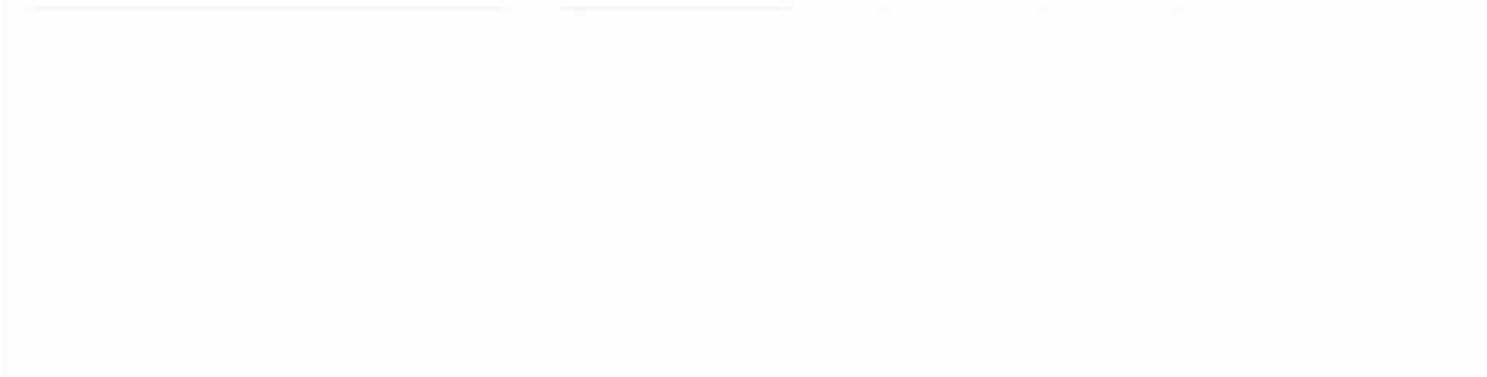


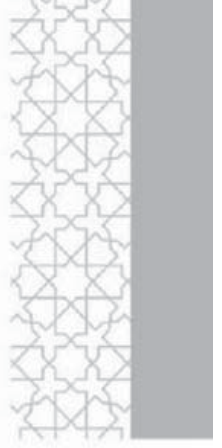
The Role of Research Chairs in Fostering Scientific Mobility in Saudi Universities A Case Study*

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Abstract:

This study aimed to explore the role of research chairs in fostering scientific mobility in Saudi universities through examining their contribution to developing scientific research and holding scientific meetings. This is done by analyzing the views of the heads of academic departments in King Saud University and examining the differences among their views according to four variables: current academic rank, specialization of the department, years of service as head of the department, and participation in some research chair activity. The study has applied the descriptive survey approach and has adopted the questionnaire as a tool for gathering data. The study shows that the mean values of choices of the two questionnaire modules (namely, scientific research and scientific meetings) wavered between 3,30 and 4,00, thus falling within the range of medium to low degrees on the scale. The study also indicates that there were no statistically significant differences among responses that can be attributed to the variables of the study. In the light of the findings, the study concluded by providing some recommendations.

دور كراسي البحث في دعم الحراك العلمي في الجامعات السعودية دراسة حالة

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ملخص البحث:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف دور كراسي البحث في دعم الحراك العلمي في الجامعات السعودية من خلال دراسة مساهمتها في تطوير البحث العلمي وعقد اللقاءات العلمية. تم تحقيق هدف الدراسة من خلال تحليل وجهات نظر رؤساء الأقسام الأكاديمية في جامعة الملك سعود ودراسة الاختلافات بين وجهات نظرهم وفقاً لأربعة متغيرات: الرتبة الأكاديمية الحالية والتخصص والقسم وسنوات الخدمة كرئيس للقسم، والمشاركة في بعض أنشطة كراسي البحث، أجريت الدراسة خلال العام الدراسي (١٤٣٤-١٤٣٥هـ). وقد استخدمت الدراسة أسلوب المسح الوصفي، واعتمدت على الاستبيان كأداة لجمع البيانات. من نتائج الدراسة أن متوسط القيم للاختبار من اثنين من بعدي الاستبيان أي البحث العلمي واللقاءات العلمية (يتراوح بين ٢,٥٥ و ٣,٢٥)، وبالتالي تقع ضمن مجموعة من متوسطة إلى درجة منخفضة على المقياس. وتشير الدراسة أيضاً إلى عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الاستجابات التي يمكن أن تعزى لمتغيرات الدراسة. في ضوء النتائج، خلصت الدراسة إلى عرض بعض التوصيات.

Introduction:

Research is one of the main functions of universities. Therefore, several universities have sought to establish regulatory bodies to undertake the management and support of academic research and help fulfill its goals. Research chairs are among the main regulatory bodies that foster scientific mobility, whether in the field of preparing research or in the field of holding scientific meetings.

Universities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) have lately witnessed many developments in the academic research system, most notably by launching a large number of research chairs specialized in humanities and applied sciences. Such developments came in response to the growing demand on academic research outputs by various sectors of society, governmental, private, or nonprofit, as well as the increasing desire of national personalities and institutions wishing to participate with universities in funding academic research as part of their social responsibility (Symposium of Research Chairs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2012: 5).

Research chairs are a positive phenomenon in the knowledge society and a major pillar resource for developing and progressing scientific mobility. They also contribute to the cultural structure of any country. They are the basis for serving many scientific projects and dealing with many issues that need accurate and specialized research. The goals fulfilled by research chairs have made them the focus of attention of decision-makers in both developed and developing countries. The research chair experience in the KSA started only recently, when compared with other experiences round the world, but it has had a positive impact on providing an environment that fosters occupying a pioneering position in the field of research, contributing to the

preparation of future leaders in various fields, and increasing creative research (Al-Fawzan 2012: 56).

Scientific research is not only the responsibility of the state. Contemporary trends are based on the concept of partnership with the private sector as an effective party in scientific research. Research chairs are a major source of support for scientific research. The KSA has taken large strides in this direction, surpassing most Arab countries in the number of research chairs, which, in KSA universities, has exceeded 230 so far. As the research chair experience in the KSA is rather recent, it needs some assessment (Al-baqaawi 2012: 175).

Problem of the Study:

Research chairs in universities are a mean to scientific research, generation and employment of knowledge, contribution to development, and raising the standard and potential of society. Therefore, many developed countries seeking to maintain their top position, as well as developing countries seeking to progress and catch up with them, are encouraging the establishment of research chairs in their universities and urging the notables and institutions of society to support and invest in research chairs for their ability to offer promising potential for such societies and their expected contribution to the body of human knowledge (Ministry of Higher Education 2012: 12).

Research chairs are among the most important programs set up by some KSA universities and academic institutions for enhancing scientific research and enlarging the circle of partnership between universities and the communities in which they exist. The KSA is currently witnessing a great advancement in research chairs, as indicated by their large number in Saudi universities. Both old-established and new universities are competing in raising and allocating funds for launching research chairs.

Such research chairs seek to fulfill particular goals as specified by the party establishing them. They are funded by real or legal persons or through partnership between the university and the financing party (Al-Maghdhawi 2009: 7).

Although enough time has passed since the launching of many research chairs in Saudi Universities, there have been no studies yet to examine the research chairs contribution to developing research and convening various scientific meetings, which can achieve scientific mobility and institutional distinction of the universities embracing them.

It is therefore important to provide an assessment for such an experience, especially in the field of increasing research publication and organizing scientific meetings, which are among the major purposes for which research chairs were originally created.

Rationale for the Study:

The importance of the present study stems from the following points:

1. The study addresses an important issue, which is the role of research chairs in achieving scientific mobility in terms of developing and supporting scientific research and holding scientific conferences within Saudi universities. Research chairs are among the major resources for scientific research and the modern means to fulfilling its functions in university institutions, benefiting from the charily funds provided by individuals and institutions in society.
2. The present study contributes to assessing the current status of research chairs in terms of developing scientific research and holding scientific meetings in KSA universities. It also gives those in charge of higher education a true picture of the degree to which these research chairs contribute to achieving scientific mobility, and offers them opportunities for improving and developing management of research chairs.

3. To the researchers' knowledge, this is one of the few studies that have dealt with research chairs in universities, which is one of the most recent aspects of higher education that needs further study and elaboration.

Questions of the Study:

The study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the contribution of research chairs to developing scientific research in KSA universities?
2. What is the contribution of research chairs to organizing scientific meetings in KSA universities?
3. What are the statistically significant differences among the responses of the individuals of the study on the role of research chairs in fostering scientific mobility in KSA universities according the following variables: current academic rank, specialization of academic department, years of service as head of department, and participation in some research chair activity?

Delimitations of the Study:

The present study has the following delimitations:

1. Subject delimitations:

The aim of this study is to examine the role of research chairs in developing scientific research and holding scientific meetings in KSA universities.

2. Place delimitations:

The application of this study is confined to the heads of academic departments at King Saud University.

3. Time delimitations:

The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 1432–1433h.

Definition of Terms:

1. Research Chairs:

A research rank assigned for researchers and distinguished scientists in their field nationally and internationally and who have research contributions of high quality and quantity in certain specialization. (King Saud University, Vice Deanship of scientific Research for Research Chairs, 2013)

2. Scientific Mobility:

In this study, scientific mobility refers to activities meant to achieve scientific progress for the university in the field of scientific communication and meetings, both inside and outside the university, and the field of academic programs.


Theoretical Framework:

1. The Concept of Research Chairs:

There are several definitions of research chairs, some of the important ones are reviewed here. Reference has already been made to Al-Maghdhawi (2009) who defines a research chair as a type of research or academic university program, aimed at realizing certain goals, and funded by grants from real or legal persons, on a permanent or temporary basis, according to specific conditions and systems(36).

Al-Khateeb, Shahat, & Al-Jabr, (2000) define research chairs as a type of scientific endowment granted by foreign or national institutions or individuals for scientific purposes, and offered to distinguished individuals according to terms and conditions agreed upon among the donor parties, the beneficiaries, and the supervising and monitoring bodies(62).

According to Al-Borie (2012), a research chair is a research program in which a scholar or researcher who is internationally distinguished in a



particular field conducts specialized research aiming at offering innovative solutions to national development problems(152). Similarly, Al-Al-baqaawi (2012) regards a research chair as a university program including research and academic activities, funded permanently or temporarily by parties outside the university in accordance with the higher education policy of the state, which aims at fulfilling knowledge-related goals pertaining to developmental issues, including educational, human, health, social, and total development(178).

Al-Ayashi (2012) argued that research chairs are a set of scientific activities in various fields performed through a research team specialized in a specific field or a group of integrated fields, which aims at supporting a knowledge society characterized by specialization, development, and translation of the achievements of researchers at universities into practical tangible results whose effect can reach the everyday life in society (340).

Thus, it can be argued that a research chair is a university research or academic program that is funded on a permanent or temporary basis to achieve specific goals according to the higher education policy.

The KSA Experience of Research Chairs:

The experience of research chairs in the KSA is rather recent. The beginning of the experience was abroad, as chairs were established in foreign universities, both regional and international, such as the Chair of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques at Gulf University (1997), King Fahd Chair at the University of London (1995), King Abdulaziz Chair at the University of Southern California (1984), Prince Nayef Chair at the University of Moscow (1996), and King Fahd Chair at Harvard University (1993). The KSA has also offered support to scientific centers at several universities worldwide. The main concern of such chairs was with humanities, namely, Islamic Studies. At that time, there were no

scientific research chairs in Saudi Universities, because universities were not allowed to accept donations or gifts from outside the university, neither from foreign nor local bodies (Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University, 2012).

The research chair experience in the KSA started at King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals, followed by King Abdulaziz University, King Saud University, and Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University. After that, the number of scientific research chairs increased in KSA universities, both old-established and recent, reaching 221 in 2012 (Al-Adhel 2012).

Table 1: Distribution of Research Chairs in KSA Universities in 2012

University	No. of Research Chairs	Percentage
King Saud University	124	56.1
Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University	41	18.6
King Abdulaziz University	28	12.7
Ha'il University	6	2.7
Tabuk University	2	2.7
Others (approximate)	20	9.0
Total (approximate)	221	100

(Source: Al-Athel 2012)

As indicated in Table 1, King Saud University occupies the top rank in the number of research chairs, with a percentage of 56.1% of the total research chairs in Saudi universities. This shows that there is accelerating scientific mobility and increasing concern with scientific progress and excellence in that university. This phenomenon is worthy of notice and needs further study and follow-up.

Table 2: Distribution of Active Research Chairs by Specialization in King Saud University

Field of Specialization	No. of Chairs	Percentage
Science	30	38.5
Medicine	28	35.9
Humanities	12	15.4
Engineering	8	10.3
Total	78	100

(Source: King Saud University, Research Chairs Program Website, 2012 (<http://ksu.edu.sa>))

The fields of specialization of those research chairs in Saudi universities range between medicine, science (physics and chemistry), engineering, and the humanities (King Saud University, Research Chairs Program Website, 2012 (<http://ksu.edu.sa>)).

It can be observed from Table 2 that science chairs occupy the top position, followed by medicine chairs, humanities chairs, and then engineering chairs at the end of the list. It is clear from the data cited in Al-Athel (2012) that King Abdulaziz University differs in the distribution of chairs by specialization from King Saud University in that the medicine chairs occupy the first position in King Abdulaziz University. However, the two universities were similar regarding the distribution of chairs over other specializations. It is also noteworthy that scientific research chairs in the field of engineering were last in both the universities, in spite of the private sector's dire need of this specialization (Al-Adhel 2012).

Goals of Research Chairs:

Several studies have dealt with the goals of research chairs. For instance, Al-Maghdhawi (2009: 45) suggests that the main goals of research chairs include:

- Disseminating Islamic culture and highlighting the merits of Islam all over the world;
- Defending the Islamic creed and exposing and refuting all false allegations against Islam;
- Establishing cultural and intellectual communication with world nations and peoples;
- Attracting specialized and distinguished scholars to support and initiate academic and research programs and universities;

- Benefiting from experienced scientists for developing the body of knowledge and research in the possession of the university and society;
- Conducting specialized scientific research;
- Developing graduate studies programs in various academic and research fields;
- Providing various academic specializations with competent staff and with modern science laboratories and apparatus;
- Arranging mutual visits for professors across universities;
- Conducting specialized research in certain fields at the undergraduate and graduate levels (e.g. the master and doctoral levels);
- Contributing to training and raising the proficiency of the targeted cadres; and
- Working for mutual cooperation between universities and society to achieve important and beneficial results for both parties..

According to Al-Al-baqaawi (2012: 188), the goals of research chairs are:

- Making a qualitative breakthrough towards distinction and creativity both at the regional and international levels;
- Effectuating the role of the university in developing the society into a society of knowledge, thought, development, and scientific progress;
- Investing in local creative cadres and benefiting by international expertise to make successful scientific partnerships by attracting distinguished international professors in scientific research;
- Diversifying sources of national income to protect national earnings, achieve human and intellectual development for future generations

raised in a research knowledge environment, and increase the number of distinguished researchers at universities; and

- Innovating new solutions to contemporary problems and supporting productive research that attaches priority to serving society.

According to Al-Ayashi (2012: 341), the goals of research chairs are:

- Developing societal partnerships with the university;
- Supporting cooperation between competencies at the university and various societal institutions;
- Fostering institutional research spirit as is the case in reputable international universities; and
- Contributing to the enrichment of knowledge with its various disciplines.

It can be argued that the goals of research chairs are focusing on the contribution of the chairs to the enrichment of knowledge with its various disciplines by:

- Enhancing the university's role in supporting scientific research through developing abilities and skills of researchers and graduate students in the field of scientific research;
- Holding scientific meetings and participating in scientific conferences and symposia of relevance to the interests and specializations of the research chairs; and
- Arranging for hosting scholars and experts.

These goals are mentioned by all the Saudi universities, however the important question is: How to achieve these goals? The Saudi universities have evaluate there experience by developing an evaluation system the will result in a very useful data. They have create a quality management system with clear and well defined quality standards to manage the research chairs programs.


Requirements for Successful Research Chairs:

The requirements for successful research chairs include the following:

1. Having the necessary infrastructure, including amenities and facilities, prepared early enough before the operation of the chair proceedings (Boutin 2012). This is important for saving time and preventing delay of the research chair proceedings. This requirement is not confined to establishing amenities and providing laboratories and apparatus, but also includes preparing such amenities to provide a convenient environment for work and secure their operation and maintenance.
2. Achieving flexibility in university policies, regulations, and administrative and financial laws so as to facilitate the work of scientific research chairs in terms of employment, partnerships, contracts, and everything related to the arrangement and regulation of the proceedings of the chairs; and
3. Assuring compatibility between the goals and specializations of research chairs and the university's strategic plan of scientific research and knowledge management.
4. Continuous assessment of the research chairs's operations and outcomes.

Other requirements may be added to the above-mentioned list, including:

1. Striking a balance in the activities and proceedings of scientific research chairs so as to fully cover the international, regional, local, and university levels;
2. Attracting distinguished specialists and scholars of international reputation so as to enrich the scientific research chair activities (Orfli and Kassab 2012);



3. Achieving international reputation and attraction at all international, regional, and local levels (Pianura 2012). This is done by using all communication media as well as traditional and electronic means of publication. This can have a positive effect on the process of funding, enlarging the circle of partnerships and attracting famous and distinguished experts for employment;


4. Focusing attention on graduate students, especially at the doctoral level, channeling their research so as to serve the goals of the chair, training them in scientific research skills (Semra 2012), and developing their curricula by adding courses related to the specialization of the research chairs; and

5. Establishing compatibility between the chairs' vision, mission, goals, and activities and the national priorities (Semra 2012) so that research chairs may have an effective role in fulfilling the ambitions of the country and solving its problems and crises.

Review of Previous Literature:

The researchers have found no previous studies that have the same goals and the same area of focus as this study. However, there are some studies about research chairs, that have different focus than this study. Some of them are:

Al-Khateeb et al. (2000) conducted a study entitled “Managing University Chairs in Higher Education: A Pilot Study,” which aimed to explore the views of KSA higher education academics concerning the importance of university chairs, the necessary rules for their management and supervision, determination of their fields of specialization, and the mechanism for funding them in the KSA. One of the main findings of the study is that it highlighted the importance of university research chairs in developing academic work at universities and supporting their role in social work. The study also stressed the necessity of providing



administrative and regulatory laws and measures for endowing university chairs and the importance of diversifying their funding sources by using consultative endowment funds. The main recommendations of the study included the following:

- Working on setting up university chairs at Saudi universities under the supervision of a technical committee affiliated to the relevant authorities;
- Considering the possibility of investing university chairs for the service of educational and cultural purposes aiming at developing the local community; and
- Establishing an endowment fund for receiving donations for supporting university research chairs.

In his study entitled “Saudi Scientific Chairs: A Descriptive Study,” Al-Maghdhawi (2000) aimed to elucidate concepts related to scientific research chairs and show the importance attached to them by the KSA, both at home and abroad. The main findings of the study related to research chairs in general were as follows:

- Scientific research chairs are of paramount importance to universities;
- Scientific research chairs have their own philosophy;
- The scientifically developed world pays great attention to scientific research chairs;
- Scientific research chairs have their benefits at the local, regional, and international levels;
- Universities are the natural home for embracing scientific research chairs;
- Other scientific institutions than universities may adopt scientific research chairs after having the necessary conditions available;

- Scientific research chairs have their own rules according to which they operate.

Some of the main findings of the study related to Saudi research chairs at home and abroad were as follows:

- The KSA is attaching increasing importance to scientific research chairs;
- There are true foundations for the KSA interest in setting up scientific research chairs, both at home and abroad;
- The KSA has taken obvious efforts in supporting research chairs in the best-reputed universities in the world;
- There is rivalry and competition among KSA universities for setting up scientific research chairs;
- There is little understanding of the scientific research chair philosophy among some academics in some KSA universities for various reasons.

Some of the main recommendations of the study were as follows:

- Saudi scientific research chairs should be the subject of further, more comprehensive, and accurate research that examines various specializations and disciplines;
- Some university research chairs should be developed to form distinguished scientific research centers;
- Saudi universities seeking to establish scientific research chairs should focus on the needs of Saudi society.

In addition, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2010) prepared a descriptive analytical study entitled “Saudi Scientific Chairs and Programs Abroad,” aiming to provide a brief description of universities embracing research chairs, centers, and programs funded by the KSA or Saudi legal persons; list such chairs, centers, and programs; and provide an objective description evaluating their scientific and academic

activities. The study was based on a twofold plan, one involving basic library research and the other involving field research. Some of the main contributions of the study were the following:

- The study reviewed some of the literature related to the concepts and methods of funding and managing research chairs;
- It listed the research chairs that the KSA participated in funding and supporting;
- It prepared a database for these research chairs, including their names, nationalities, the qualifications of their supervisors, their date of establishment, and the obstacles that they encountered;
- Chairs, programs, or centers are not identical or similar in terms of their infrastructure or academic activities;
- The study highlighted the potential of such research chairs, which qualifies them to work in the area of Arab and Islamic research and studies objectively and systematically;
- King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture at the University of Southern California is the oldest (1976), while Kamal Adham Center for Journalism Research and Training at the American University in Cairo is the most recent (2008);
- As far as the amount of the endowment is concerned, the highest was King Fahd Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies at the University Arkansas (25 million US Dollars), while the lowest amount was that of King Fahd Chair of Biotechnology at the Gulf University (400,000 US Dollars).


Al-Athl's study (2012) entitled "The Private Sector's Motivations and Expectations of Research Chairs: A Proposed Track for Enhancing their Benefit to Saudi Society" aimed to discuss possible forms of achieving effective benefit from research chairs in Saudi society and examine their ability under their current conditions to meet the needs and expectations

of the private sector. Some of the main findings of the study were the following:

- Research chairs constitute a flexible resource for funding research, away from the bureaucratic measures, within the limits of which state-owned universities and research centers operate;
- Individuals and notables of society remain in the category of the highest contribution to financing research chairs in KSA universities. On the other hand, the contribution of the private sector in this respect is relatively low;
- Research chairs in KSA universities under their current conditions are operated according to the individual vision and policy of each university without regard to the general role that such chairs can play in serving the national economy as a whole;
- Humanities and social sciences still hold a significant percentage of research chairs;
- There is insufficient effort in marketing research chairs to the private sector on the part of the university, irrespective of whether in terms of cost or real return.

Alwadan et al (2012) carried out a study aimed at evaluating research chairs in the Research Chair Program of King Saud University. This was done by setting the evaluation process goals, building an evaluation system, specifying the period of time for evaluating research chairs and their specializations, and setting the general criteria for assessing their performance and performance indicators. Some of the main findings of the study were the following:

- Evaluating the Research Chair Program of King Saud University aimed at linking the University's policies, orientations, and visions to the research chair achievements, creating a competitive spirit



among the chairs to reach the international standards and showing the points of strength and weakness for each chair;

- Building the evaluation system involved in measuring the efficiency of performance mean value, the period of time for supervising the chair, and value of the amounts spent on the chair since the beginning of such a supervision;
- The period of time for research chairs evaluation should be 6 months from the date of chair supervision;
- The fields of research chairs included engineering, medicine, science, the humanities, and economics;
- The general criteria for research chair performance assessment included academic product; the impact of the program on industry and economy; the impact of the program on public health, social service, and environment protection; the chair professor; training national and foreign competent staff; the method and amount of research funding; the media aspects of the chair; cooperation among chairs and optimal investment of resources and potentials; and the chair's periodic technical reports.

The study recommended setting a strategic plan and annual plans for each chair based on scientific foundations. It also recommended setting a stable, integrated, and comprehensive structure for each research chair.

Al-Ayashi's (2012) study entitled "Research Chairs: The Arab and the Western Experiences" aimed to compare the Arab research chair experience with its Western counterpart and to recognize the difficulties faced by Arab research chairs. Some of the main findings of the study were the following:

- There is lack of information centers in universities as well as laws and agreements that facilitate communication among scientific research centers in the Arab World;

- There are obstacles against reaching the stage of possessing special technology related to scientific research and development;
- There is failure to adopt innovative programs for scientific research and choose appropriate technology;
- There is little room for Arab researchers and scholars to freely choose their research topic and express their ideas, despite the vital role of academic freedom in advancing scientific research, which limits the researcher's creativity and seriousness;
- In many Arab countries, the rate of academic productivity is low, and society does not highly regard scientific research owing to the lack of awareness about the importance of development and keeping up with modern civilization;
- Arab universities and academic institutions lack specialized bodies that market research findings to beneficiary parties according to a systematic economic plan, which indicates poor cooperation between research centers and the private sector;
- There is lack of cooperation and coordination between Arab ministries and universities with respect to conducting research that contributes to solving national problems.

The study recommends that the best way to reduce difficulties is by establishing a national organization to undertake coordination between the parties concerned and scientific research chairs.

Al-baqaawi (2012) carried out a study entitled "The Malaysian Experience of Scientific Research Chairs," which aimed to define the concept of scientific research chairs and cast light on the Malaysian experience in this respect. Some of the main findings of the study were the following:

- The number of permanent research chairs does not exceed 20, while temporary research chairs amount to hundreds;

- The term for a permanent research chair is open-ended;
- Research chairs support of various kinds usually comes from the Ministry of Higher Educations, although, sometimes, it comes from commercial establishments and corporations;
- A research chair has a chair professor, who is the project leader of the research endowment and the general supervisor of the chair, and who works full time for the supervision of the project;
- The activities of a research chair are continuous and take various forms, including lectures, workshops, symposia, meetings, and publishing books, periodicals, and encyclopedias;
- A chair's achievements and outputs must include all of the following: published papers, definite or possible applications, number of master and doctoral students, networks, connections and patents, and applicable research grants;
- The chair seeks help of visiting professors to deliver lectures, courses, or symposia through which the chair provides services to the society and university, provided that the period of the professor's assistance does not exceed 15 days;
- Most research chairs and research grants operate under the auspices of scientific research centers at universities.

It is clearly noticeable the previous studies have covered different areas in the field of research chairs. The five areas covered are:

- The management of the research chairs programs.
- The concept and the importance of the research chairs.
- The abroad experience of Saudi research chairs.
- The private sector motivations towards research chairs in Saudi Arabia.
- The evaluation system oh research chairs (its process goals, period of time, assessment criteria, and performance indicators).

As shown, these studies differ regarding the areas of focus and the methodologies used.

This study has concentrated on the role of research chairs in fostering scientific mobility in Saudi Universities, mainly on increasing research publication and organizing scientific meetings.

Methodology of the Study:

The researchers have applied the descriptive survey approach, which, as defined by Al-Assaf (2010: 191), is “a method of research in which all the individuals of a research population or a large sample of them are questioned, with a view to describing the phenomenon under investigation in terms of properties and quality.”

Population of the Study:

The population of the study was composed of all the heads of academic departments at King Saud University who have research chairs. Owing to limited population, the researchers used the complete enumeration method by applying their tool on all individuals of the population. The number of individuals was 60 heads of departments, among whom the questionnaire was distributed, and out of them, 31 returned the questionnaire.

Properties of the Individuals of the Study:

1. College Specialization:

Table 3: Properties of the Individuals by College Specialization

College Specialization	Frequency	Percentage
Humanities	17	54.8
Natural Sciences	14	45

Table 3 shows the properties of the individuals of the study by college specialization. As the figures indicate, 54.8% of the individuals belonged to humanities colleges, whereas 45% belonged to colleges of natural sciences.

2. Participation in Research Chairs:

Table 4: Properties of the Individuals by Participation in Research

Chairs

Participation in Research Chairs	Frequency	Percentage
Has participated	11	35.5
Has not participated	20	64.5

Table 4 shows the properties of the individuals of the study by participation in the activities of the research chair. As the figures indicate, 35.5% of the individuals participated in some research chair activity, whereas 64.5% did not participate in any activity.

3. Department's Association with Research Chair:

Table 5: Properties of the Individuals by Department's Association with Research Chairs

College Specialization	Frequency	Percentage
Associated	17	54.8
Not Associated	14	45

Table 5 shows the properties of the individuals of the study by the department's association with research chairs. As the figures indicate, 54.8% of the departments were associated with research chairs, whereas 45% were not associated with any research chair.

Tool of the Study:

The researchers used the questionnaire as their main tool for gathering the data of this study to find out the role of research chairs in fostering scientific mobility in Saudi universities. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, the first included the variables of the study and the second included the two modules of the study related to the role of research chair in fostering scientific mobility. The latter part was in turn divided into two components: developing scientific research and holding

scientific meetings. The validity of the tool was assured by peer reviewing. Based on the reviewers' remarks, the final formula was reached. The correlation coefficient (Pearson) was used, which yielded the following result:

Correlation coefficients wavered between 0.55 and 0.86, which indicated the high validity of all questionnaire statements, except for statement No. 25, for which the correlation coefficient was relatively low.

For verifying the consistency of the tool, the Cronbach's Alpha consistency test was used, yielding the following result:

Consistency coefficients wavered between 0.64 and 0.86. This result indicated that there was a high degree of consistency in all the statements of the questionnaire.

Methods of Statistical Analysis:

To achieve the objectives of the study, a number of statistical methods were used, employing the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analyzing the data gathered in the survey. For calculating the values of the responses of the individuals included in the study, the following distribution was used:

From 1 to 1.80 – “*I disagree.*”

From 1.81 to 2.60 – “*I slightly agree.*”

From 2.61 to 3.40 – “*I moderately agree.*”

From 3.41 to 4.20 – “*I strongly agree.*”

From 4.21 to 5.00 – “*I very strongly agree.*”

Subsequently, the following statistical measures were calculated: frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation, *T*-test, Scheffe test, and Pearson and Cronbach's Alpha correlation coefficients.

Review and Analysis of the Study Results:

A. Answer to the First Question:

Table 6: Frequencies, Percentages, and Means in Descending Order of the Contribution of Research Chairs to Scientific Mobility in KSA Universities from the Point of View of the Individuals of the Study


Module A: The Role of Research Chairs in Developing Scientific Research in KSA Universities

No.	Statement		High	Medium	Low	Not Present	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
	<i>Research chairs:</i>								
1	Observe the research needs of the university staff	T	8	18	5	--	3.10	0.65	7
		%	26	58	16	--			
2	Meet the urgent research needs in the university	T	10	14	6	--	3.13	0.73	5
		%	32	45	19	--			
3	Urge university staff to participate in preparing scientific research	T	10	10	10	1	2.94	0.89	14
		%	32	32	32	3			
4	Communicate with university staff when announcing funded research	T	8	12	10	1	2.87	0.85	18
		%	26	38	32	3			
5	Contribute to developing the research skills of university staff	T	10	12	8	-	3.07	0.79	10
		%	32	38	26	-			
6	Provide opportunities for cooperation between university staff and research centers and expertise outside the KSA	T	11	12	8	-	3.10	0.79	9
		%	36	38	26	-			
7	Provide the necessary financial resources for researchers inside the KSA	T	8	10	11	2	2.77	0.92	24
		%	26	32	36	7			

No.	Statement		High	Medium	Low	Not Present	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
	<i>Research chairs:</i>								
8	Provide the necessary human resources for researchers inside the KSA	T	9	9	10	2	2.83	0.95	20
		%	29	29	32	7			
9	Honor distinguished researchers who have good contribution to scientific research	T	8	11	8	3	2.80	0.96	22
		%	26	36	26	10			
10	Provide care for distinguished students from various countries in graduate studies programs that serve the chair's field of specialization	T	8	10	11	2	2.77	0.92	23
		%	26	32	36	7			
11	Contribute to achieving a distinguished scientific status for the university at the international level	T	16	11	3	1	3.35	0.90	1
		%	52	36	10	3			
12	Strengthen societal partnership in the field of research between the university and the various institutions of society	T	15	10	4	2	3.23	0.92	2
		%	48	32	13	7			
13	Encourage graduate students to channel their research to issues related to the specialization of the chair	T	7	11	11	2	2.74	0.89	25
		%	23	36	36	7			
14	Attract competent researchers from various international research centers to cooperate with them	T	12	12	7	-	3.16	0.78	4
		%	39	39	23	-			

No.	Statement		High	Medium	Low	Not Present	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
	<i>Research chairs:</i>								
15	Contribute to the development of graduate studies programs so as to achieve the research requirements of society	T	6	8	14	3	2.55	0.93	29
		%	19	26	45	10			
16	Direct scientific research at the university towards achieving knowledge-based economy	T	7	10	13	1	2.74	0.86	26
		%	23	32	42	3			
17	Link university research outputs to the needs of society	T	7	14	6	2	2.90	0.86	16
		%	23	45	19	7			
18	Approve scientific research after being refereed by specialists in the field	T	14	8	7	2	3.10	0.98	8
		%	52	26	23	7			
19	Cooperate with the best-known scientific journals for publishing the research funded by the chair	T	8	14	4	4	2.87	0.97	19
		%	26	52	13	13			
20	Contribute to confirming the university's role in establishing the knowledge society	T	13	13	2	3	3.16	0.93	3
		%	42	42	7	10			
21	Contribute to adopting and localizing modern technology and new knowledge at the university	T	10	15	3	3	3.03	0.91	12
		%	32	48	10	10			
22	Contribute to developing and improving scientific research methods	T	10	14	6	1	3.06	0.81	11
		%	32	45	19	3			


No.	Statement		High	Medium	Low	Not Present	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
	<i>Research chairs:</i>								
23	Contribute to making information and knowledge available through traditional and modern sources (paper libraries, digital libraries, etc.)	T	8	12	10	-	2.93	0.79	15
		%	26	39	32	-			
24	Inform researchers of all research projects sponsored by the chair	T	5	8	18	-	2.58	0.77	28
		%	16	26	58	-			
25	Inform researchers of the rules and conditions regulating supporting research funded by the chair	T	6	14	10	1	2.81	0.79	21
		%	19	45	32	3			
26	Remove all the obstacles that researchers face during conducting their research	T	4	13	13	1	2.65	0.76	27
		%	13	42	42	3			
27	Publish research papers in all paper and electronic forms	T	11	14	5	1	3.13	0.81	6
		%	36	45	16	3			
28	Provide researchers inside the university with all topics and issues that can be researched and studied	T	7	14	9	1	2.87	0.81	17
		%	23	45	29	3			
29	Encourage innovation, creativity, and development in various disciplines of knowledge	T	8	15	6	2	2.94	0.85	13
		%	7	14	6	2			
Axis General Mean							2.93		



As indicated in Table 6, which includes the statements of the first axis of the questionnaire, i.e. the contribution of research chairs to the development of scientific research at universities, the mean values of the statements ranged between (3.30) and (2.55). Such values lie between the two choices “I moderately agree” and “I slightly agree.” His result indicates that the level of research chairs contribution to the development of scientific research at the university is less than what is expected. It could be due to being a new experience which needs a well set quality management system with clearly defined quality standards.

Some statements occupied high positions, namely, statements 11, 12, 20, and 14. When considering these statements, it could be noted that they are related to achieving scientific distinction at the international level in the first place and then at the local level. Paying attention to the international level is one of the main concerns in the University vision, mission, and goals. The statement that occupied the first position, which is statement 11, directly and clearly highlights the goal of universality. It reads “Research chairs contribute to achieving a distinguished scientific status for the university at the international level.” The same applies to statement 14, which reads “Research chairs attract competent researchers from various international research centers to cooperate with them.” With regard to statements 12 and 20, they are concerned with achieving distinction in serving the local society.


These results reflect the extent of the attention paid by the university to attaining excellence and distinction at the international level in the field of research, as well as serving and performing its developmental role in the local society. They also reflect another concern of the university, which is contributing to forming the knowledge society, as indicated by the responses to statement 20, which reads “Research chairs contribute to confirming the university’s role in establishing the



knowledge society.” However, the response to statement 16 (“Research chairs direct scientific research at the university towards achieving knowledge-based economy”), with a mean value of 2.74, weakens the result of statement 20, because employing knowledge to achieve returns is one of the most important elements in knowledge management. Hence, it can be argued that the contribution of research chairs to the employment of knowledge and realization of the knowledge economy was not up to the expected level.

With regard to the contributions in favor of university staff members, they are represented by statements 4, 5, 7, 8, 19, 24, 25, 26, and 28, and they had the same mean values as the statements related to distinction at the international level. Statement 24 (“Research chairs inform researchers of all research projects sponsored by the chair”) had the mean value of 2.58. Similarly, statement 26 (“Research chairs remove all the obstacles that researchers face during conducting their research”) had the mean value of 2.65, which lies within the range of “I moderately agree,” but presented the lowest mean value in this range. Such results indicate that the contribution of research chairs to developing scientific research for the university staff members is, from the viewpoint of the heads of academic departments, not up to the expected level and does not reflect the degree of scientific mobility established in the university.

Concerning the research chairs’ contribution to developing scientific research at the graduate studies level, it was noted that the mean values of statements 10 and 13 lie within the range of “I moderately agree.” Statement 10 (“Research chairs provide care for distinguished students from various countries in graduate studies programs that serve the chair’s field of specialization”) had the mean value of 2.77. Statement 13 (“Research chairs encourage graduate students to channel their research to issues related to the specialization of the chair”) had the mean



value of 2.74. Although such mean values lie within the range of the “I moderately agree” category, they are still among the medium values in this range and are closer to the “I slightly agree” category. This indicates that there is little attention paid by research chair management to graduate students, whose programs are supposed to focus on developing their research potentials, and who are supposed to benefit from and contribute to the research activities of such chairs. In his speech to the Research Chair Program of King Saud University (2008), the Minister of Higher Education stressed that the main research chair goal is to develop the research abilities of faculty staff members and graduate students. In this context, he said:

Scientific research chairs represent one of the major components of academic research at university, not only in terms of the funding provided by the research chair, but also in terms of attracting distinguished scholars who can contribute to human knowledge and talented students at the graduate level. Research chairs also provide them with the appropriate and encouraging academic environment that enables them to keep abreast of various technological and scientific findings and use them for the service of development. (Research Chair Website, King Saud University, 2008)

Statement 15 (“Research chairs contribute to the development of graduate studies programs so as to achieve the research requirements of society”) occupied the lowest rank, with a mean value of 2.55, which falls within the range of the “I slightly agree” category. This indicates that graduate studies programs suffer from stagnation and are far from being positively affected by the new changes that occurred in the university policy and activities, including research chairs, in spite of the fact that one of the objectives of the Research Chair Program in King Saud University, as stated in the Program’s bulletin, is “Supervising doctoral

and master dissertations and developing new courses lying within the fields of specialization of the research chair” (Research Chair Website, King Saud University, 2008).

Another point indicated by the findings presented in Table 6 is that the mean values in the module of “Research Chairs Contribution to Developing Scientific Research” do not reach above the degree of “I slightly agree.” This could be attributed to the relative insufficiency of the evaluation methods and the decency of the university’s research chair experience. The concentration of the university on the international level had a negative impact on the contribution of the research chairs to the scientific mobility at the university level.

Table 7: Frequencies, Percentages, and Means in Descending Order of the Contribution of Research Chairs to Scientific Mobility in KSA Universities from the Point of View of the Individuals of the Study

Axis B: The Role of Research Chairs in Developing Scientific Meetings in KSA University

No.	Statement		High	Medium	Low	Not Present	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
	<i>Research chairs:</i>								
1	Specify the kind of scientific meetings needed by university staff members in various disciplines	T	7	19	5	-	3.06	0.63	6
		%	23	61	16	-			
2	Provide financial support to scientific meetings held by the research chair	T	12	11	7	1	3.10	0.65	5
		%	39	36	23	3			
3	Select distinguished speakers and trainers when holding scientific meetings	T	13	14	4	-	3.29	0.69	2
		%	42	45	13	-			
4	Enable university staff to benefit from	T	8	17	6	-	3.06	0.68	10
		%	26	55	19	-			

No.	Statement		High	Medium	Low	Not Present	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
	<i>Research chairs:</i>								
	experts and consultants in various fields of specialization								
5	Contribute to the development of university staff skills in academic meeting organization	T	9	14	8	-	3.0 3	0.75	13
		%	29	45	26	-			
6	Contribute to the dissemination of specialized knowledge and culture among university staff members	T	9	15	6	1	3.0 3	0.80	12
		%	29	48	19	3			
7	Help communicate the results of research and studies in various disciplines to the university staff	T	9	10	10	2	2.8 4	0.93	16
		%	29	32	32	7			
8	Provide consultation, advice, and appropriate information to the university staff members when they perform a given task or try to solve a given problem	T	6	15	7	3	2.7 7	0.88	17
		%	19	48	23	10			
9	Suggest appropriate topics for the meetings they organize that meet the needs and interests of the university staff	T	11	13	5	2	3.0 6	0.89	8
		%	36	42	16	7			
10	Select the convenient place for holding scientific	T	16	8	5	2	3.2 3	0.96	4
		%	52	26	16	7			


No.	Statement		High	Medium	Low	Not Present	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
	<i>Research chairs:</i>								
	meetings so that university staff members can easily attend and participate in the meeting								
11	Provide good management of all scientific meetings organized by the research chair	T	10	13	7	1	3.0	0.84	14
		%	32	42	23	3	3		
12	Make available the abstracts of each academic meetings for all the university staff members	T	7	18	4	1	3.0	0.72	11
		%	23	28	13	3	3		
13	Provide all financial resources for holding scientific meetings	T	9	17	3	2	3.0	0.81	7
		%	29	55	10	7	6		
14	Provide all human resources for holding scientific meetings	T	9	17	3	2	3.0	0.81	9
		%	29	55	10	7	6		
15	Cooperate with international centers and bodies in organizing and holding scientific meetings	T	15	11	5	-	3.3	0.75	1
		%	48	36	16	-	2		
16	Invite specialists and researchers to attend scientific meetings that the chairs hold inside the university	T	15	8	8	-	3.2	0.85	3
		%	48	26	26	-	3		
17	Offer the opportunity for university staff members to choose the topics of scientific meetings	T	5	12	12	2	2.6	0.84	18
		%	16	39	39	7	5		
18	Involve university	T	8	15	5	2	2.9	0.85	15

No.	Statement	High	Medium	Low	Not Present	Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
	<i>Research chairs:</i>							
	staff members in managing the scientific meetings held by the chair	%				7		
Axis General Mean						3.04		

Table 7 shows the responses to the second axis of the questionnaire, namely, “The Role of Research Chairs in Developing Scientific Meetings in KSA Universities.” It can be observed that all the statements in this module had mean values between 2.22 and 2.65, which fall within the medium range (“I moderately agree”). This result could be related to the fact that fifteen 15 statements out of eighteen statements 18 in this axis are about the local level, and only 3 statements 3 are about the international level.

The statements that occupied the highest position in this Axis are statements 15, 3, and 16, respectively. These statements read as follows: “Research chairs cooperate with international centers and bodies in organizing and holding scientific meetings” (statement 15); “Research chairs select distinguished speakers and trainers when holding scientific meetings” (statement 3); and “Research chairs invite specialists and researchers to attend scientific meetings that the chairs hold inside the university” (statement 16). They are also related to attaining a high position at the international level. Such results indicate that attaining distinction at the international level is one of the priorities of the university, which reflects the vision, mission, and goals of the university that focus on this aspect.

It is also observed from the results of this Axis that the contribution of research chairs to developing scientific meeting for the



university staff was within the medium range (“I moderately agree”). Among the statements related to this point were statements 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 17, and 18. The mean values of these statements ranged between 3.06 and 2.65. It could be further noticed that the mean values of some of these statements were closer to the lower category “I slightly agree.” Statements 17, 8, and 7 had the mean values of 2.84, 2.77, and 2.65, respectively.

The statements read as follows: “Research chairs offer the opportunity for university staff members to choose the topics of scientific meetings” (statement 17); “Research chairs provide consultation, advice, and appropriate information to the university staff members when they perform a given task or try to solve a given problem” (statement 8); and “Research chairs help communicate the results of research and studies in various disciplines to the university staff” (statement 7).

These results indicate lack of interest in activating the role of research chairs in development at the university level, especially with reference to the university staff members. The significance of this point is further stressed by the fact that the above-mentioned statements pertain to one of the important mechanisms for the dissemination and circulation of knowledge among university scholars and researchers. It can generally be said that the statements of this Axis are strongly associated with the importation, generation, assessment, circulation, and publication of knowledge. However, the contribution of research chairs in this important respect was not up to the ambitions stated in the University’s vision, mission, and goals.

In general, these results about the research chairs to the scientific mobility at the university either in research production or in scientific meetings organization, could be related to some factors as:

- More attention is paid to the international level than to the university and local level.
- the fact that the university gives the private sector donators who funds the research chairs, the right to decide the area of specialization which mostly does not fit in the research priority list of the university (Al-Athl's study, 2012).

B. Answer to the Second Question

Table 8: Results of Variance Tests for Responses of the Individuals included in the Study that are Attributable to Academic Specialization

Module	Specialization	No	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	T-value	Statistical Significance
Total	Humanities	17	141.29	28.91	0.492	0.626
	Natural Sciences	14	136.35	26.32		
Contributing to the development of scientific research	Humanities	17	85.529	17.54	0.376	0.710
	Natural Sciences	14	83.07	18.77		
Contributing to the development and improvement of scientific meetings	Humanities	17	55.76	11.84	0.608	0.548
	Natural Sciences	14	53.28	10.58		

Table 9: Results of Variance Tests for Responses of the Individuals included in the Study that are Attributable to the Variable of Participating in Any of the Chair's Activities

Module	Participation	No.	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	T-value	Statistical Significance
Total	Participated	11	145.54	20.44	0.975	0.338
	Has not participated	20	135.50	30.50		
Contributing to the development of scientific research	Participated	11	88.00	13.22	0.824	0.417
	Has not participated	20	82.45	19.98		
Contributing to the development and improvement of scientific meetings	Participated	11	57.54	8.38	1.074	0.292
	Has not participated	20	53.05	12.35		

Table 10: Results of Variance Tests for Responses of the Individuals included in the Study that are Attributable to the Variable of Association of the Chair with Academic Department


Module	Association	No.	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	T-value	Statistical Significance
Total	Associated	17	133.94	24.65	-1.152	0.259
	Not Associated	14	145.28	30.19		
Contributing to the development of scientific research	Associated	17	80.05	16.75	-1.532	0.136
	Not Associated	14	89.71	18.29	-	
Contributing to the development and improvement of scientific meetings	Associated	17	53.88	9.58	-0.413	0.683
	Not Associated	14	55.57	13.17	-	

The results of Tables 8, 9, and 10 indicate that there no statistically significant differences among the responses of the individuals of the study that can be attributed to the variables of the study: college specialization (humanities/social sciences), participation in chair activities (has/has not participated), and association of academic department with research chair (associated/not associated). This result, i.e. lack of statistically significant variance, is at the level of the tool as a whole as well as at the level of the two axes of the questionnaire (developing scientific research and developing scientific meetings). This result may be attributed to the fact that all the heads of the academic departments are members in their college councils, and, therefore, are all well-informed of the activities of the research chairs.

Recommendations of the Study:

In light of the results of the study, the researchers propose the following recommendations:

1. Attracting distinguished international research experts to participate in research chairs for longer periods of time;



2. Supporting and confirming interaction through co-researching, communication, and scientific meetings sponsored by research chairs between international research experts and university staff members and scholars;

3. Providing the university staff with appropriate infrastructure and environment that enable them to actively participate in the research activities and scientific meetings organized by research chairs, including amenities and support services at the academic departments and chair sites;

4. Providing care to distinguished graduate students from all over the world and linking their activities to the specializations of the research chairs;

5. Encouraging Saudi graduate students to participate in research chair activities and benefit from national and international research experts;

6. Adopting curricula in graduate studies programs that are associated with the specializations of the research chairs concerned;

7. Focusing on circulating and publishing the proceedings of research chairs, such as research papers and conferences, both in the academic and local community.

8. Paying more attention to the process of evaluating the activities and outputs of research chairs, combining between internal and external independent evaluation.

9. Increasing the financial support to sustain the continuity quality of the research chairs program.

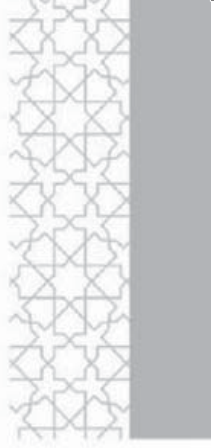
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Activating the Funding and Management of University Scientific
Research Projects at Al-Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University

A Case Study

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Abstract:

The study aimed to identify the reality and the problems of the experience of the program of funding research projects at Al-Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in order to review it, and shed light on its findings and on the estimated efforts of the university administration to make it successful. This was done through an attempt to monitor the situation and identify existing problems, thus contributing to the development of research funding projects program, and contributing to improve the quality of research, and achieve benefit from them in various fields of development, both at the university and in society. The study has highlighted the contemporary trends in the funding and management of scientific research projects, and the reality of funding and management of university scientific research projects of Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University at the quantitative and qualitative level, and highlighted the administrative problems faced by the beneficiaries of the program funding research projects at the university.

The most important findings of the study are that financial problems come on top of the problems as a whole, followed by procedural problems and then arbitration and communication problems. The study also provides a proposal of a vision to activate the funding and management of scientific research projects at the university in the framework of the most prominent contemporary trends for the funding and management of scientific research projects. The suggested proposal is based on a number of procedures including, most importantly: the development of the organizational structure of the management of research funding program projects; a restructuring of the standing committee to finance research projects; developing research centers and units in colleges at the university and activating their role in participating in the administration of scientific research projects; developing some managerial processes, such as arbitration, communication, motivation, quality and competitiveness; further, developing procedures and forms for program funding research projects and developing techniques used in program funding research projects.