

## Person Centered Planning in Saudi Schools: An Arabic Model

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### Abstract

The Planning Alternative Tomorrow with Hope (PATH) model is a strategy to promote person centered planning through collaboration among stakeholders. This approach has been successfully implemented in the United States and holds promise for other nations as well. As Saudi Arabia has increased programs for individuals with disabilities, the need for increased communication between families and educators has become evident. The components of the PATH model and the goals of the Prince Salman Center for Disability Research are in close alignment, suggesting that the PATH model is a viable method to address this objective in the Kingdom. This article provides an overview of Saudi's special education provision, introduces the PATH model as one tool that is specifically useful as students move from school to adult life, and introduces a translation of the PATH model into Arabic. Career counselors and educators can use the PATH model to clarify understanding of career goals and dreams for their students through shared collaboration and communication.

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**Keywords:** Person Centered Planning, Career Development, Inclusion, Special Education, Self-Determination

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### INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia's education system has undergone many transformations since its establishment in 1932 (Alquraini, 2011). As the country has progressed, policy has followed, mandating that a free education be available to all citizens. According to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2019), "the Saudi educational system aims to ensure that students are prepared for life and work in the modern world, while meeting the country's religious, social and economic needs" (para.10). The Saudi Ministry of Education has established policies and goals that address the needs of individuals with disabilities, including enrolling all Saudi children of primary school age; overseeing and enabling special education services to persons with disabilities; working on early detection of disabilities, publishing information about working with this population; and working towards initiating specialized library services (The Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019).

Despite these policies and goals concerns exist regarding efficacy and effectiveness of implementation, particularly in relation to communication between school personnel and the families of children with disabilities (Al-Qarni, 2010; Al-Shammary, 2018). The importance of Saudi educators and families having access to established practices designed for success within their educational framework cannot be overstated. Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) is one of several person centered planning processes that promote self-determination and family involvement and has been effectively used in the United States to support transition planning for students moving from secondary school to adulthood

for many years (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak & Shogren, 2015). In this article, we present (a) a general overview of Saudi special education history and current practices; (b) a rationale for increased collaboration between Saudi families and schools; and (c) an introduction to the PATH model translated for Saudi practitioners.

### Overview of Saudi History and Current Practices/Needs in Special Education

Within Saudi Arabia, the historical timeline of special education services parallels many countries in that services for individuals with disabilities was often overlooked until advocates stepped forward to fight for greater opportunities for this population. For example, Al-Mousa (1999) described the efforts of an educator in 1958, who introduced the Braille system to a few students with blindness who attended a regular school. These individuals mastered the Braille system and began teaching other public school students how to use Braille in the evenings outside of the regular school session. Thus, students with blindness learned how to read and write using Braille prior to centralized efforts in Saudi Arabia to extend educational services to greater numbers of students. In 1960, the first institute (Al-Noor) for persons with blindness was established in Riyadh, which further promoted the provision of special education services (Al-Mousa, 2010).

The Saudi Government soon recognized the need for a central agency and established the Department of Special Education within the Ministry of Education in 1962 to be responsible for special education services; thus, the Ministry of Education created three Educational Administrations for students with

Blindness, Deafness, and Intellectual Disabilities (Alsloom, 1995). By 1962 to 1973, there was a significant movement toward provision of education services to students with Blindness, Deafness, and Intellectual disabilities. The department established Al-Noor institutions in six cities for males and one for females across the country. Furthermore, the department established two institutions for individuals with deafness and intellectual disabilities for both males and females in Riyadh and Jeddah (General Directorate of Special Education (GRSE), 2019). In 2006, the Ministry of Education changed the name of this department to be the GRSE and expanded its responsibility for all school age students with special needs (GRSE, 2019). These seminal efforts represent some of the earliest special education services in the Kingdom.

The “Legislation of the Disabled” was introduced in 1987. This foundational statute represents the first piece of legislation in Saudi Arabia which states that individuals with disabilities have rights that are equal to those of other members of society. The law included definitions and descriptions of disabilities, intervention methods, and eligibility criteria. Additionally, this law addressed educational, rehabilitation, and training components to ensure that services are provided by highly qualified educators (Alquraini, 2011; Al-Jadid, 2013).

In 1993, the Disabled Children’s Association held its first conference. This conference recommended creating a new inclusive code to cover all sectors of disabilities in Saudi Arabia. Based on this recommendation a Supreme Council was established in 1997 to create an inclusive code for disabilities. With this impetus, the committee provided the new Provision Code for Persons with Disability (PCPD) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, 2000).

As efforts to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities gained traction, King Saud University established the Special Education Department within their College of Education in 1984. Its purpose was to educate and train special educators to staff programs to meet the specific needs of individuals with disabilities in public school settings. Since that time, most of the universities in Saudi have created Special Education Departments. Today there are 24 public universities that have Special Education Departments, which includes male and female universities (Ministry of Education, 2019)

With global emergence of the inclusion philosophy, the recognition of the rights for students with disabilities and a push to include them throughout school settings emerged in Saudi Arabia around 1995 (Al-Mousa, 1999). In 2000, the government enacted the PCPD, which guarantees habilitation and welfare,

as well as free medical, education and vocational services for all individuals with disabilities and their families (Gulf Legislation Network-Royal Decree, M/37, 2008). The Supreme Council is responsible for coordinating with authorities on all affairs that impact individuals with disabilities. Finally, the PCPD modified all pre-existing codes related to disability (Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, 2000) resulting in a unified code addressing the educational needs of individuals with disabilities.

Since the early 2000’s there has been a dramatic increase in the number of regular schools that offer special education programming. Al-Mousa (2010) noted that the number of students with special education needs receiving services in regular education schools now exceeds the number served in special education institutes. Specifically, in the 2006-2007 school year, 93% of males and 73% of females with special education needs were served in regular education schools (Al-Mousa, 2010). For example, the GRSE’s statistics for the school year of 2010-2011 showed that there are approximately 700 (for males) and 253 (for females) regular education programs for student with intellectual disabilities. On the other hand, there are 15 separate institutions for students with intellectual disabilities. Regular school programs for students who are Deaf are reported at 252 for males and 100 for females. In short, there has been a large increase in the number of special education programs in regular schools. In general, there are reportedly around 4,841 programs and institutions providing services to 63,461 students with disabilities (Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, 2015).

Regarding the impact of increased programs, many of which were inclusive, on academic outcomes, Al-Mousa, Al-Saratawi, Al-Abduljabbar, Al Battal, and Al Hussain (2008) conducted a national study to evaluate the inclusion movement in public schools in Saudi Arabia. They found that more than 80% of the participants stated that the special education programs in schools had appropriate location, reasonable size, reasonable supplies, and the reasonable usage of these supplies. Moreover, school personnel, administrators, teachers and students had a great collaboration and communication with each other. In general, students with intellectual disabilities scored higher on math, reading, and adoptive behavior than their peers in the institutions. High school students with deafness in the regular schools scored higher on the reading assessment than their peers in institutions for blindness. In contrast, students with blindness in special programs earned higher scores on reading and math than their peers in institutions. In addition, students with autism did not differ much from their peers in institutions in terms of reading and math. However, they scored higher on adaptive behavior compared to their peers in

segregated institutions. Perhaps due to findings such as these, the inclusion movement in Saudi has received wide-spread support from legislative bodies (i.e., government agencies) in terms of supportive statutes and regulations. Specifically, the Ministry of Education oversees all aspects of the education of students with disabilities. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs provides additional services and supports.

### **Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs**

The importance of the Ministry of Education centers lies in the fact that they provide many services related to special education, starting with the education of young children and ending with the transition to adulthood. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs has a close relationship with special education in terms of providing a variety of different supplies, vocational education, and services for adult living and childhood (Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, 2019). The provision of services is divided between the two ministries as they work together to further the education and life experiences of individuals with disabilities.

**Ministry of Education.** Following the passage of the Disability Code, the Ministry of Education, represented by the GRSE, described its duties in the Disability Code by publishing the Document of Rules and Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RRSEPI; Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, 2019). These regulations were formulated and adopted after a thorough review of special education legislation and policies created in the United States of America. Specifically, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990) provided a guiding framework for the RRSEPI and educational programs in Saudi Arabia.

Representatives from the Ministry of Education and the Department of Special Education at King Saud University reviewed and modeled these policies to establish special education services in Saudi Arabia (Alquraini, 2011). Specifically, the Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing the regulations that address the rights and services of students with disabilities throughout the nation. This regulation entitles all students with disabilities to a free public education. Furthermore, it also requires provision of a meaningful education and proper assessments (e.g., unbiased) from qualified education professionals (Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, 2019).

**Ministry of Social Affairs.** In 2001, The Ministry of Social Affairs clarified its role in the PCPD when it assumed responsibility for planning, supervision, and follow-up for all the services offered to individuals

with disabilities. It is responsible for supporting individuals with disabilities so that they can achieve the maximum possible degree of functional efficiency to enable them to become independent and productive members of society (Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, 2019). The Ministry relies on strong legislative provisions to achieve these goals. To meet these goals, the Ministry created an agency, the General Directorate of Care and Rehabilitation of Individuals with Disabilities, to carry out these duties. The aim of this agency is to supply integrative rehabilitation and social services to persons with disabilities (e.g., shelter, rehabilitative, vocational, subsidy services).

**Current Status of Services.** While mainstreaming represents a relatively new effort for the Kingdom, since 1995, the movement has resulted in qualitative differences to the provision of services for students with disabilities. First, there has been distinct growth in the numbers of individuals with disabilities served in regular education school, as compared to those served in special education institutes. This increase has expanded the footprint of special education in the Kingdom. No longer are programs merely relegated to densely populated centers, they have now been established in rural areas throughout the country (Alkhashrami, 2004). Additionally, the populations served have increased. Traditionally, individuals with deafness, blindness, and intellectual disabilities have received services (though often in segregated school settings), but over time students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, individuals with autism, and those who are gifted and talented, are increasingly receiving services. In short, educational services are being provided to far more youth in both regular and special education settings than in previous decades (Al-Mousa, 2010).

Increased provision of services has necessitated the need for varying service delivery models to meet the individualized needs of students (e.g., residential schools, day schools, special education programs in regular schools, resource settings, and itinerant models). For example, despite the fact that the Ministry of Education did not establish programs for students in regular schools until the 1995-1996 school year, such programs have spread throughout the Kingdom, resulting in 3,171 programs by the 2006-2007 school year. Additionally, programs for students who are gifted and talented were targeted in the late 1990s to be addressed in two phases, (1) identifying qualified students and, (2) establishing educational programs to meet their needs (Al-Mousa, 2010). Furthermore, these efforts have highlighted the necessity for identifying strategies to best meet the needs of these populations. The overview of the development of special education in Saudi Arabia provides a framework for understanding the positive

changes that have occurred over the years in Saudi Arabia to provide a meaningful education for individuals with disabilities and for assistance with identifying areas that represent potential barriers to providing necessary special education services. While varied programs have emerged to address the education of students with unique learning needs, practices must be identified to address those needs. Alquraini (2011) identified several areas that must be considered as the Kingdom moves forward with providing high quality educational services for individuals with disabilities. These services include improving diagnosis and assessment procedures; developing the IEP by a multidisciplinary team, including more students into general education settings; and examining and improving the curricula. Furthermore, families of individuals with disabilities reported obstacles in accessing information about the rights of individuals with disabilities and other resources (Alotiabi & Al-Saratawi, 2012).

The collaboration between family and school was less than half, especially regarding diagnoses and developing the IEP (Al-Mousa et al., 2008). Similarly, collaboration with families was one of the greatest obstacles in providing appropriate special education services (Abduallah, 2003; Al-Hherz, 2008). Researchers found that around 15% of schools with special education program did not have speech and language or behavioral therapists (Al-Mousa et al., 2008). Moreover, less than 20% of schools did not have visual and hearing supplies, educational tools and resources, and computers (Al-Mousa et al., 2008). Students with disabilities do not go through a comprehensive process of assessment and diagnosis similar to that in the United States. Furthermore, identifying students with intellectual disabilities was based solely on the school psychologist diagnosis apart from the multidisciplinary team (Al-Ajmi, 2006).

Students with disabilities must have appropriate support to ensure their success in the regular education settings. Other considerations include provision of related services and appropriate individualized education plans (IEPs). Strengthening communication between Saudi families and the school system is one way to address many of the current concerns. When parents and educators work together to create education plans (i.e., IEP), students reap the benefits of coordinated services focused on their personalized education.

#### **Rationale for Increased Collaboration between Saudi Families and Schools**

Saudi families face many barriers that inhibit participation in the provision of special education services and planning for their children. For example, Hanafi and Gargiesh (2009) identified the barrier of professional language and jargon used by teachers

during IEP meetings and noted how this type of communication inhibits family involvement. Similarly, Al-Qarni (2010) noted that teachers tended to plan IEP goals without family input, while Al-Shammary (2018) found some families lacked knowledge about the purpose and function of the IEP meeting. He suggested that families need more information and training regarding how to take a more active role in the development of the child's IEP. Furthermore, Saudi parents reported that they are concerned about the future of their children and are willing and poised to actively participate in the IEP planning process (Alhazmi, 2009; Al-Qarni, 2010). With information and training, family members will be more skilled and confident in collaborating with schools and teachers.

Even though the Ministries of Education and Social Affairs in Saudi Arabia have established legislations and regulations that mandate support and services for individuals with disabilities, it is still the responsibility of the schools to work with students with disabilities and their families in a positive way. Indeed, school professionals and families have to share responsibility in locating and accessing available services for their children with disabilities. This shared responsibility becomes more problematic when collaboration between families and schools is infrequent or strained (Abo-Nayyan, 2015).

Although there is some communication and collaboration between schools and families, few of these interactions focus on transition to adult life for students with disabilities. Communication is often limited to topics of academics and occurs in the form of monthly, sometimes daily, written reports and phone calls (Hanafi & Gargiesh, 2009). There is a need for improved communication regarding transition planning and services for students with special education needs in Saudi Arabia. These provisions could be modeled after those that have been established in the United States of America. Transition services in the United States are defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA (2004) as:

*a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional academic achievement of a child with a disability to facilitate achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes instruction, related services,*

*community experiences, the development of employment and other post school adult living objective, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. (20 U.S.C. § 1401 [Sec. 602] [34])*

The IDEA 2006 regulations note that transition services begin at age 16, specifically including “appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills” (§ 300.320 (b)). It is important to recall that transition is more than a single event; it is a coordinated set of procedures designed to facilitate the move into postsecondary options (e.g., postsecondary education, military, living situations) for students with disabilities. To address the legal mandates of IDEA related to transition services, schools typically create detailed plans for individual students that change as the student grows. Plans are designed in this manner because a student at age 16 has different needs than a student who is nearing 21 (Savage, 2005). While parental and student involvement is key components in designing effective transition plans, there are numerous barriers that exist to their collaboration in the process. Their involvement is often impeded by barriers such as lack of knowledge, lack of school support mechanisms, and a disconnect between parental expectations and school beliefs (Martinez, Conroy, & Cerreto, 2012). Incorporating student-centered planning is another important strategy that is often overlooked despite the fact that evidence exists supporting its efficacy (Cobb & Alwell, 2009). Thus, educators must carefully and strategically plan to include parents and students in meaningful ways.

One specific research-based strategy to accomplish the goal of increased parental participation is the Person-Centered Planning (PCP); a process designed to assist individuals with disabilities in making plans for their lives. The model is designed to facilitate collaborative communication among all members of the planning team (Kolb & Griffith, 2012). A specific method based on this strategy that was developed in the U.S. is the PATH model (Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest, 1993). PATH is a tool to help the student with a disability, family members or guardians, teachers, administrators, and agency members to work collaboratively toward a shared vision. This collaborative effort results in a plan for each student that identifies goals, necessary resources, means to achieve goals, and people who can support the student along the way.

### **Person Centered Planning and PATH**

Pearpoint, O’Brien, and Forest (1993) introduced the PATH model as one method of the PCP to effectively facilitate a focused collaborative plan among all stakeholders. PATH and other PCP models have been

successful in the United States (Holburn&Vietze, 2002; Claes et al., 2010) and may hold promise for Saudi as well as they are considered culturally sensitive tools (Callicott, K.J., 2003; Trainor, A.A., 2007).It was found that student achievement improves when educators focus on their specific needs and collaborate with families to address these needs (Meadan, Shelden, Appel, & DeGrazia, 2010; Turnbull et al., 2015). “Person centered planning advances the partnership principles of respect, commitment, equality, and advocacy.” (Turnbull et al., 2015, p. 235).

The eight steps and guiding questions of PATH (Pearpoint et al., 1993; Kolb & Griffith, 2012) include:

1. The Dream: the dream provides direction by exploring the values, ideals, identity, and future possibilities of the focus individual.
2. Sense the Goal: use the dream to sense the goal by looking at possible and positive future outcomes. Participants speak as if the dream is a possible reality by responding to questions such as: what have you done? What has happened?
3. Ground in the Now: describe where the person is now and what is currently happening?
4. Identify People to Enroll: list who you need to ask to help you reach your goals: who will help you access needed resources?
5. Ways to Build Strength: what do you need to get strong and stay strong as you work toward creating what you want in life? What knowledge do you need? What skills do you need to develop? What relationships do you need to maintain?
6. Plan the Next 6 Months: what steps do you have to take in the next six months to sense and work toward the goal, to take action toward what possibilities you want to create, and to identify who will assist in these actions?
7. Plan the Next 3 Months’ Work: to accomplish what you want in the next three months, you will need to take action now, so identify what you will have to do. Be specific and plan who does what, where and when.
8. Commit to the First Step: moving from thinking to action requires commitment to a clear first step. Who will support you in this critical step? How will you ask for their support? PATH members who were enrolled by the student will agree to what they will personally accomplish to support the student in the next month. This also includes identifying who will follow up on the upcoming actions and monthly work.

Figures 1 and 2 depict the PATH process in both English and Arabic. Figure 3 presents the steps listed above, along with guiding questions, as translated in Arabic. The principles of person centered planning help with developing students’ community presence, self-determination, respect, community participation,

and overall competence (O'Brien & O'Brien, 2006). The guiding principles of the PATH process provide a framework within which the process is steered toward the desired outcomes. While it is self-evident that teachers play an important role in the success of inclusive practices, few studies have been conducted to identify the perceptions of Saudi teachers in terms of providing services to individuals with disabilities. While Alquraini (2011) indicated that a small number of investigations have shown negative attitudes toward inclusive practices, far more indicate positive feelings toward the practice. The PATH model can assist with building upon this sentiment as a tool for positive interactions between parents and educators.

## CONCLUSION

The goals of PATH (Pearpoint et al., 1993) and the values of the Prince Salman Center for Disability Research (2019) are in direct alignment with each other. Both focus on a team-building approach, sharing of knowledge and resources, and stress the culture of integrity, professionalism and humanity. The PATH process also helps participants examine

natural supports and resources that are currently available in the community or that can be accessed. The Saudi government offers many resources that provide support, information, and advice to individuals with disabilities, their families, and education professionals (see Table 1). Nonetheless, despite the existence of a particular resource, an inability to access it can derail providing appropriate services. It is our hope that by providing the PATH model in Arabic, Saudi practitioners will find this tool more accessible and easier to share with students and their families. Questions regarding the effectiveness of the PATH model in Saudi culture and its impact on student outcomes remain unanswered until the practice is adopted and data on implementation and outcomes are gathered and analyzed. Future research in this area might include studies related to implementation of the model, necessary adaptations to the original model, as well as its impact on different student populations (e.g., by disability, gender, or both). Once implemented the model can be refined based on the valuable feedback provided by practitioners and families who pilot it in Saudi Arabia.

Table 1  
Sample Resources for Families and Professionals

Resource	Website
Ministry of Education: provides information regarding aspects of the ministry's duties	<a href="http://www.moe.gov.sa">http://www.moe.gov.sa</a>
Ministry of Labor and Social Development: provides information about the Ministry's role and where to obtain services and provides contact information for rehabilitation centers	<a href="https://mlsd.gov.sa/en/node">https://mlsd.gov.sa/en/node</a>
Ministry of Health: provides varied range of e-services for citizens; provides information about medicine, health, and disease prevention; provides comprehensive hospital directory and feedback tool for citizens	<a href="http://moh.gov.sa">http://moh.gov.sa</a>
Prince Salman Center for Disability Research: provides listing of rights and psychological and social supports for individuals with disabilities and provides information about training opportunities for special educators	<a href="http://www.pscdr.org.sa">http://www.pscdr.org.sa</a>
Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Humanitarian City: provides information about disabilities and rehabilitation services, helps patients with scheduling appointments and identifying appropriate medical practitioners, and provides educational workshops	<a href="https://humanitariancity.org.sa/ar-sa/Pages/default.aspx">https://humanitariancity.org.sa/ar-sa/Pages/default.aspx</a>
Gulf Kids: provides information regarding disability categories, preventions and interventions, research, books, and conferences	<a href="http://gulfkids.com">http://gulfkids.com</a>

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Figure 1. PATH Model

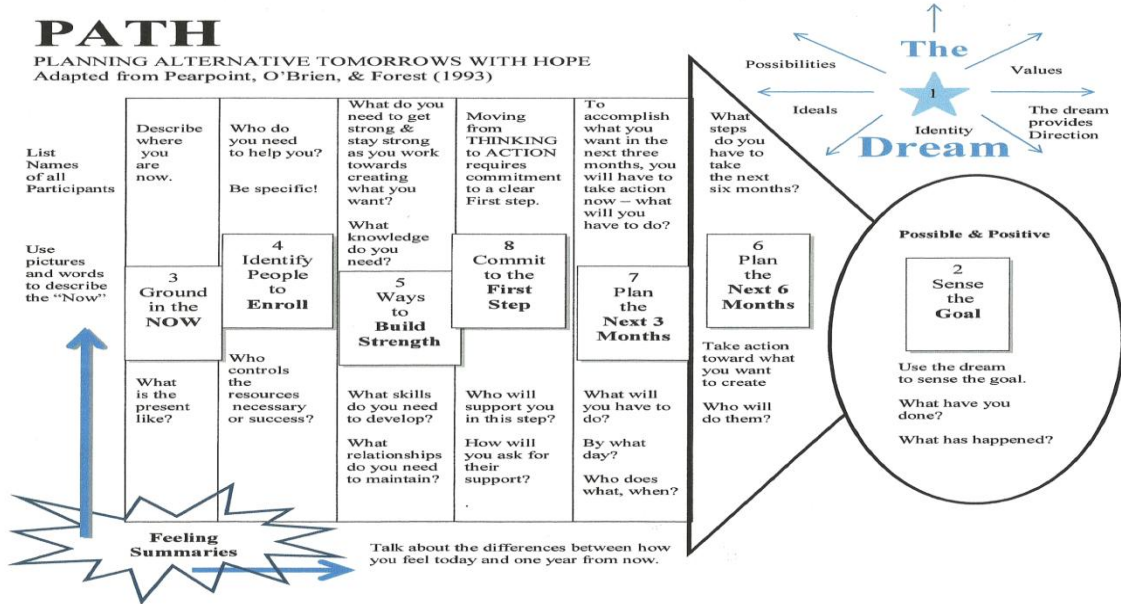


Figure 2. Arabic PATH Model

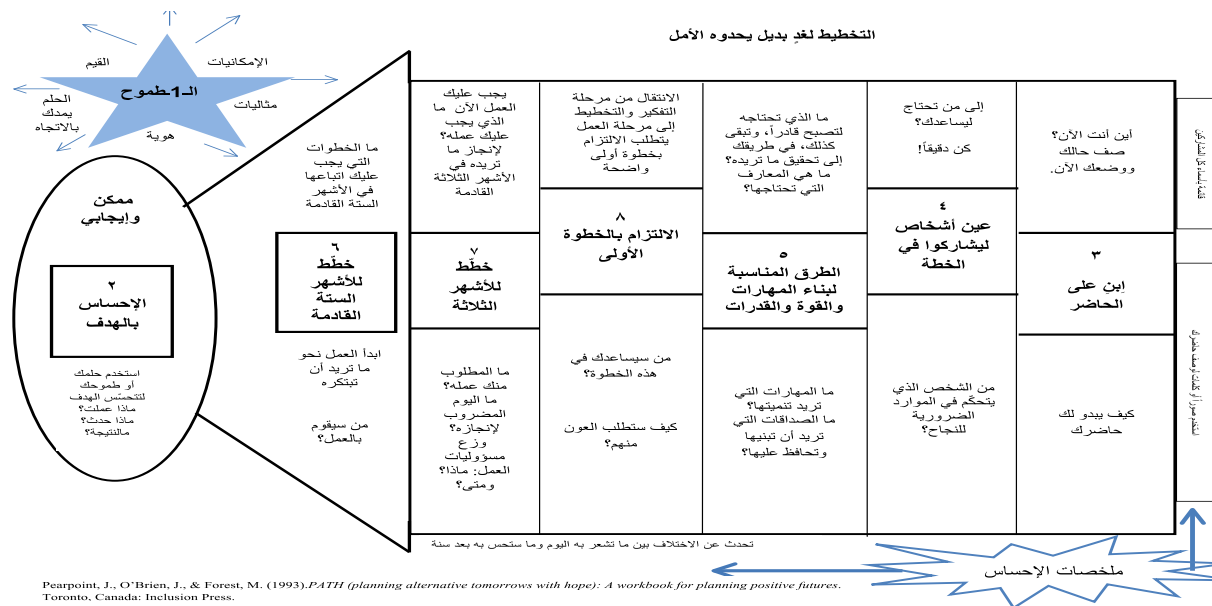


Figure 3. Arabic PATH Guide

- التخطيط لغير بحدوده الأمل**
- 1- الحلم: ما هو حلمك وطموحك؟ ارمس طريقك من خلال التفكير بيقمك و هويتك ومبادئك ومستقبلك.
  - 2- الهدف: فكر بالهدف بشكل إيجابي وثق بقدرتك على تحقيقه. استخدم حلمك وطموحك للاستدلال على الأنشطة اللازمة لتحقيقه. خذ بعين الاعتبار الخبرات السابقة.
  - 3- ابن على الحاضر: من خلال التفكير ووصف الوضع الحالي وتقييمه.
  - 4- تحديد الأشخاص: حدد الأشخاص وأساليب دعمهم ومساندتهم أثناء عملية التغيير أو التنفيذ.
  - 5- تحديد الطرق المناسبة لبناء المهارات والقوة. ويكون ذلك من خلال تعريف المهارة التي تحتاج إلى تقوية. مثلا الحاجة لبناء والحفاظ على الصداقات. أيضا يجب أن تحدد المهارات والموارد اللازمة لتحقيق والحفاظ على مستوى الأداء.
  - 6- التخطيط للشهر القادم وذلك من خلال التفكير بما يستلزم من أنشطة وخبرات وأشخاص.
  - 7- التخطيط للشهر التالي وذلك من خلال التفكير بما يجب عمله وإنجازه. أيضا حاول تحديد الأشخاص والخبرات اللازمة لتحقيق هذا الهدف.
  - 8- الالتزام بالخطوة الأولى سيساعدك على إنجازها. فكر بمن تحتاج وكيف ستطلب الدعم من الآخرين. هنا سنتنقل من مرحلة التفكير والتخطيط إلى مرحلة العمل والالتزام.