ABSTRACT

Since the creation of the King Abdullah Scholarship in 2005, over 100,000 Saudis have ventured abroad for higher education. The United Arab Emirates and Qatar have significantly increased their students studying abroad while promoting greater educational development within their respective countries. Education City in Doha is an example of this internal project, with a sign reminding its students, “Ask Why”. While walking through Education City this past winter with a friend, I read the sign, “Ask Why,” to which he replied, “But don’t ever act on it.” With hundreds of thousands of Arabian Gulf students abroad at this moment the region continues to push for greater educational development along with internal educational development programs and projects. Given this increased importance of education and looking primarily westward for direction and development, very few studies have been conducted on how 21st century education in the region is affecting society, culture, religion and government among other things. Those of us familiar with the region know the ruling families will allow change and development so long as it does not affect their power. Yet these large demographic interactions with primarily western educators is bound to have some impact, at the very least on the students themselves. To what extent will looking westward for educational development and access impact the Arabian Gulf countries? This study seeks to explore this rather untapped but extremely important trend in the region with a special focus on government institutions, elites, students, and the peoples themselves.