their specific state (Fanoos & He, 2021). Accordingly, the professors responsible for designing and updating master's programs in educational leadership at American universities ensure that the courses and activities of the study program cover many of the standards and requirements mandated by the education departments of the states in which the universities are located in order to provide the students enrolled in these programs with a better chance of being employed in a leadership position in a public school.

#### Part II

This section briefly presents chosen studies that concentrate on exploring the reality of master's programs in education in universities in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, as well as the methods to develop and evaluate these study programs and improve their quality. The Alfayez study in 2009, which was a master's thesis, aimed at evaluating the master's program in educational administration at KSU. The study was limited to evaluating the master's program and the master's thesis track. Sixty-three participants from the program's students and graduates participated in the study. The researcher developed a questionnaire to collect information from the participants; the questionnaire consisted of these axes: study plan, courses, teaching methods and techniques, evaluation methods used by faculty members, supervision of the thesis, and research procedures. The study concluded that the participants' evaluation in general of the master's program was positive and that the program was distinguished by its quality (Alfayez, 2009).

Altohamy (2014) conducted a comparative study of the educational master's programs in three universities in Egypt, Britain, and the United States. The researcher chose the master's programs offered at Ain Shams University in Egypt and Cambridge University in Britain and the educational master's programs offered at Harvard University in the United States. Altohamy examined the similarities and differences between master's programs on several topics, including points related to the admission requirements for master's programs and courses. The researcher found significant differences in the admission requirements between the Egyptian University, Harvard University, and the University of Cambridge; for example, the Egyptian University restricts admission to national students, while the universities in Britain and the United States welcome international students. The researcher furthermore discovered that the curricula and study plans in the educational master's programs differ sharply between Ain Shams University, Harvard University, and Cambridge. Altohamy's most important observation was that the master's programs in Ain Shams dedicate their efforts more to the master's thesis than to the academic courses. In contrast, the study programs in Cambridge are characterized by a balance between the courses and the master's thesis, while master's students at Harvard University can obtain the



degree after completing the required courses and units without the need to write a thesis.

The Alhamidi (2014) also studied the effectiveness of the Master of Educational Administration program in preparing educational leaders from the point of view of former students at a public university in the western region of Saudi Arabia. A total of 92 students who completed the master's program participated in the study. The study results discovered that the participants' evaluation of the Master of Educational Administration program was excellent, and the satisfaction rate of the participants was high. Al-Hamidi concluded that the master's program effectively prepared and developed educational leaders in technical, administrative, and human skills (Alhamidi,2014).

In 2015, AlKhozaim conducted a descriptive study aimed at evaluating a master's program in curriculum and instruction at a public college in Central Saudi Arabia. The researcher developed a four-part questionnaire to answer the research questions. The first section is about the quality level of the educational objectives of the program and the academic courses. The second section was about the quality level of the educational content. The third section was the quality status of teaching methods. The fourth section of the questionnaire contains statements related to the quality of the assessment methods used by the professors of the study program. A total of 135 students participated in the study, and 83 of them were female. The researcher found that students' evaluation of the quality of the master's program is medium in general, and the evaluation of male students of the quality of the master's program is higher than that of females. The researcher justified the result that female students study in separate buildings and classrooms from males and that the professors who teach females are often female professors, so the gender variable influenced the results of the study (AlKhozaim, 2015).

In his study, Alfentuch aimed to evaluate the Master in Administration and Educational Planning program at Al-Imam University in Riyadh (2015). The researcher followed the descriptive survey method, and 127 students studying at the last level of the program participated in the study. The researcher found that the participants' level of satisfaction was moderate towards faculty members, study plans, and courses. The participants' evaluation of the master's program's equipment, halls, and teaching aids was unsatisfactory. Alfentuch found that the participants were not satisfied with the reality of the master's program, and the participants stressed the significance of improving the program

The researcher benefited from the facts and recommendations of previous studies that emphasized the importance of conducting comparative studies between master's programs in education at Saudi universities and master's programs at elite universities around the world, then benefited from the practices followed in study programs at elite universities in developing study programs in Saudi universities. The researcher also benefited greatly from Altohamy's (2014) study in formulating research questions and developing a methodology for selecting study programs and universities. The





current study is distinguished from the previous studies because it is a comparative study that focuses on the Master of Educational Administration program at KSU, comparing it with master's programs in the same specialization at four prestigious American universities. According to the researcher's information, this is the first comparative study of its kind, which is concerned with a comparative study between the educational administration program at a Saudi university with international universities.

### **First: Admission Requirements to Master's Programs**

This section aims to answer the first question of the study, which is about the requirements for admission to master's programs in educational administration KSU and four American universities. The part also reviews the most significant similarities and differences between the admission requirements in the master's program at KSU and four American universities.

#### **Admission requirements at the KSU**

To be accepted into the Master of Educational Administration program at KSU, the applicant must meet some requirements. First, to receive admission to the master's program in educational administration or graduate programs offered by KSU, the applicant has to be a citizen. Non-local students are welcome to be accepted if these students have a scholarship from the university. Among the specifications provided by the applicant is that he has completed his Bachelor's degree and is in a suitable health condition (suitable health condition was not defined in the university catalog). Moreover, the applicant must submit two letters of recommendation from former professors (Deanship of Graduate Studies [DGS], 2022).

If the applicant is an employee, he must bring an approval letter from the employer proving that the work officials have no objection that the applicant is studying at the university. It is worth knowing that study times in most courses are still in the morning period, which means that study and work times contradict on some days; therefore, obtaining the approval of the employer is important. Citizen applicants for a master's program in educational administration must also score (70) in the Post-Graduate General Aptitude Test (PGAT)—similar to the GRE test—as a minimum. International students who have a scholarship from the university are not required to take the PGAT. Additionally, the applicant must have a Bachelor's degree in education or a non-educational bachelor's degree with an educational diploma, with a grade of (very good) or above in the Bachelor's and the educational diploma. It is also required that the applicant has experience in the field of education or administration for a period of not less than two years.

Applicants with a grade (good) in the Bachelor's degree can be accepted in this master's program but with more requirements such as scoring a minimum score of (75) on the PGAT (DGS, 2022). Also, the applicant must have experience in the field of management for a duration of no less than five years, including the year of application (DEA, 2022). In addition, the applicant must pass the written test



conducted by the department. It is not required to submit a statement of purpose for the applicant. It is noteworthy that bachelor's and diploma qualifications are not accepted if the study method is done online or remotely (DEA, 2022).

#### Admission requirements at the ASU

Students wishing to apply for a master's program in educational leadership at ASU must meet the following requirements: earning a bachelor's degree and having a cumulative average in the last 60 hours of bachelor's courses at least 3.0 points out of 4.0. Also, the applicant must have at least two years of teaching experience. Moreover, submitting a resume, a statement of purpose, and three letters of recommendation from experts is also required. The applicant does not have to take the GRE (ASU, 2022).

#### Admission requirements at the UF

A student who plans to study in a master's program in educational leadership at UF must possess some qualifications, the most important being that the applicant must have at least a bachelor's qualification. To be accepted into the master's program, the applicant's cumulative grade point average in the last 60 hours of the bachelor's program must be 3.0 out of 4.0 or higher. The master's program officials also require that applicants have at least three years of teaching experience, submit an evaluation for teaching for the last two years and have positive evaluation points. Furthermore, it is required that the applicant submit three letters of recommendation and provide a statement of purpose. The applicant is not required to take the GRE (UF, 2022).

#### Admission requirements at the OHS

Applying to the Master of Educational Administration and Leadership program at OHS requires several prerequisites that the applicant must meet: Obtaining a bachelor's degree with a GPA of at least 3.0 out of 4.0 and attaching a resume. The applicant needs to deliver two recommendation letters, and the recommended persons may be former professors of the applicant or their heads of work. The course officials also require that the applicant submit a statement of purpose explaining her goals by enrolling in this program and her future ambitions. The applicant is not required to submit a GRE test scores document or a writing sample. It is also not required that the applicant have experience in education or leadership (OHS, 2022).

#### Admission requirements at the UTSA

There are several requirements for applying to the Master of Education in Educational Leadership at UTSA, such as acquiring a bachelor's degree and completing at least eighteen credits of educational or leadership courses at the bachelor's level. The applicant must present a resume and a statement of purpose in which the applicant explains his goals for studying in this study program and his future career plans. The applicant is not required to provide the admissions officials at the University of Texas with recommendation letters or GRE test scores. No administrative or educational experience is required for the applicant. Of course, applicants who are intentional



students who do not speak English as a first language must submit evidence of their proficiency in English language skills (UTSA, 2022).

Similarities and differences in admission requirements at the KSU and the four American universities

The benchmarks for admission into the Master's in Educational Administration program at KSU and the four American universities agree on four significant elements. First, the main point is that the applicant fulfills all the requirements for receiving a bachelor's degree. The admission requirements in all of the universities also agreed on the importance of submitting letters of recommendation and CVs of the applicants. The prerequisites for admission to the master's program at KSU, ASU, and the UF agreed on the importance of having experience in teaching and administrative work for applicants.

Marked contrasts are also found in the admission prerequisites for the Master's in Educational Administration program at KSU and the four American universities. First, for admission to the master's program at KSU, applicants must have a bachelor's degree in one of the educational specializations or hold an educational diploma, while the four American universities do not demand that the applicants be education majors; their master's programs in educational leadership welcome students from all disciplines. Second, the applicants for a master's degree at KSU must prove that their employers do not object to them studying in the program. No such obstacle is in the aforementioned American universities' requirements for admission.

Third and furthermore, KSU master's applicants are mandated to take a standardized test (PGAT) and score about 70 points on this test. On the other hand, applicants for educational leadership programs in American universities are not required to take the GRE test or any other types of standardized tests. Fourth, when applying for admission to the master's program at KSU, it is required that the student be a Saudi citizen or an international student who has been granted a scholarship from KSU, while the American universities welcome the study of international students in their various programs, including educational leadership, without the need to acquire a scholarship. The applicant for the educational administration program at KSU also ought to take and pass a written test designed by the program directors, but the applicants for similar master's programs in the four US universities do not need to take any written tests to obtain acceptance.

Sixth, KSU does not accept the previous qualifications of applicants if the applicants studied in a non-orthodox method, such as remote or online. On the other hand, there is no such condition in the American universities used in the study. Seventh, to gain admission to this master's program at KSU or any other study programs, the applicants must be of good behavior and be medically fit. No such conditions are in the four universities. Finally, it is noted that all four American universities agreed on the significance of attaching the statement of purpose. At the same time, students



wishing to study for a master's degree in educational administration at Saud University are not required to write a statement of purpose.

## Second: Courses and Study Plans

This section summarizes the study plans and courses taught in the master's programs in administration and educational leadership at the five universities. This part of the paper furthermore compares the study plans and courses of the Master of Educational Administration programs at the KSU and four American universities.

Study plans and courses at the KSU

Two study plans are available for the Master of Educational Administration program at KSU (DEA, 2022). The first study plan is for students who intend to write a master's thesis, and the second study plan is for students who do not plan to write a master's thesis.

First: Study plan for a master's thesis track

Students in the master's thesis track must have at least 34 credits to complete the graduation requirements and successfully defend their master's thesis. Out of 34 credits, the student must take 12 credits or 4 courses, which are requirements for all MA students at the College of Education, and each course is worth 3 credits. The courses are Methods of Scientific Research, Educational Statistics, Philosophical and Social Foundations of Education, and Foundations of Curricula. These four courses are mandatory and are taught by professors from the departments of Psychology, Education, and Curriculum.

A master's student taking the master's thesis study plan must complete 12 courses in educational administration, and all educational administration courses at the master's stage are worth 2 credits, except for the research plan and thesis courses, as each of these courses is only worth 1 unit. Following are the required courses: Educational Administration, Seminar and Research in Educational Administration, Educational Supervision, Education Policy and Management in the Kingdom, Educational Administration Theories, Contemporary Educational Trends, Applied Administration, Educational Planning, In-Service Training, and Independent Study in Educational Administration. Students must also pass the research plan preparation courses at the third level and the master's thesis course at the fourth level.

Second: Study plan for a non-master's thesis track

The total study plan credits for students in a master's program that is a non-master's thesis track is 45. Students in this track must take 20 courses, 15 of which are related to educational administration and leadership. The courses that students must take and pass in order to obtain a master's degree are the following: Educational Administration, Seminar and Research in Educational Administration, Educational Supervision, Education Policy and Management in the Kingdom, and Educational Administration Theories. Students in this track must also take the courses



Contemporary Educational Trends, Applied Management, Educational Planning, In-Service Training, and Independent Study in Educational Administration.

Students in the track without a master's thesis furthermore must take 5 additional courses related to the educational administration specialization, which students do not study in the master's thesis track. The courses are School Economics, Educational Leadership, Computer Applications in Educational Administration, Applied Educational Supervision, and Registering a Graduation Project. It is noteworthy that all educational administration courses are 2 credits, except for the graduation project, which is worth 3 credits. Furthermore, students in a track without a thesis study all the 4 general subjects mentioned above, which all master's students study in the College of Education. This is in addition to the course on computer applications in education presented by professors from the Curriculum Department, which is equivalent to 2 credits, so that the total number of general courses in this track is 5 (DEA, 2022).

Study plans and courses at the ASU

The study plan for the Master of Educational Leadership at ASU consists of 12 courses, and each course consists of three credits (ASU, 2022). What distinguishes the study plan in this program from others in other universities is that all the required courses are related to educational leadership and administration. There are no courses required to be completed in general courses, such as educational research courses or educational statistics.

The courses are Competency/Performance in Educational Administration, American Education System, School Law, Leadership in Curriculum and Assessment, Instructional Supervision, and School, Family and Community Connections. Students must also pass these courses to fulfill the degree requirements: School Finance and Human Resources, Critical Issues in Educational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, and two internship courses. Students who are not planning to take the comprehensive exam or portfolio need to register for the Applied Project course to complete all the requirements for the master's degree at ASU (ASU, 2022).

Study plans and courses at the FU

Master's students majoring in educational leadership at UF must study and pass 12 courses to earn the degree (UF, 2022). The study plan in this program requires students to take nine required courses: Educational Leadership: The Individual, Curriculum and Instructional Leadership, Administration of School Personnel, and Public School Law. Furthermore, students must study the following courses to fulfill the degree requirements: Public School Finance, Technology Leadership, Data-Driven Decision Making, Principalship, and Supervised Practice in School Administration.

Officials of the master's program likewise provide the opportunity for students to choose four elective courses linked to the educational leadership specialization, except for one course. The program offers six elective courses: Educational Organization and Administration, Leading Change, Communications in Educational Leadership, Turnaround Schools, Supervision, and Professional Development.





Students can also register for the School Curriculum as an elective course, and this course is not linked to leadership. All courses are three credits, and students must earn 36 credits to complete the courses (UF, 2022).

#### Study plans and courses at the OHU

The Master of Arts in Educational Administration at OSU is characterized by the availability of many courses, which allows students to study the courses they prefer (OSU, 2022). Students must complete 33 credits to obtain a master's degree in this program or 30 credits when planning to write a master's thesis. The study plan in the master's program at OSU divides the courses into two clusters. The first cluster is the courses related to the specialization of educational administration and leadership. Students should earn at least 21 credits in the first cluster's courses. The second cluster is called the general requirements; students must earn nine credits from this group.

As mentioned, all students in this program must earn at least 21 credits in specialization requirements. The program officials divide the specialization courses into three groups. The first group is required courses, the second is supporting courses, and the third is cognate areas. Only two courses are required in this course, which are Introduction to Educational Leadership and Instructional Leadership and Supervision.

Students must choose at least three courses worth nine credits from the supporting courses. The courses belonging to this group are Consult with Faculty Advisor for Alternatives, School-Community Relations and Politics, Educational Leadership: Learning & Teaching, and Educational Technology Leadership and Administration.

Students also can choose these courses as supporting courses: School Finance and Business Administration; Legal Aspects of School Administration; Leadership, Inquiry and Ethics; and Strategic Human Capital Management for P-12 Administration. Master students are also required to take six hours or more in cognate area courses.

Students studying for an MA in Educational Administration at OSU are required to complete at least one course for each of the following three categories: Educational Research, Fundamentals of Education, and Multicultural and Human Diversity. Each of the mentioned categories provides seven to eight courses, and students need to pick one to fulfill the master's requirements. It is helpful to know that all courses are equivalent to three credits in the Master of Arts in Educational Administration program at OSU (OSU, 2022).

#### Study plans and courses at the UTSA

Students at UTSA must complete 36 credits and then pass the comprehensive exam to fulfill all requirements to earn a Master of Education degree in Educational Leadership. Students of this program do not have other options for graduation instead of taking a comprehensive exam, such as completing a graduation project or writing a master's thesis. To receive the degree, students must complete 36 credits divided into 13 courses: 10 courses in educational leadership and administration and two courses



provided by professors of other educational disciplines. According to the study plan of this program, students who intend to obtain a master's degree in educational leadership are required to study and succeed in the following courses: Introduction to School Administration, Introduction to School Finance and Budgeting, School and Community Relations in Education, and Human Relations in Educational Administration. Also, students have to study and pass these courses: The Principalship: Educational Unit and Site Administration, Administration and Function of Special Programs, Legal Foundations in Education, Supervision: Teaching-Learning Process, and Instructional Leadership. Students also have to practice what they have learned in the program in their workplaces by registering for the two following practical courses: Practicum in Educational Administration-1 and Practicum in Educational Administration-2. Students likewise ought to study two more subjects for general courses; the courses are Research Methods and Education in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Society. All mentioned courses are three credits except Practicum in Educational Administration 1 and 2; both are three credits only (UTSA, 2022).

Similarities and differences in study plans and courses at the KSU and the four American universities

The study plan courses of the Master of Educational Administration program at KSU are consistent with similar programs in the four American universities at some points. After deep research into study plans and courses in the master's programs related to this study, the researcher found that the master's program at KSU teaches two educational supervision courses and that all the four universities have one or more courses related to educational supervision and educational administration at the master's level. The five universities also agree to offer one or more courses on educational leadership and school management. The study plan at KSU agrees with the master's programs of all universities except OHS by providing a course related to economics and school financing. The study plans in KSU, Texas, and ASU also agree with the existence of an applied course or more for educational administration. Finally, the study plans at KSU, UF, and OHS also include a course on utilizing technology in educational leadership.

The researcher discovered sharp dissimilarities between the master's program in educational administration at KSU and the four American universities in several essential points, including the significant difference in the credit numbers between the two tracks of KSU's thesis and non-thesis, the number of courses required for graduation, elective courses, and differences in the content and titles of the courses.

One of the most prominent differences between the master's program at KSU and the four American universities is that the study plan differs sharply between a master's thesis and a non-a master's thesis at KSU. Students in a non-master's thesis track are required to study 42 credits plus three credits as a graduation project, for a total of 45 credits. On the other hand, students who choose to write a master's thesis are required



to complete 32 credits plus the two courses for preparing the research plan and master's thesis, for a total of 34 credits.

After reviewing the study plans of the four American universities, the researcher did not find significant distinctions between the study plans and study credits required for the students of the master's program, whether with or without a master's thesis, except for the study plan at OHS. At OHS, students who plan to write a thesis are required to study 30 credits, while students in a track without a master's thesis must study at least 33 credits, meaning that the difference between the two tracks is only three credits (or one course). Because the study plan at KSU differs in the two tracks by ten academic credits, where students in the non-thesis track must study five additional courses (four of them in educational administration specialization), such means that students in the master's thesis track lose the opportunity to increase their information and skills related to the specialization. The courses that students in the master's thesis track do not study are school economics, educational leadership, applied supervision and computer applications in educational administration, and computer applications in education.

Another critical dissimilarity between the study plan of the master's program at KSU and the four American counterpart schools is that almost all the core and specialized courses in the four American universities are worth three credits per semester. In contrast, the specialized courses in the educational administration program at KSU are worth only two credits per semester.

One of the prominent points in the study plan for the Master of Arts in Educational Administration at KSU is the large number of core courses compared to the four American universities.

The study plan states in the master's thesis track that students must study four core courses that are not related to the major. The courses are The Foundations of Curricula, Educational Research Methods, Education's Philosophical and Social Foundations, and Educational Statistics. At the same time, students in a track without a master's thesis must study five core courses—the four mentioned above, as well as a computer applications course in education. On the other hand, the core courses that students must study vary in the four master's programs at American universities. For example, students at UF and ASU do not have to take core courses at all. Students at UTSA must take a research course, while master's students at OHS are required to complete three core courses.

The researcher found that the required credits in the study plan for master's students at the four American universities range from 33 to 36 credits, while in the study plan for master's students in a non-thesis track at KSU is 45 credits. As a result, students at KSU are required to take more courses than their counterparts at the other four universities. For instance, students at KSU study 20 courses in the non-thesis study plan, while students in the four American universities study only 12 courses to fulfill the courses required to obtain a degree.

The study plan for the MA at KSU does not include elective courses, either in the core courses or educational administration courses. The courses in the study plan are pre-



set without any flexibility. In contrast, master's programs at the four American universities offer many options for students. For example, students at OHS can choose three core courses out of 21, and students at UF can choose three specialized courses out of 6.

After carefully reviewing the study plans and courses, the researcher found that the study plan for the master's program at KSU does not teach some specialized core courses, which are required for students in the four American universities. For example, the study plans of the master's programs in the four American universities emphasize the significance of the Educational Law course for future school administrators. However, there is no course on Legal Aspects in the study plan for students at KSU. Furthermore, there are no courses in the study plan at KSU on Personnel Management and Human Resources, while these courses are required in the four American universities. Finally, the study plans at UTSA, OHS, and ASU agree that there is a course or more on the relations among the school, the family, and the community. However, the study plan at KSU has abandoned a similar course for the master's program.

### **Third: Graduation Requirements for Master's Programs**

This part reviews the requirements for graduation and completion of studies in the master's programs in educational administration and leadership in the five universities. This section also focuses on the most critical topics of similarities and differences in graduation requirements between the MEA at the KSU and the four American universities.

#### **Requirements for graduation at the KSU**

Students who plan to complete the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in educational administration from KSU have two paths to graduation (DEA, 2022). The first is to complete the required courses and write and defend a master's thesis, and the second track to finish the program is to complete the courses and to write a research assignment as a graduation project.

KSU has two study plans for students in the Master's Program in Educational Administration. The first plan is for students planning to write a master's thesis, and the second is for students who prefer not to write a thesis. Students who choose the first plan must complete 34 credits, including 21 credits in the area of educational administration. In the last semester, the students defend their master's theses. By completing the mentioned requirements, a student has the right to earn a master's degree.

Students who choose the second study plan and do not want to write a master's thesis must complete 45 credits, including 33 credits in educational administration studies, and then conduct a scientific research paper as a graduation project under the supervision of the academic supervisor. The supervisor determines whether the



research is suitable as a graduation project or not. There is no option for students in this program to take the comprehensive test or other graduation projects (DEA, 2022).  
Requirements for graduation from the ASU

To meet the requirements for receiving a master's degree in educational leadership from ASU, students must complete 36 credits, including 27 credits in educational administration courses and 6 credits of an internship. Several options are available for a master's student at the ASU graduate level, including completing 36 credits and passing the comprehensive test. Furthermore, after completing 36 credits, students can submit a graduation project to complete all the degree requirements. One of the options available to students is to complete 36 credits and submit a profile (ASU, 2022).

Requirements for graduation from the UF

To obtain a master's degree in the Educational Leadership Program from the UF, students must complete at least 36 credits, including 27 credits in mandatory courses in subjects linked to education administration, and there are also many elective courses. In addition to completing the required courses, students intending to earn a master's degree in the postgraduate program must pass the comprehensive test, which includes written and oral tests conducted by the student supervisors. The supervisors determine whether their students passed the comprehensive test or not. The second option for students to complete the requirements for getting the degree after completing the required courses is to write and defend their master's thesis. (UF, 2022).

Requirements for graduation from the OHS

Students in the Educational Administration Program at OHS have two main choices for receiving a master's degree. The two options are to complete the required courses and write a master's thesis or to complete more study credits without writing a master's thesis by taking some tests or projects. Master's students in educational leadership are entitled to graduate if they complete 30 credits, including 21 credits of specialized courses in educational administration, and then succeed in defending their master's thesis. Students who do not want to write a master's thesis can choose alternative methods of completing the degree requirements, but these students must complete 33 credits, including at least 21 credits in educational administration courses. Among the options for graduation for students who do not plan to write a master's thesis is to pass the master's exam, which is a written and oral test administered by student supervisors. A student can also conduct a procedural research project to fulfill the requirements for obtaining a master's degree from this university (OHS, 2022).

Requirements for graduation from the UTSA

To complete the requirements for a master's degree in educational leadership from the UTSA, students must complete at least 36 credits, including 11 courses in educational administration. Students in this program do not have as many options for graduation





as students at other universities. In order to obtain the degree, students must, after completing 36 credits, pass the comprehensive exam (UTSA,2022).

Similarities and differences in graduation requirements among the MEA at the KSU and the four American universities

After examining the conditions for obtaining a master's degree in educational administration in the five universities, the researcher found many similarities in the requirements for obtaining a master's degree between KSU and the four American universities. Major common point procedures at KSU are consistent with the four universities in that student who intend to acquire a master's degree must complete all required courses and have an overall grade average of no less than very good. One of the agreements between the KSU and the UF, and the OHS and the ASU is that students have the option in the last semester to write a master's thesis as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master. The KSU also agrees with the three mentioned universities in providing the option for students who do not plan to write a master's thesis to complete a graduation project as an alternative to the master's thesis.

On the other hand, the researcher found sharp differences in the conditions for receiving a master's degree in educational administration between the KSU and the four American universities in several points, the most significant of which is the large number of units of study required for graduation by the KSU compared to the other four universities, as well as the absence of a comprehensive test option for students. Students at KSU must complete 45 credits and complete the graduation project, which is scientific research. The academic supervisor decides how good this research is to serve as a graduation project. It is noted that students in American universities are required to complete between 33 to 36 credits to complete all required courses. Among the notes regarding requirements for receiving a master's degree in the master's program in educational administration at KSU is that students planning to write a master's thesis at KSU are required to complete only 34 credits compared to 45 credits for students who intend to undertake a graduation project. This means that students in the graduation project track study have 11 credits more than students in the master's thesis track, and this is not present in the four American universities. For example, all students in the aforementioned American universities, except for the OHS, study the same number of credits. At OHU, students in the master's thesis track must complete 30 credits, while students in the graduation project tracks must complete 33 credits, meaning that the difference is three credits only. Furthermore, one of the apparent differences in the conditions for completing graduation requirements between KSU and the four American universities is that the four American universities offer the option to pass the comprehensive exam as an option to satisfy the graduation requirements besides finishing all required courses. At the same time, there is no comprehensive exam in the master's program in educational



administration at KSU, where students must write a master's thesis or a graduation project to fulfill the requirements for the degree of master's.

### **The study recommendations**

After comparing the admission requirements, study plans, courses, and graduation requirements from master's programs in educational administration at KSU and the four American universities, the researcher suggests making some modifications to the master's program in educational administration at KSU to improve the quality of the program to reflect the master's programs in the same specialty in the four universities in the United States. One of the significant changes that must be modified is to open up the opportunity for admission to international students in the program without obtaining a full scholarship. This change in conditions attracts many international students and enhances diversity in the department's students. Furthermore, the suggestions to enhance the study plan and courses for the master's program include adding courses to the study plan on educational law, human resources leadership, and relations between the school and the community. All the mentioned courses are essential for school principals to improve their schools' outcomes and enhance students' performances. Also, offering additional options for graduation requirements within the master of educational administration programs at KSU will positively impact improving the quality of the program, for instance, adding the option to pass the comprehensive test as an alternative requirement for writing a master's thesis, to resemble what is found at the four American universities. The researcher believes that adopting these recommendations and suggestions presented in this section of the paper will contribute to the development of the master's program at KSU, which will contribute to providing the students of the program with meaningful experiences and knowledge that will contribute to improving the quality of education in the schools they will lead in the future.

### **Conclusions**

Benefiting from lessons, practices, and plans followed in elite and distinguished higher education institutions benefits other universities seeking quality education and work and improved students' educational experiences. Among the practices universities can achieve is comparing their study plans, curricula, and admission requirements with distinguished universities at the global level, which are ranked as elite universities in recognized classifications. After completing the required comparisons, it is helpful for universities, colleges, and departments to develop and enhance academic programs, curricula, and practices in light of the best international practices followed in distinguished universities.

The study compared the master's program in educational administration at KSU and four master's programs in the same specialization at four universities in the United States. The study attempted to discover the similarities and differences, as well as the practices and methods used in the master's programs in educational administration chosen in this study regarding the subjects of admission requirements, study plans,



curricula, and graduation requirements. The researcher found similarities between the master's programs in educational administration at KSU and the four master's programs offered at four American public universities in Arizona, Florida, Ohio, and Texas. At the same time, the study found sharp differences in admission requirements, curricula, study plans, and graduation requirements between the master's program at King Saud University and the master's programs at the four American universities. In the last part of this paper, the researcher presents some recommendations for developing the educational management program at KSU in light of the practices followed in similar master's programs at the four American universities.

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