

Chapter 13

Strategic Planning in Higher Education in the Arab World: Toward an Effective Implementation to Overcome Challenges

Bashaer Mohamed Al-Kilani
Alef Education, UAE

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to deliberate the strategic planning in higher education as a critical factor in the success of transforming the quality of higher education in the Arab world. With Arab universities still lagging behind in the world's top 200 universities, according to both Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and Times Higher Education (THE) world university rankings for the year 2018, it is momentous to investigate the causes and tackle the issues prompting Arab universities to not fulfill their role as hubs that transform nations. The chapter starts off by reviewing the status quo of higher education in the Arab world and Arab nations' aspirations for the higher education sector; it then proceeds to review research on the critical role of strategic planning in the higher education sector around the world and the obstacles hindering its effective implementation. The chapter then addresses the gap between the current strategic planning practices in higher education institutions in the Arab world and the effective practices that should be adopted to overcome the challenges confronting this sector.

INTRODUCTION

The Role of Institutions of Higher Education in the Arab World

Universities play an essential role in promoting socio-economic growth: they generate the knowledge, innovation, and human capital required to increase competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy (World Bank 2012). According to the Arab Human Development Report, Arab youth numbers are equivalent to one third of Arab countries' population; the report discusses that the young demographic, provided its size and inherent energy in working and being effectual, is a potential productive work force.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8048-5.ch013

The report adds that the opportunity presented by this demographic to promote development will gradually disappear and may not recur in the Arab region if the proper investment is not provided (2016). Higher education has a monumental impact on the regional and national restructuring of politics and the economy, which are currently under way, in the Arab world. “The long-term success or failure of today’s reform initiatives will rest, to a large degree, on the ability of these societies to place higher education as the engine of social and economic progress” (Wilkens 2011); higher education institutions have a key role in the scientific, technological, cultural and social advancement of nations (Awwad 2013; ElObeidy 2014).

Universities in the Arab world need to rectify their mission to surpass their role as knowledge disseminators and academic research providers; this entails fast adaption to the ever-evolving economies and the disruptive innovations to meet the demands of political and economic contexts on local and global levels. In order to meet the expectations of Arab nations, higher education institutions in the Arab world need to adopt strategic planning not only to front crises but also to use as a roadmap to sustain a perpetual impact on the future of rising generations.

An Overview of the Current State of Education in the Arab World

According to statistics provided by The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the gross enrollment ratio of tertiary education in the Arab world for both genders has witnessed an increase and an upward tendency toward growth between 1971 and 2015. Countries like Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Tunisia had a surge that went over 30% in tertiary education enrollment over the same period of time. Despite the expansion in higher education providers and the increase in student enrollment (especially females) in the Arab world, the higher education sector is still lagging behind with regards to meeting the needs of the labor market and society. Furthermore, the higher education sector in the Arab world insufficiently contributes to human development as well as scientific and technological advancements (Awwad 2013; Wilkens 2016).

As stated by the research-based indicator, THE World University Rankings, for the year 2018: Arab universities were not among the top 300 universities. Namely, only two Arab (Saudi Arabian) universities were in the top 400 list: King Saud and Al Faisal universities with percentages of 27.6 and 27.3 respectively. “The progress of research, development, science and technology in the Arab region lies at a very critical and fragile juncture” (ElObeidy 2014 p. 132) and “There is a mismatch between the skills companies are seeking and what universities in the region are producing. The result is millions of young people with high expectations and no hope of fulfilling their dreams” (UNDP 2003; Badran and Zou’bi 2010 as cited in ElObeidy 2014 p. 131). High unemployment among university graduates is an indicator of a deficiency in the educational system’s capability of meeting labor market needs – a highly skilled workforce that has the potential to succeed in the modern global economy (Wilkens 2011).

Higher education has also overlooked the need to reinforce work ethics: “Although our job market openly demands skills-based education, the real challenge is about work values and ethics and how to instill them in our youth” (Al-Sabah 2017). In order to gain international stature, higher education in the Arab world should embrace adaptive approaches to fulfill its role as a driver of nations’ economic growth - a role that mandates more insightful perceptions of labor market needs and future careers that are induced by the fourth industrial revolution. Baghdady states that a critical need exists to move toward a knowledge-based economy; he mentions that this can exclusively be achieved by developing a well-educated population that can effectively contribute to the economy. “As such, there has been a

23 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/strategic-planning-in-higher-education-in-the-arab-world/224524

Related Content

Do E-Athletes Move?: A Study on Training and Physical Exercise in Elite E-Sports

Tuomas Kariand Veli-Matti Karhulahti (2021). *Research Anthology on Business Strategies, Health Factors, and Ethical Implications in Sports and eSports* (pp. 915-929).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/do-e-athletes-move/270771

Sustainable Communities for Knowledge Management Systems in the New Technological Era

Elham Mousavidinand Lakshmi Goel (2012). *Organizational Learning and Knowledge: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools and Applications* (pp. 157-177).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/sustainable-communities-knowledge-management-systems/58089

A Case for Objectivist Ethics in the 21st Century: A Review

Edward M. Slover (2020). *International Journal of Responsible Leadership and Ethical Decision-Making* (pp. 19-31).

www.irma-international.org/article/a-case-for-objectivist-ethics-in-the-21st-century/273057

Teleworking as a Form of Massive Recruitment in the Colombian Youth Labor Market

Cristian Camilo Vargas Miranda (2020). *International Perspectives on the Youth Labor Market: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 153-171).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/teleworking-as-a-form-of-massive-recruitment-in-the-colombian-youth-labor-market/254921

Redefining Motivation in Digital Transformation: Employee Motivation in a Flat Organization

Václav Cejthamr (2020). *Examining Cultural Perspectives in a Globalized World* (pp. 141-173).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/redefining-motivation-in-digital-transformation/250058