Candidate: Khalifah Albalawi
For the degree of: Doctor of Philosophy
Department: Educational Leadership, Research and Technology
Title: Examining the Existence and Importance of Ten Skills for Successful School Leaders from Saudi Principals’ Perspectives
Committee: Dr. Joseph Kretovics, Chair
Dr. Nancy Mansberger
Dr. David Hartmann
Time/Place: Monday, November 23, 2015
1 to 3 p.m.
3120 Sangren Hall

In 2011, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Saudi Arabia decided to reform the educational system to improve school performance especially student achievement. MOE has realized the importance of developing school leadership to lead the process of change focusing on principals as change agents. The new MOE vision places principals at the center of the education reform initiatives. As a result of the implementation of the new vision, principals are expected to play different roles and must improve their leadership capacities to successfully lead reform efforts. The new expectations for principals in order to lead the process of change, established by MOE, include: a) building a vision concentrates on student education and learning, b) developing the process of education and learning, c) managing the process of change according to a scientific methodology, d) employing communication skills with all stakeholders, and e) fostering a creative and innovative environment to develop learning communities.

In order to meet these expectations, principals in Saudi Arabia first need to examine their current leadership capacities based on a validated leadership assessment. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) developed a framework called Ten Skills for Successful School Leaders that provides such a validated assessment. NASSP (2014) considers understanding and examining leaders’ personal
capacities is a prerequisite for effective change. The NASSP framework closely matches the new MOE vision and expectations and, therefore, is used to guide this study. Moreover, the NASSP framework provides school leaders with a self-assessment to identify the leadership skills required to be successful 21st-century leaders. Consequently, this study seeks to determine the degree to which Saudi principals believe they currently use the Ten Leadership Skills and their perceptions of the importance of these skills to successfully lead the process of school change.

In this study, a descriptive survey research is conducted to obtain data relevant to the perceived existence and importance of the Ten Skills for Successful School Leaders from Saudi principals’ perspectives. A Web-based survey is used to collect the perspectives of public school principals from the Tabuk state in Saudi Arabia. The findings from this study indicate that Saudi principals perceive frequently using NASSP Ten Skills ranging from high to moderate perceptions. Principals perceive that they use written communication, teamwork, and oral communication skills in their work more than other skills. Further, findings indicate that Saudi principals believe all skills are highly important for leading and facilitating the process of change. Principals rate the ability to understand their own strength and weakness, teamwork, and oral communication skills as the most important skills required for successful school leaders. Finally, there is a positive linear relationship between the use and importance of the Ten Skills. Suggestions for policy, practice and future research are offered in this study.