

Foreword

Welcome

أهلاً وسهلاً

The British Education Act of 1876 for the first time required parents to ensure that their children were taught reading, writing and arithmetic (the "3 Rs"). Introducing it, the then Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, said: "upon the Education of the people, the fate of this country depends". Over 120 years later, Prime Minister Tony Blair said that his top three priorities in government were "education, education, education".

In Saudi Arabia, too, the importance given to education goes back to the foundation of the Kingdom, and to the introduction of formal primary education in the 1930s. King Abdullah has said that "we consider youth as the most important of all our issues as they represent the future of our country".

Both our countries know that education is what enables us to compete, survive and prosper in an increasingly competitive and globalised world. Education for all, to enable everyone to live fulfilling and productive lives. Sir Digby Jones, Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry, has said "High skill levels are the greatest protection that any of us can have from the challenges of globalisation". In Britain for example, by 2020 two thirds of jobs will require workers with higher level qualifications, that is workers qualified at technician level and above. About half our jobs will be in occupations demanding university graduates.

This is a daunting challenge. But I'm pleased to say that, as in so much else, it's one on which Britain and Saudi Arabia are working together. There are three thousand Saudi students at British universities and colleges; and eight thousand more on part-time or language courses. Other examples of co-operation include: the agreement between King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah and 20 UK universities on joint supervision of women doctoral students; technical co-operation between the UK Quality Assessment Authority and our Higher Education Statistics Authority, and their Saudi counterparts, on standards, statistics and bench-marking; the recent agreement between Oxford and Prince Sultan Universities on exchanges of students and faculty; and a dramatic increase in funding for the advanced study of the Arab world at British universities.

During his recent visit to the Kingdom, his third in three years, HRH The Prince of Wales saw for himself some of this co-operation at work. At the Imam Muhammad University, he met British students at the University, and Saudis who had studied in the UK. And at GOTEVOT, he saw vocational training in action, developed in part with the British Council.

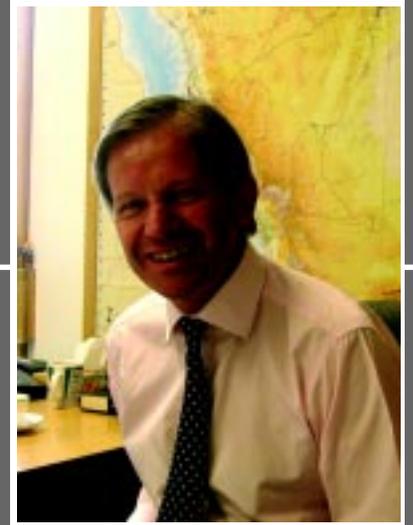
We want to do even more. That's why, with the agreement of Prime Minister Blair and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the British Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell, recently visited the Kingdom with a high level delegation of British educationalists. A report of his visit is published later in the magazine. I know he was impressed by what he saw: the high standards of Saudi educational establishments; the new resources being devoted to education, and the energy and commitment of the Saudis he met.

We hope more Saudis will benefit from the UK's experience and expertise. Our Embassy is here to help: over 90% of Saudis applying for a visa receive it on the day they apply. The British Council offices across the Kingdom offer support and advice.

The links we are building between individuals in both countries, and the greater knowledge and understanding they will have of each other as a result, will build the foundations on which our long friendship will continue to flourish. For education is a life-long investment: **أطلبوا العلم من المهد إلى اللحد**
(demand knowledge from the cradle to the grave)



Sherard Cowper-Coles, British Ambassador



Kingdom to Kingdom
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