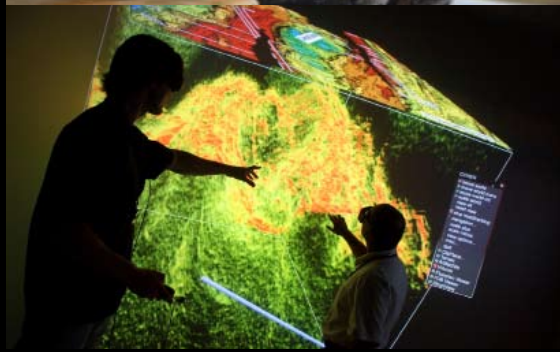*Viewpoints* Special Edition

Higher Education and the Middle East:
Serving the Knowledge-based Economy

The Middle East Institute
Washington, DC

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Middle East Institute

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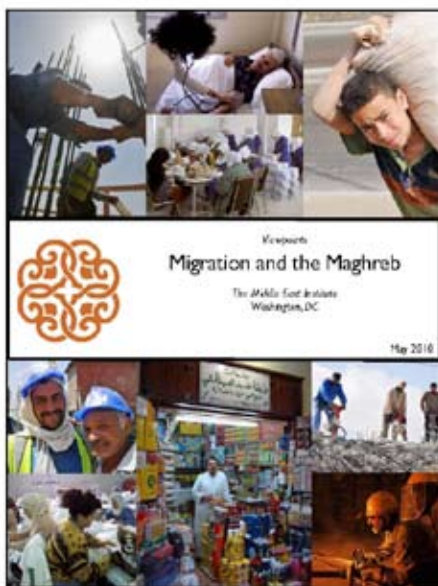
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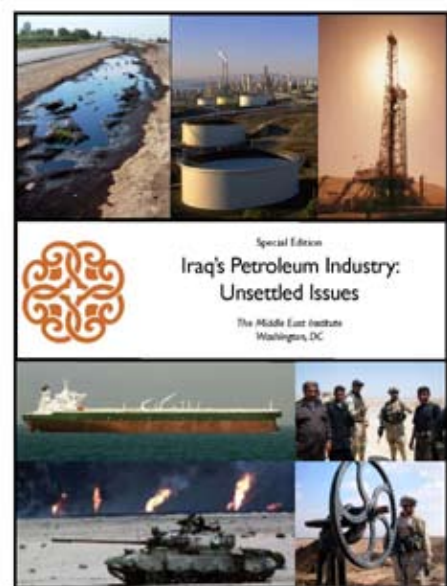Middle East: Volume V

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Higher Education and the Middle East:
Serving the Knowledge-based Economy
A Special Edition of *Viewpoints*

Introduction

This is the first of three volumes examining the internationalization of higher education and the Middle East. The 12 essays included in this volume explore some of the changes that are taking place and the challenges that lie ahead as Middle Eastern countries seek to build sustainable higher education systems and strengthen their economies. Within the dynamic global higher education landscape, is the Middle East a stagnant backwater or a center of creative initiative? What are, and should be the roles of foreign partners and providers? In which ways and to what extent can innovative modes of delivering educational content, facilitated by information communications technology (ICT), enrich learning? What are the broader cultural implications of the adoption of Western higher educational standards and practices? How does politics inform and impede the ability of students and faculty to participate fully and flourish in institutions of higher learning? These are just some of the important questions addressed in this volume.

Emerging Opportunities and Challenges for Regional Higher Education

Don Olcott, Jr.

As universities respond and adapt to globalization and internationalization, there may be an emerging trend towards a "new global regionalism" (NGR) in North America, East and Southwest Asia, Latin America, the Gulf States, the Middle East, and Africa. Within this new landscape, we may see other regions of the world building stronger regional networks and partnerships particularly relevant to international student mobility, study abroad programs, transnational higher education, and the accelerated movement of research and technology among regional universities, businesses, and government agencies.

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This shift towards global regionalism may develop incrementally over the next five to ten years. Whether this new global regionalism is in response to the Bologna Process to create a more attractive and marketable European Higher Education Area is unclear. What is clear is that these regions, and the nations that comprise them, are committed to building their own sustainable higher education systems and strengthening their regional economies over the next decade.

Moreover, regional economic imperatives will drive the local knowledge-based economy, and higher education will be a major catalyst in this process. This potential regional focus raises a number of considerations for host nations and foreign providers that will be highlighted later. This essay discusses a variety of these issues within the context of the emerging global higher education landscape and concludes with some thoughts about the potential implications for the Middle East.

THE GLOBAL CULTURAL DICHOTOMY

Indeed, although there are significant regional developments in the Middle East and in Southwest Asia, these regions do not function in a vacuum. It is useful to consider these regions within the context of the global transformations that are driving knowledge-based economies, the internationalization of higher education, and global initiatives such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) "Education for All" and the Millennial Goals.

At the heart of these global transformations is what I would term "the global cultural dichotomy." This refers to the growing adoption of English and "Western" ideas and

practices in business as well as higher education in concert with preserving the unique linguistic, cultural, and social norms that define nations and regions. At present, this is not an either-or scenario or an "us versus them" issue. There are advantages and limitations to both sides of this dichotomy ... *The fundamental question is what is the optimum balance between English-Western globalization and ensuring that the cultures and languages in non-native English speaking countries are preserved and protected.* Moreover, there are many who view this trend as a subtle euphemism for cultural imperialism. Though such a view may be an extreme, reactionary response to this trend, it nonetheless highlights the critical issues facing many nations and universities, which are equally committed to embracing modernity and preserving their language and cultural heritage.

Within the global higher education landscape, the dominant recruiters of foreign students and deliverers of cross-border academic programs, research, and technology transfer are the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The "Big Three" also represent significant global dominance by major multi-national corporations of diverse global market sectors (banking, technology, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, tourism, etc.). What does all this mean? It means that English is dominant and ubiquitously promotes Western ideas, practices, and cultural norms in these major global markets.

> **... if one views the changing global landscape in terms of the "perceived threat" of cultural or academic imperialism, then by extension the use of academic and cultural protectionism emerges as one alternative strategy to counterbalance English-Western influences.**

Conversely, it is also important to recognize that despite the influence of the Big Three, there is growing evidence that China, India, the Gulf States, Germany, France, and many other countries are moving up the global economic and higher education stratum. While the accuracy and subjectivity of League Tables that rank universities is controversial, it is equally apparent that these "new global regions" are in fact moving up the ladder, most notably East Asian universities during the last two years. Also promising is the development and investment of resources by nations in the Middle East, the Gulf States, and Africa to create regional higher education hubs.

We tend to think of protectionism primarily in terms of trade deficits, GNP, and other economic indicators. However, if one views the changing global landscape in terms of the "perceived threat" of cultural or academic imperialism, then by extension the use of academic and cultural protectionism emerges as one alternative strategy to counterbalance English-Western influences. Indeed, it is at this critical juncture that the conceptual construct of a "new global regionalism" begins to take shape.

Paradoxically, the dominant Western powers in the global marketplace (US, UK, and Australia) are intrinsically insular and parochial nations. This paradox manifests itself in other enigmatic ways. Despite the dominance of these nations in recruiting international students and delivering cross-border programs, a small percentage of students from the Big Three study abroad, have advanced language skills, and have a true understanding of what it means to show mutual respect, humility, and tolerance as global citizens. This is not a lack of understanding; it is a lack of awareness and to some

degree ignorance. Perhaps foreign partners can enlighten these providers towards more cultural awareness rather than academic imperialism. *Indeed the key question that emerges is whether a new global regionalism will become a strategy for counterbalancing foreign academic imperialism. Time will tell.*

EMERGING CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN THE NEW GLOBAL REGIONALISM

What are a few of the considerations that each region, and the countries within that region, should examine relative to higher education and internationalism? Generally, they can be divided into 1) priorities for the home region/country/ university and 2) expectations by the home region/country/university of foreign providers and partners.

Host Region/Country/University Priorities

1) Developing economic and cultural goals of higher education within the region, country, and university sector.

2) Defining internationalism within the regional higher education and political sectors and the regional strategy for the higher education sector.

3) Determining what foreign providers bring to the region/country that contributes to economic development and creating a sustainable higher education system.

4) Identifying advantages and limitations of having foreign partners providing academic programs, research, and technology transfer to the region.

5) Establishing requirements for foreign providers to operate in the region and/or nation; local partner requirements; contractual reinvestment of profits back into the programme; and any requirements for a portion of the curriculum delivered in the native language.

Expectations by Host of Foreign Providers

1) Foreign providers need to clearly articulate the academic, research-related, and potential economic benefits of operating in the region.

2) Foreign providers need to clearly outline the cultural, social, and professional advantages they will bring to their students.

3) The foreign provider needs to be viewed as a high quality, reputable, and value-added partner by the local institution to serve local students.

4) The foreign provider needs to offer a comprehensive array of student support services for local students, particularly if the programme is offered in English. Have the foreign providers clearly done its homework about the cultural, language, and social norms of the host country, the region, and the partner university?

5) The foreign provider needs to have proven experience and capacity for multi-modal delivery of their academic programmes (e.g., distance learning, face-to-face, blended learning, etc.).

These questions are not all inclusive. There are many other areas that require serious analysis in developing cross-border partnerships. They do, however, provide a general framework for balancing the opportunities and the perceived drawbacks to these partnerships.

ADVANCING REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The educative capacity to transform economies, tolerance, societal harmony, and global citizenship is immense. Education is the future of the Middle East.

Perhaps there is a new "fundamentalism" that needs to be embraced in the Middle East — the fundamental power of education to transform lives, cities, nations, and regions. This is a requisite value that must be promoted across all sectors of Middle Eastern society. Without it, discussion of collaboration or regional higher education will lie dormant. Moreover, embracing education is not synonymous with relinquishing the history, culture, and religion of the region. It may simply require a "reasonable" accommodation of education within the context of these indelible values and ideals. While this may be challenging, it is not impossible.

> **The educative capacity to transform economies, tolerance, societal harmony, and global citizenship is immense. Education is the future of the Middle East.**

The inherent strengths of the Middle East are usually underestimated by locals as well as Westerners. The region is rich in history, culture, ethnicity, customs, food, philosophical thought, religious teachings, topography, and much more. These are invaluable assets that can be utilized to build education at all levels throughout the region.

What does all of this mean for education in the region? Foreign providers are delivering higher education programs and research in the Middle East. Many of these programs are taught in English. But, the Middle East is also a region where people speak French, Italian, German, Greek, and other languages. These are not liabilities but, indeed, assets that the region can and does use as a catalyst to build a sustainable, high quality educational system. There are excellent universities that are improving year after year. There has been considerable progress in advancing opportunities for women in higher education. More and more universities are integrating technology and open and distance learning methods into their program. In sum, the region has made incredible progress despite the many challenges of civil strife and conflicts across the region.

The global regionalism of higher education is about education yet is embedded in economics, politics, cultural and societal norms of the region. Building regional capacity is not about Western or Eastern supremacy, it is about setting regional agendas that can be achieved locally and with the collaboration of foreign knowledge, expertise, programs, research, and technology transfer. The key is to create a balance that at the end of the day strengthens the region and creates opportunities to transform the lives of all its citizens. The people of the region have more in common with each

other than with those in any other part of the world. The success of global regionalism in the Middle East may indeed be more dependent on this commonality than on any other factor.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The globalization of higher education suggests that regional strategies may play an increasingly important part in future development of foreign partnerships, branch campus models, and regional economic sustainability. The new global regionalism may become a viable strategy for counterbalancing the growing concerns about academic imperialism by foreign providers. At the same time, this balance scenario may strengthen both local initiatives and foreign partnerships by clearly articulating the critical cultural, linguistic, and social issues that regions such as the Middle East, East Asia, Europe, and other global regions will promote and expect.

Moreover, traditional patterns of global student mobility are likely to change. These changes, however, will not be due to rigid regional parochialism but rather to the basic market forces resulting from more providers that translate into more choices for students, universities, and nations. Perhaps nations that have traditionally dominated the recruitment of foreign students to their shores will be held accountable for ensuring that their own students are engaged in study abroad, language programs, and the cultural prerequisites of living and working in a diverse global village.

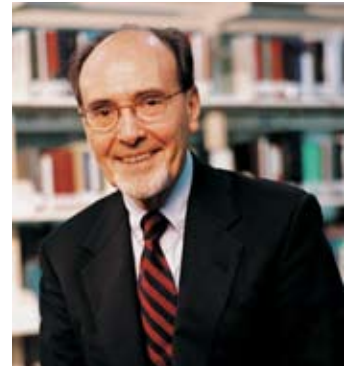# United Arab Emirates (UAE): Flagship of the Gulf

Roderick French

In an article in the Fall 2008 issue of *The New Atlantic,* the Doha-based Egyptian science writer Waleed Al-Shobakky, advanced the proposition that the center of creative initiative in higher education in the Arab world has shifted from the traditionally influential lands of Egypt and the Levant to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Whether such a sweeping proposition is fully warranted or not, I would argue that in the years ahead, the major center of higher education in the Gulf, if not the region, will be the UAE. The three leading emirates in this enterprise are Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. The hallmark of reform and expansion in all three cases has been Americanization, but the distinct differences in the models adopted by the three governments are in themselves instructive.

Dr. French is Chancellor Emeritus and Trustee of the American University of Sharjah. Before going to the UAE, he had a 30-year career at George Washington University where he was Professor of Philosophy and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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The first full chapter in this story was written in Sharjah, so let me begin with that emirate. To place this account in its proper context, I would refer to the 2003 Arab Human Development Report *Building a Knowledge Society*. Two central themes in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Report situate the work of Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, the Ruler of Sharjah, in a broader setting.

(1)The UNDP Report confronts directly one of the most sensitive topics in the contemporary intercultural dialogue, namely, how to account for the inarguable decline of the arts and sciences in the Arab Islamic world across several centuries. The Report deftly bypasses the debate initiated by Bernard Lewis and turns that glorious past into a motivating force for future achievements: "building the knowledge society in Arab countries [today] reclaims one of the brightest treasures of Arab history."

(2) The second invaluable observation in the UNDP Report is that the broader cultural context is of decisive importance for the sustainability of the many promising new ventures in modernizing higher education. There must be a pre-college system in place that produces graduates capable of doing academic work at the university level, and also a civil society prepared to assimilate the graduates of these institutions into settings where they can continue to grow and to contribute their skills and knowledge to the advancement of their nations.

It is against this background that one should interpret the extraordinary work of the Ruler of Sharjah. His Highness is the most highly educated ruler in the Gulf with earned doctorates from University of Exeter and Durham University. He is also widely respected for his unquestioned devotion to Islam. This unique combination of qualities has given him the vision and the authority with which to lay the groundwork for a broad renaissance of Arab Islamic culture and science in the region.

Upon the completion of his own graduate studies, Sheikh Dr. Sultan began a comprehensive program of educational and cultural development, first for the people of his emirate and then more widely. The number of museums and other public cultural institutions in Sharjah is now just over twenty. These include an art museum that hosts a most exciting biannual exposition, a children's science museum, a planetarium, a wildlife center that is also a center for a breeding program for endangered species, and so on. All of these institutions have been strictly local initiatives using international advisors only until they could be fully managed by the appropriate ministry of the government. Other initiatives include the annual Sharjah Book Fair, the Arab Science and Technology Foundation, and the biannual Arab drama festival for which the Ruler subsidizes playwrights throughout the region. The Ruler's remarkable cumulative achievement was recognized in 1998 when UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared Sharjah to be "The Cultural Capital of the Arab World."

At the heart of the Ruler's effort to lay the foundation for a renaissance of Arab Islamic culture is Sharjah University City (SUC). This was the first of the large complexes of multiple colleges and universities. This beautifully landscaped set of linked campuses opened in 1997 with the American University of Sharjah (AUS) as its flagship institution. In addition to AUS, SUC includes two campuses of the federal system of Higher Colleges of Technology, one for men and one for women, the University of Sharjah, a gender segregated institution developed in cooperation with several Canadian and US universities, a College of Fine Arts developed in partnership with the Royal Academy of Art, a Police Academy, the UNESCO Regional Center for Educational Planning, and a School of Medicine and Health Sciences undertaken in cooperation with Monash University.

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SUC is unique in its combination of selectivity in admissions and the size of its collective enrollments. My estimate is that the combined enrollments in SUC are approaching 15,000. The comparable figure for Education City would be about one-tenth that number. The relevance of this observation is in the calculation of impact on the region through their respective alumni. But scale is not the most interesting factor differentiating SUC, Dohas's Education City, and Knowledge Village in Dubai.

The strategy behind the promotion of Knowledge Village was to utilize the same model of incentives for entrepreneurial

development that had been so the successful in creating Internet City and Media City. The sponsors apparently did not fully appreciate the magnitude of "sunk costs" required for the formation of comprehensive universities that incorporate the liberal arts in the curricula of their professional schools and have a substantial portion of the student body in residence.

Thus far, only a small number of institutions from abroad have tried to raise branch campuses in Knowledge Village, and, except for Michigan State University, The British University, and Herriot-Watt, they tend not to be leading colleges or universities in their own countries. Michigan State is finding it very challenging to achieve a viable level of enrollments. The most substantial resident institution is no doubt the Dubai branch of the federal Zayed University. The majority of tenants in Knowledge Village to date are, not surprisingly, online and/or for-profit institutions. (The plan is for all universities in Knowledge Village to relocate to the higher education free zone, Dubai International Academic City, in the near future.)

Education City in Doha is an instructive contrast to both SUC and Dubai's Knowledge Village. At last count, seven elite American universities have established branch colleges there.

It should be noted that there are other colleges and universities in the emirate of Dubai that are not located in Knowledge Village. They include the London Business School, the Dubai School of Government, and the for-profit American University of Dubai.

Education City in Doha is an instructive contrast to both SUC and Dubai's Knowledge Village. At last count, seven elite American universities have established branch colleges there. (The pattern of detaching single professional schools from discrete comprehensive universities presents a challenge in terms of forming a coherent "university" as distinguished from a collection of schools.) Although the enrollments remain modest, the profound resource commitment by the Qatar Foundation in the form of substantial subsidies and incentives to the participating institutions should assure Doha a prominent role in the years ahead as a source of highly trained elites in several professions.

Let me return now to the Sharjah narrative. AUS received full accreditation without qualification from the Middle States Association in record time for a new overseas institution. Specialized accreditations have been achieved or are in progress. AUS was the second university outside the US to have all of its engineering disciplines fully accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). The School of Business and Management is on track to receive accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The School of Architecture, Art and Design is the first program outside the US to be accepted as a candidate for accreditation by the National Architectural Accreditation Board.

Over its first decade, the university has concentrated primarily on the development of a comprehensive set of high quality undergraduate degree programs offered by four colleges and schools. However, last year the Ruler gave the university 400+ acres contiguous with the campus for a Technology & Innovation Park. That will make possible the

development of research-based graduate degrees in the sciences, engineering, and business.

The university is now governed by a self-perpetuating international board of trustees. The Ruler recently signed over to the university the ownership (entirely debt free) not only of its campus but also of the research park. This constitutes a new paradigm in the Gulf: a truly indigenous, yet fully independent Arab university conforming to the standards of best practices in US colleges and universities.

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The second major center of creative initiatives in the UAE is Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi plays two roles in this story as the seat of the federal government and as the increasingly culturally sophisticated capital city. In the latter capacity, various members of the ruling Al Nayhan family have taken the lead in attracting distinguished Western universities to complement their coup in luring branches of the Louvre and the Guggenheim to its shores. The Sorbonne is already operatiing. New York University is set to begin limited operations in the fall of 2010. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has also confirmed that it will begin offering research-based graduate degrees in conjunction with the science park being developed by the Al-Masdar Institute.

The story summarized in the previous paragraph highlights the significant similarities and differences between the Abu Dhabi model and the Sharjah model. Sharjah has stimulated the growth of its universities and other cultural institutions out of its own soil, with the aid of consultants from North America to be sure, but the result is an array of distinguished *indigenous* institutions. Abu Dhabi has used its extraordinary resources to import and seek to implant branches of Western universities and museums on its soil. The resulting educational and cultural landscapes may or may not look very much the same two generations from now, but the originating conceptual and practical differences are worth noting.

> **The Ruler recently signed over to the university the ownership ... of its campus [and] the research park. This constitutes a new paradigm in the Gulf: a truly indigenous, yet fully independent Arab university conforming to the standards of best practices in US colleges and universities.**

There is much more to this chapter of the story due to the fact that Abu Dhabi is the seat of the federal government. One of the most striking developments taking place under the leadership of the Federal Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research is the systematic reform and restaffing of the three principal branches of the federal system to bring them into greater conformity with US practices and standards.

One branch of the system consists of the sixteen campuses of the Higher Colleges of Technology located around the country. Over the last several years they have conducted a major recruiting campaign in the US, casting their net not only for faculty but also for senior academic administrators and chief executive officers.

Zayed University, a second branch of the system, was created to provide a more selective alternative to United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) for the most talented young Emirati women. They have from the outset appointed mainly American academics in all leadership positions. When the Middle States Association dropped US incorporation as a condition for accreditation, Zayed was in the first cohort of overseas institutions accepted as candidates for accreditation, for which they have now qualified.

The capstone of this strand of our story is the steady transformation of the national university in Al Ain. For more than a decade, UAEU has invested heavily in US consulting teams, obtaining advice from them on curricular revisions and other changes that would qualify major fields of study for accreditation by US professional associations. This has been particularly successful with business and engineering.

More recently, UAEU has intensified its recruitment of Americans to the faculty and to senior academic administrative positions. This process culminated in the appointment of the former provost of the University of California system as provost in Al Ain. Most strikingly, the Ministry recently announced that they will seek full institutional accreditation for UAEU from one of the US regional associations. To my knowledge, this thoroughgoing "Americanization" of a sovereign nation's federal education system is without parallel.

In addition to the imported branch campuses and the Americanization of the federal system, efforts are also being made to develop first-rate private institutions in Abu Dhabi. The newly reconstituted Khalifah University of Science, Technology, and Research may be the most promising of these with its spectacular new campus under construction and aggressive faculty recruitment in the US.

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The future is of course always contingent, but barring major political disruptions in the GCC, it would seem that the UAE is positioning itself well and comprehensively for a preeminent position in the field of higher education in the 21ˢᵗ century.

Tertiary Education in the Arabian Gulf: "A Colossal Wreck, Remaining Boundless and Bare?"

Tim Walters, Lynne Walters, and Jack Barwind

… "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away. [1]

                     – Percy Shelley

Whether education can contribute to Knowledge Age economies and inspire the spirit of entrepreneurship in the six countries forming the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is unclear. Certainly, the magnificent edifices rising in educational cities across the region in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) offer concrete proof of progress begun. Whether such physical achievements, however, can lead to achievement and meritocracy or, as the poet Shelley suggests, survive only as decaying artifacts, is murky.[2]

Burgeoning student enrollments, rising literacy rates, and female access to educational resources speak to immense progress on a statistical level. But thus far, numerical advances have not translated into either the development of a Knowledge Age economy or the generation of a critical mass vital to an entrepreneurial economy. There are several barriers to these advances. Expansive social safety nets, hide-bound cultural values, and government job perks have blunted the potential impact of education. Mixed with these deadening effects are fundamental flaws in a tertiary education system that depends upon an ill-suited consultant army; a dearth of locally-generated, relevant learning material; and a myopic educational focus. Culture's deadening influence results from the potent brew of the civic compact, a demographic tsunami, a narrow perspective of college education as a terminal activity, and a vision of a college degree as the ticket to the good life.

All six countries have hereditary monarchies whose continued rule depends on the social compact between rulers and their subjects. These compacts have spawned an Arabian Gulf version of "*Laissez Les Bon Temps Roulez*" (Let the Good Times Roll). Those who rule have

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Jack Barwind has written extensively on culture, society, and education and was Associate Dean, College of Communication, at Zayed University for several years.

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1. Percy Shelley, *Ozymandias*, The Literature Network, available at http://www.online-literature.com/shelley_percy/672/.
2. United Nations Development Report, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development" (2009), http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_EN_Complete.pdf.

created expansive social safety nets. Life subsidies (free education and health care, subsidies per child, no-interest loans for home purchase, wedding grants, and artificially low utility rates, among others) are not uncommon. Such largess dulls motivation. Often, instead of adopting the risk-taking inherent in entrepreneurship, Arabian Gulf citizenry feels more comfortable practicing risk aversion; in turn, risk aversion leads to secure and safe government jobs or silent partnerships with the hard-working expat population.

The economies and societies of the GCC countries are pyramidal; a minute few exercise absolute control over most wealth and social and civic power. The economy and the society are also divided between citizens and legions of resident expatriates (expats). Although citizens may be educated in a formal sense, many view education merely as a ticket to high paying, low-risk jobs with government-owned-and-operated businesses. Those students who are citizens rarely need to actually compete in the marketplace. Affluent citizen-students have been granted connections and wealth beyond their years. Their futures are secure and rosy. Citizen-students who are not from wealthy families are often risk-adverse because of the real and perceived consequences of failure. They have much less of a safety net and are unwilling to gamble family savings or risk loss of face.

A powerful demographic tide has exacerbated the distortion within society. In addition to high birth rates, all six GCC countries have significant non-citizen populations; today, citizens comprise only about 63% of the total regional population. In Kuwait and Qatar, citizens comprise only about 60% of the population. In the UAE, the distortion is much worse. Expats constitute more than 85% of the population. All across the GCC the vast majority of expats remain common laborers; but some are highly educated and willing to create and innovate. Unfortunately, limited workplace rights, ownership of companies, and a skewed legal system circumscribe these prospects. Additionally, exclusion has been instrumental in generating both real and perceived boundaries.

> **As are all things in the GCC countries, society defines the form, shape, and substance of education; to date, the result has been that culture, language, and income sharply divide students.**

As are all things in the GCC countries, society defines the form, shape, and substance of education; to date, the result has been that culture, language, and income sharply divide students. Because most non-nationals have not yet been (nor will they ever be) assimilated, they exist on virtual islands in society's stream of life. Many expats who are resident non-citizens transport cultural artifacts such as schools with them.

Government K-12 schools are almost exclusively for nationals — so, too, are national universities. Government-run K-12 schools are poorly run and produce graduates unprepared for either university or for a Knowledge Age economy. Graduates mostly lack the critical thinking skills vital to navigate the shoals of qualitative and quantitative information. Those citizens who can afford to do so send their children to expensive private schools. Non-citizens bring their educational systems with them, leave their children back home, or send them home.

An insidious sense of cultural inferiority pervades university and college education, generating vast chasms. GCC higher education typically imports models from England, India, and the United States. A vast army of foreign "parachutists" pay little heed to

cultural factors inherent in the Arab and Muslim populations. These consultants, who come for an adventure and large tax-free six-figure salaries, regularly come and go. This ebb and flow remains a major factor in the ever-changing educational focus. Each and every new batch of consultants projects its own sense of educational well-being. Tertiary educational institutions regularly alter the vision, mission, and objectives. Education often appears based more on training than on problem-solving abilities inherent in critical thinking.

Though research parks exist (some of which, on paper, are tied to universities), most are not engines of enterprise. Some, like Knowledge Village in Dubai, actually function as revenue-generating venues geared along a shopping mall business model with brand-name anchor tenants. So dull and limited are the horizons that educational leadership in the GCC expends premium prices to import grand educational brand names. Abu Dhabi in the UAE regularly imports Nobel Prize winners to offer pearls of wisdom at the Festival of Thinkers. Education City, Qatar, fueled by the deep pockets of the ruling family, has spent billions of dollars to attract Cornell Medical College, Texas A&M University, Carnegie Mellon, and Northwestern University.[3]

Unemployment is high among national populations across the region for many reasons. One reason is that businesses do not create the type of job in non-governmental sectors that nationals want. (For example, citizens hold less than 1% of the approximately two million private sector jobs in the UAE.) Citizen-students expect to begin at the top and stay there. They have little patience for working their way up the ladder. A second reason is that students are training for jobs that do not exist and probably won't ever exist because entrepreneurs are largely missing from the economy.

Education often appears based more on training than on problem-solving abilities inherent in critical thinking.

In a recent study, *The Economist,* in cooperation with Cisco, produced an index looking at innovation inputs and innovation outputs and created a scale ranking countries worldwide. The input formula included direct drivers such as education, quality of local research infrastructure, and policy; the output formula included normed number of patents per million residents. Among the main findings was that innovation is beneficial to national economies on the microeconomic level. The findings promise a bleak future for GCC countries. No GCC country was among the top 25 for the period 2004-2008. Only Kuwait and the UAE were among the top 45 for projected innovation performance for 2009 and 2013, and only the UAE was among the top 50 for the innovation enablers index.[4]

Unless higher education in the GCC discovers the linkage between and among tertiary educational systems, innovation, and entrepreneurship, the future looks particularly monotonic. Whether the connected few who have a vested interest in the *status quo* can actually lead change is uncertain. If they do not, the result will be similar to that of Ozymandias, who called upon others to look upon his works in despair.

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3. "Third Festival of Thinkers Convenes in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates," http://blog.taragna.com/pr/third-festival-of-thinkers-convenes-in-abu-dhabi-united-arab-emirates-8384/.
4. "A New Ranking of Thinkers Convenes in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates," http://graphics.edi.com?PDF/Cisco_Innovation_Complete.pdf.

Student-Centered Education and American-style Universities in the Arab World

Shafeeq Ghabra

American-style universities in the Middle East help students acquire the skills currently needed for expanding the private sector. A graduate of an Arab curriculum will have difficulty entering the private sector in most countries in the region. Globalization has established English as the language of communication, research, writing, and business. Entire fields, from communication, marketing, and economics to the hard sciences are changing at a rate with which Arabic cannot keep pace. An English-based curriculum is needed in all fields of study in the Middle East, as Western methodologies, findings, and overall approach dominate learning and research.[1]

The new American-style universities in the region are a response to the widespread awareness of the need to adapt to prevailing global standards. Such institutions open the eyes of students to international developments, expose them to new methods of thinking, and help them learn to understand and accept others. As one student said after graduating from the American University of Kuwait (AUK), "I come from a traditional conservative family and found myself dealing with so many people from different backgrounds and with teachers from different countries. It changed me for the better and taught me the meaning of accepting differences."

Institutions dedicated to this path must be student centered in order to evolve, mature, and succeed at achieving their goals. They must dedicate their resources to the profession of teaching and to developing a "complete" student — that is, one intellectually, socially, psychologically, and globally aware. Meeting such a goal may sound simple, but it is actually among the hardest for universities. To be successful, faculty members must feel secure in fulfilling their classroom duties while also focusing on research. It requires that students be challenged and ultimately excel. The university system thus must foster an academic culture responsive to teacher and student needs.

Meaningful interaction between faculty and students can often be complicated at new private universities in the Arab world. These schools sometimes experience sudden changes in administration and shifts in mission that affect what transpires in the class-

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1. Shafeeq Ghabra and Margreet Arnold: "Studying the American Way: An Assessment of American-Style Higher Education in Arab Countries," Washington Institute for Near East Policy (June 2007).

room. Activities beyond the purview of students as well as those in the classroom are central to a student-centered approach. For some poor countries, such as Yemen, problems in the education system stem from a lack of money and resources. For wealthier states, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the relative newness and underdevelopment of their university systems have hampered the ability to focus on student needs. Some of the other problems they face include weak administration, poor recruiting strategies and practices, heavy teaching loads, too much emphasis on profit, ineffective faculty representation, and instability among staff. Addressing such challenges is basic to the next stage of evolution for Western-style universities in the region.

CHALLENGES FOR FACULTY AND STUDENTS

Many new universities in the Arab world overburden their faculty. Even in classes with 15 to 20 students, workloads prevent teachers from getting students involved in research and extracurricular activities. The faculty of new American-style universities are often contractually obligated to do administrative work in addition to teaching. They are made to teach as many courses as possible, but do not have the security of tenure; they are also usually asked to sit on an overwhelming number of committees. The average teacher at a Western-style university in the Arab world must prepare for four courses per semester. The teaching load at many US colleges is two courses per semester, while an average of three courses per semester at Arab public universities. Part of the problem is that many universities have not hired research and teaching assistants for faculty. These issues lead to burn out and low morale among faculty. The scant use of tenure among the new American-style universities and the old ones undermines the establishment of a stable faculty. Contractual abuse on the part of university administrations is not uncommon. Instability in the region makes the hiring of instructors from abroad a challenge at times.

> **Many new universities in the Arab world overburden their faculty ... The retention of quality professors and attracting new, promisiing ones depends on the institutional environment.**

Universities should encourage research relevant to the region, including teaching and methods of instruction; applied research in these two areas alone is essential. Instructors must be given the budget, time, and resources to conduct research and attend conferences. Without such support, faculty members are disadvantaged because they cannot compete professionally or keep pace with their counterparts elsewhere. The retention of quality professors and attracting new, promising ones depends heavily on the institutional environment. Generally speaking, making money drives most of the private, American-style universities. There is no separation of ownership, administration, and operation of the university. Faculty have little or no say in governance.

The newly opened universities have essentially become colleges for the privileged. Access to private colleges and universities in general is limited to those with a higher economic status, as profit-based universities have limited scholarship opportunities and do not offer student loans; in some countries, including Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE, the state provides some assistance. In most cases, only the rich are able to study at these institutions, creating a social class in itself.

Leaving knowledge acquisition entirely to the privileged classes in developing countries risks reducing the spread of knowledge and depriving disadvantaged social groups of its benefits and economic opportunity.[2]

The establishment of scholarships and financial aid to offset the high cost of college education is necessary to promote representation of all social layers of society among students. In addition, more state funding and scholarships can be created through support from corporations and fundraising to offer talented, less fortunate students an opportunity to participate in higher education. Kuwait provides scholarships for students in the new colleges there, but universities need to develop fundraising strategies so that the greater part of society has access to the university system.

University students want a quality education; a large percentage of them take their studies and learning seriously. Regardless, another segment of students, those not as fully committed, expect to earn a university degree with only limited effort. This is a sizable group whose attitude is encouraged by the current culture. They will attempt to use personal contacts to obtain special benefits or consideration; they expect arbitrary enforcement of admission standards to work in their favor and to bargain for grades or benefit from grade inflation. All this only serves to lower university standards and undermine the integrity of the institution. In the process, it creates problems for dedicated faculty, who slowly lose their ability (and perhaps desire) to teach and make a difference. There are cases in which university administrators and board members have interfered in ways that have undermined the very institution they are working to build. Such actions negatively affect the morale of dedicated students. As one highly achieving student said, "I get an A and so does the guy next to me who made no effort whatsoever."

Integrity, due process, faculty empowerment, and fairness and consistency in decision making must be bulwarks of institutional credibility. My experience at AUK from 2003-2006 proves that such is possible; culture need not stop a university from implementing, encouraging, and enforcing high standards. The result of not doing so is to undermine both the creation of a culture of achievement and a desire to learn in students. In cases where students feel that they have been wronged, there must be a process for appeal.

> **Integrity, due process, faculty empowerment, and fairness and consistency in decision-making must be bulwarks of institutional credibility.**

At AUK from 2003 to 2006, the university had to observe Kuwaiti segregation laws passed a decade ago. Men and women could attend the same school, but they were not allowed to take classes together, sit next to each other in coffee shops, or work together in the library — even if they were relatives. I could not in good faith enforce such a law, which I thought was detrimental to creating a positive learning environment. Although other universities accepted the law, in reality each had difficulty enforcing it. Students did not want to segregate themselves, and their parents did not want such an arrangement either, but Islamist members of Parliament and the University Council continued to press the issue. In the end, we applied segregation in some classes but kept 50% of them co-ed while not enforcing segregation in the University public space, coffee shops, and library. This approach worked, at least during my tenure.

2. *Arab Human Development Report 2003* (New York: United Nations Development Program, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2003), p. 39.

In Kuwait, jobs require men and women to work together; the coffee shops next to every university are public spaces where students meet to study together. Strict gender segregation in universities would create estrangement among students and lead them to seek out space outside the university environment. Creating a student-centered environment means listening to students. This can be done through student government and meeting with them in open, town hall-style meetings where they can air their opinions, ideas, and concerns.

Most degrees in the new American-style institutions are technical, science-related, or business-oriented. Degrees in the arts and humanities tend to be limited to mass communication, education, and languages. Few universities offer degrees in fine arts, history, or the social sciences or have established study abroad programs; the latter is true even among the more established schools, although study abroad is an important part of American higher education. Studying in a foreign country can inspire independence and self-confidence and offers the obvious benefit of seeing the world from a different perspective.

> **Students need to be made aware that decision-making skills, opinions, and a critical mind are indispensable assets.**

Students at American-style universities face the challenge of learning to think for themselves rather than being told what to think or simply accepting the opinion of a professor. The students from public Arab schools are accustomed to learning passively, through lectures and memorization. They also think that their opinion might be held against them and thus prefer professors who merely lecture to them rather than attempt to liberate their minds. It will require great effort on the part of faculty at American-style institutions to draw these students out and into independent thought. Students need to be made aware that decision-making skills, opinions, and a critical mind are indispensable assets. Although some universities have been able to create pockets of skills and critical thinking among students, there is still a long way to go in laying the groundwork for a real liberal arts experience.[3]

More work needs to be done on developing hybrid student-oriented educational models.[4] The focus should be on adapting the American approach to fit local culture and traditions. This means that research should be focused on business models and problem-solving that address local needs. Universities must continually review their strategies and policies to accommodate more modern approaches and integrate new technologies into education.

TO PROFIT OR NOT TO PROFIT?

The relation between business, profit, and academics has in some places led to a lowering of standards and hampered the ability of new universities to be student centered. This is not the case at the American University of Beirut (AUB), the American University in Cairo (AUC), The Lebanese-American University (LAU), the American University of Shar-

3. Raja Kamal, "Oil won't last; invest in Arab education," *Daily Star Egypt*, January 8, 2007, p. 1.
4. "Independent Universities in the Muslim World: A New Approach," Hollings Center for International Dialogue, Washington, DC (2005), p. 8, http://0303ffd.netsolhost.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/12-2005_Independent-Universities_Part_I.pdf.

jah, and the Qatar Foundation, which are run on a non-profit basis. They are either able to raise sufficient funds (AUC, AUB, LAU) or have secure, government backing (AUS and the Qatar Foundation)

It is not clear that there is a "correct" or definitive financial model, profit or non-profit, for universities in the Arab world. Examining this issue raises a number of questions: What is the proper balance between seeking a return on investment and reinvestment in the university? What about the allocation of funds for services for students, enhancing the quality of education, and growth? Investors, after all, want a return on their contribution or they will not support education.

> **What is the proper balance between seeking a return on investment and investing in the university? What about the allocation of funds for services for students, enhancing the quality of education, and growth?**

A possible solution is that licenses for new universities in the Arab world only be offered to non-profit foundations or owners who view maintaining them as a corporate social responsibility. A university must be run with a certain element of altruism in order to earn the respect of the community, which it is supposed to serve; it is also necessary to develop an active alumni community and raise funds. Without such an approach, for-profit institutions will be at a fundraising disadvantage and remain heavily dependent on high tuition for growth. With the commercialization of education — some universities are even listed on the stock market — universities will be forced to lower their standards to attract (wealthy) students. One remedy is to impose restrictions on existing for-profit universities regarding the amount of return and reinvestment, governance, and issues affecting standards. Otherwise, for-profit universities will add to the decline of education in the region.

VISION AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Institutions must develop a vision to guide them into the future. As the foundation of the institution, a university's mission — and how it perceives and carries it out — is of great importance. As stakeholders, all members of the university — faculty, staff, students, and governors — must be involved in the process of discussing and finalizing its mission and vision. Town hall meetings and other public gatherings can contribute to the type of university the collective governing body would like to nourish. Fair and effective governance must include faculty and administration voices.

Another major challenge is the issue of academic freedom. Higher education remains highly centralized, with the government controlling curriculums, admissions, and recruitment. Despite the diverse and wealthy cultures of the region, a lack of appreciation or fear of academic exploration and freedom endangers knowledge and its educational benefits. Curtailment of academic freedom extends from banning classroom and library materials to blocking internet sites to limiting student interaction and activities because of government laws, school policies, and student or faculty complaints. Some professors self-censor because they are afraid of offending someone.

When I was President of AUK, a faculty member expressed interest in an excellent textbook. There was, however, one problem: It contained an article by Salman Rushdie. She was afraid that ordering it would cause problems. I told her to purchase the book, but added that "if anything happens I will take full responsibility and will defend your position pub-

licly on the grounds of academic freedom and the importance of students being exposed to all opinions." We received the book and nothing happened.

In some universities in the region, presidents restrain faculty for fear of a backlash from society or the state. Such an approach harms the students. Censorship by default undermines a student-centered approach to education. It also penalizes students *vis-à-vis* those in university programs elsewhere. To learn, students need to be exposed to new thoughts and ideas. In addition, faculty who are not citizens of the countries in which they work feel added pressure to be on the safe side. Some are not encouraged to teach all that they know in art or literature or philosophy; instead, they must be accommodating of the social, political, and religious environment. The result is to compromise knowledge.

CONCLUSION

In the Arab world, the university lags in its ability to lead and provide a model for quality education. Creating and maintaining a student-centered environment requires that these educational institutions dedicate resources to the profession of teaching with the aim of developing students intellectually, socially, psychologically, and educationally. Students must be challenged to excel in order to think critically, learn problem solving, write effectively, express themselves, and become life-long learners. This necessitates a sound university system and a strong academic culture responsive to teaching needs. All of these elements remain a challenge in the Arab world.

Liberal Education in the Middle East

Benjamin Reilly

What is the value of a liberal education in a Middle Eastern academic context? For that matter, what is the place of such education in American academia? In the early 20th century, the answer was clear: a liberal education was the vessel by which Western civilization's Renaissance-Humanist heritage was passed to young students.[1] In the mid-20th century, Carnegie Mellon University's influential "Carnegie Plan" made a different case for liberal education, arguing that professional degrees should be infused with liberal education in order to teach critical thinking and real-world problem-solving skills. A generation later, scholars such as Roger Shattuck and E.D. Hirsch made the case that a liberal education provided students with the "cultural literacy" needed to navigate modern society successfully.[2] Most recently, Harvard University Task Force on General Education proffered the most radical apology for a liberal education yet, arguing that the "aim of a liberal education is to unsettle presumptions, to defamiliarize the familiar … to disorient young people, and to help them to find ways to reorient themselves."[3]

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Despite such impassioned defenses, liberal education plays a weaker role in American academe today than almost ever before. According to a 2005 article in the *Journal of Higher Education*, the number of degrees granted in traditional liberal disciplines dropped from about 70% in 1915 to only 40% in 2000. Liberal education degrees remained strong until the 1930s, when the Great Depression encouraged colleges to provide degrees that would help students find jobs rather than find themselves. Professional degrees gained a further boost from the end of WWII, when the GI bill flooded colleges with older students seeking the skills needed to re-integrate into the civilian work force. During the late 1960s, post-Sputnik government funding for the hard sciences and the prevailing culture of social critique fueled a temporary revival in classic liberal education degrees. By the late 1970s, however, professional degrees had reasserted themselves. Between 1970 and 2000, the number of students earning philosophy, social science, mathematics, and English literature degrees dropped substantially, while public administration, business, and computer science spiked in popularity. Today, liberal education degrees remain prevalent in only a handful of American educational sectors, including highly selective, prestigious schools somewhat protected by their reputations

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1. See for example Karl E. Shedd, "The Liberal Arts at Mid-Century," *South Atlantic Bulletin*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (March 1953).
2. Roger Shattuck, "Perplexing Dreams: Is There a Core Tradition in the Humanities?" *American Council of Learned Societies* (April 1987); E.D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (New York: Random House, 1988).
3. *Report of the Task Force on General Education*. Harvard University Faculty of Arts and Sciences (2007), pp. 1-2.

The views expressed in these *Viewpoints* are those of the authors; the Middle East Institute does not take positions on Middle East policy.

from the prevailing winds of the educational market.[4]

Fair enough, but to what extent have education trends in the Middle East regarding liberal education tracked those in the United States? Little work has been done on this issue, and the studies that exist give impressionistic data. For example, a recent publication by *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* by Shafeeq Ghabra and Margreet Arnold argued that "most degrees [offered in the Middle East] are technical or science related, or business … very few universities offer degrees in the fine arts, history, and the social sciences." They also contended that liberal education in the Middle East suffers from "an anti-humanities and social sciences culture that stems from the old thinking of strict employability within fields of study." However, they present mostly anecdotal evidence in support of these conclusions.[5]

... to what extent have education trends in the Middle East regarding liberal education tracked those in the United States?

In search of more definitive data, I conducted my own informal survey of the state of liberal education in the Middle East using some of the tools provided by the *JHE* study. I was not able to duplicate this study exactly: it relied on a central database of liberal education vs. professional degrees awarded to American university students per year, and no such database exists for Middle Eastern universities. Rather, I conducted a thorough search of the web sites of 24 larger Middle Eastern universities — 12 public, 12 private — to determine how many "professional" and/or "liberal" degree programs they offered, as defined by the *JHE* article.[6] Although I am counting degree programs rather than degrees given, I was confident that this procedure should produce comparable, though not entirely congruent, results.

What I found is that Middle Eastern curricular trends on the subject of liberal arts largely track American developments. Overall, only 30% of the degrees offered in both public and private universities can be categorized as "liberal education" degrees, even less than are granted by American higher education. This aligns closely to the more impressionistic data provided by the *WINEP* study. Other indications further underscore the underlying similarity between American and Middle Eastern educational trends. In the five "American Universities" on the list, including the well-known American University of Beirut and the American University of Cairo, liberal arts degrees make up 44% of all degrees offered. This aligns well with the *JHE* study's findings that selective and prestigious schools disproportionally offer a liberal education.

4. Steven Brint *et. al.*, "From the Liberal to the Practical Arts in American Colleges and Universities: Organizational Analysis and Curricular Change," *The Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (March-April 2005), pp. 151-80.
5. Shafeeq Ghabra and Margreet Arnold, "Studying the American Way: An Assessment of American-Style Higher Education in Arab Countries." *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy*, Policy Focus #71 (Jun., 2007), pp. 13-14.
6. Public: Zayed University, Qatar University, King Saud University, University of Jordan, Sultan Qaboos University, Alexandria University, University of Kuwait, The Higher Colleges of Technology (UAE), University of Damascus, Ain Shams University (Egypt), University of Bahrain, and Assiut University (Egypt). Private: American University of Cairo, American University of Beirut, American University of Kuwait, American University of Sharjah, Lebanese American University, Misr International University, October 6 University (Egypt), Modern Sciences and Arts University (Egypt), Saint Joseph University (Lebanon), University of Kalamoon (Syria), Al-Zaytoonah Private University (Jordan), and Education City (Qatar).

Reilly...

Middle Eastern universities also track American universities in curricular changes over time. Most major Middle Eastern public universities, when first founded, had a strong liberal educational core, but subsequently added professional degrees. In 1977, for example, the only "professional" degree offered at Qatar University was education, but schools of engineering, business, and economics were founded in 1985, while pharmacy was added in 2008. King Saud University began in 1957 with a college of arts, then gained departments of business and pharmacy (1960), agriculture (1966), and computer and information sciences (1984). Similarly, Alexandria University began only with colleges of arts and law, then gained departments of nursing (1954), pharmacy (1956), education (1969), veterinary medicine (1974), and tourism/hotel studies (1983). Middle Eastern universities, then, have probably gone even farther than their American counterparts in embracing the professions and departing from the old liberal education core.

Nonetheless, there are reasons to think that liberal education may soon play a more prominent role in Middle Eastern universities. Elsewhere in the non-Western world, universities are beginning to reincorporate the spirit of a liberal education into their elite academic programs. In recent years, for example, Peking University introduced the Yuanpei Honors Program, which is designed to teach creative thinking by exposing students to an interdisciplinary core curriculum. Similar programs have been set up elsewhere in China and in South Korea and Singapore. The impetus behind these programs, according to international education expert Richard C. Levin, is that "the Chinese and the others in Asia are worrying that their students lack the independence and creativity necessary for their countries' long-term economic growth." Levin argues that Asian universities have traditionally focused on mastery of content rather than "development of the capacity for independent and critical thinking," which a liberal education can provide.[7]

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The same wind of change is now blowing through India's universities. According to Amrit Dhillon, liberal education promises to overturn a "cultural tradition of deference … to authority" that severely inhibits critical thinking in Indian higher education.[8] What is more, the Indian educational system has been weighted heavily towards the professions, with business, engineering, and IT schools receiving the bulk of state funds, while humanities and social science schools receive "only crumbs."[9] This is a huge mistake, some Indian educational reformers believe, as "new knowledge and new insights have often originated at the boundaries of disciplines," and "there are no great universities in the world that do not simultaneously conduct world class programs" in both professional and liberal education fields.[10] Advocates of Indian educational change also argue that liberal education degrees are crucial to providing "effective leadership,"

7. Richard C. Levin, "Top of the Class: The Rise of Asia's Universities," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (May/June 2010), pp. 70-72.
8. Amrit Dhillon, "More Than a Billion People But Where Are the Thinkers," *Times Higher Education*, April 14, 2010.
9. Shreesh Chaudhury, "India: Science and Technology vs the Humanities," *University World News*, May 30, 2010.
10. Yash Pal, "Forward," *Report of the Committee to Advice on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education*, p. 2, p. 4. Available on-line from http://www.hinduonnet.com/nic/yashpalreport.htm.

and "out-of-the-box lateral thinking."[11] Several institutions have recently risen in India to push this reformed vision of education forward, including the Foundation for Liberal and Management Education (FLAME), which offers a liberal education degree as well as business, communication, and performing arts degrees that are all "anchored" to a liberal education model.[12]

A similar pattern of re-thinking the role of liberal education in academia is underway elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent. Since 1992, when Bangladesh began to allow private universities, a number of liberal education institutions have sprung up in Bangladesh, most notably the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (2002) and the Asian University for Women (2008). Both institutions offer a range of liberal arts and science degrees in a country where narrow professional education is the norm. On the other end of the subcontinent, Habib University is slated to open in Pakistan in 2012 with a similar mission of importing a liberal education program into an educational culture dominated by narrow professional education.

Will these incipient steps towards reincorporating liberal education into the university curriculum find traction in the Middle East? Perhaps. The imminent opening of New York University's unabashedly liberal education campus in Abu Dhabi and Bard College's more modest liberal arts and sciences partnership with Al-Quds University in Jerusalem may be a sign of things to come. However, what is still lacking in the Middle East is an indigenous public debate as to what benefit liberal education offers to society. As we have seen, American academia has already debated this point robustly, while the Chinese, Indians, and other Asian nations are now undergoing this process of introspection. True, voices have been raised concerning the utility of a liberal education in the Middle East, but these voices mostly belong to expatriates and outsiders to the region.[13] Until a substantive internal debate occurs, it is unlikely that liberal education will sink deep roots into the universities of the Middle East.

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11. Aziz Haniffa, "India Needs Leaders at Many Levels: Sam Pitroda." *Rediff.com Business,* August 29, 2009; "How to Reform Higher Education In India." *Businessworld*, April 14, 2010. See also, Binu S. Thomas, "Rising Stress on Liberal Arts Education." *India Together*, Feb 2003.
12. http://www.flame.edu.in/index.php.
13. See for example David R. Blanks, "Cultural Diversity of Cultural Imperialism: Liberal Education in Egypt," *Liberal Education* (Summer, 1998), pp. 30-35.

Leveraging on Technology via International Collaboration: Open University Malaysia's (OUM) Experience in the Middle East

Anuwar Ali

The development of information communication technology (ICT) has transformed the world into a global village, facilitating the flow of knowledge, information, and people like never before. Its impact on everyday living is apparent, fundamentally changing the way people think, work, and play. Within education, the impact of ICT may not be as extensive as in other fields. This is because education is often perceived as a socially-oriented activity where the teacher's main role is to transmit knowledge and be a role model.

Given that knowledge has become an important component of the nation's economic progress, the shift towards a "knowledge society" means the role of technology is becoming increasingly important. Technology is already supporting more effective learning, research, and administration — enabling greater access to education and a rewarding educational experience. It influences the development of academic innovations, such as e-learning and mobile learning, academic partnerships and collaborative research, enhances quality, and encourages transparency.

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The ever-increasing demand for higher education, especially in developing countries, has inevitably led universities to re-examine the way that education is being delivered. A feasible solution is to embark on distance education and ICT-based learning, provided that such technologies are properly mastered and the necessary resources made available, including hardware, software, and trained manpower.

In this context, this essay seeks to share the experiences and initiatives taken by the OUM to position itself as a cross-border open and distance learning institution by using technology as an enabler to offer quality programs on a global scale through international partnerships, particularly in the Middle East.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

As Malaysia's first open distance learning (ODL) institution, OUM has capitalized on technology for its blended pedagogy since its inception in 2000. While ODL is relatively new in Malaysia, its importance cannot be overstated in line with the Government's move to provide Malaysians with greater access to higher education. The use of ICT in

education through e-learning can play a vital role in democratizing education, especially in developing countries. Apart from providing a cost effective means of delivery, it creates an education experience that is more responsive to the learners' needs and aspirations, thus providing the flexibility that allows learners to study at any time and place.

As indicated in Chart 1, OUM's blended pedagogy employs a multi-mode strategy that combines online learning with face-to-face interaction and self-managed learning. Learners are provided with print modules to read on their own and are required to attend tutorial classes and participate in online forums with their tutors and peers. The learning management system (LMS) is an integral part of the ODL system. In OUM, this learning platform, known as the myLMS, was internally developed. It allows learners and tutors to communicate, share information, access course materials and e-content, and keep them in the loop on academic matters and developments taking place within the university.

CHART 1
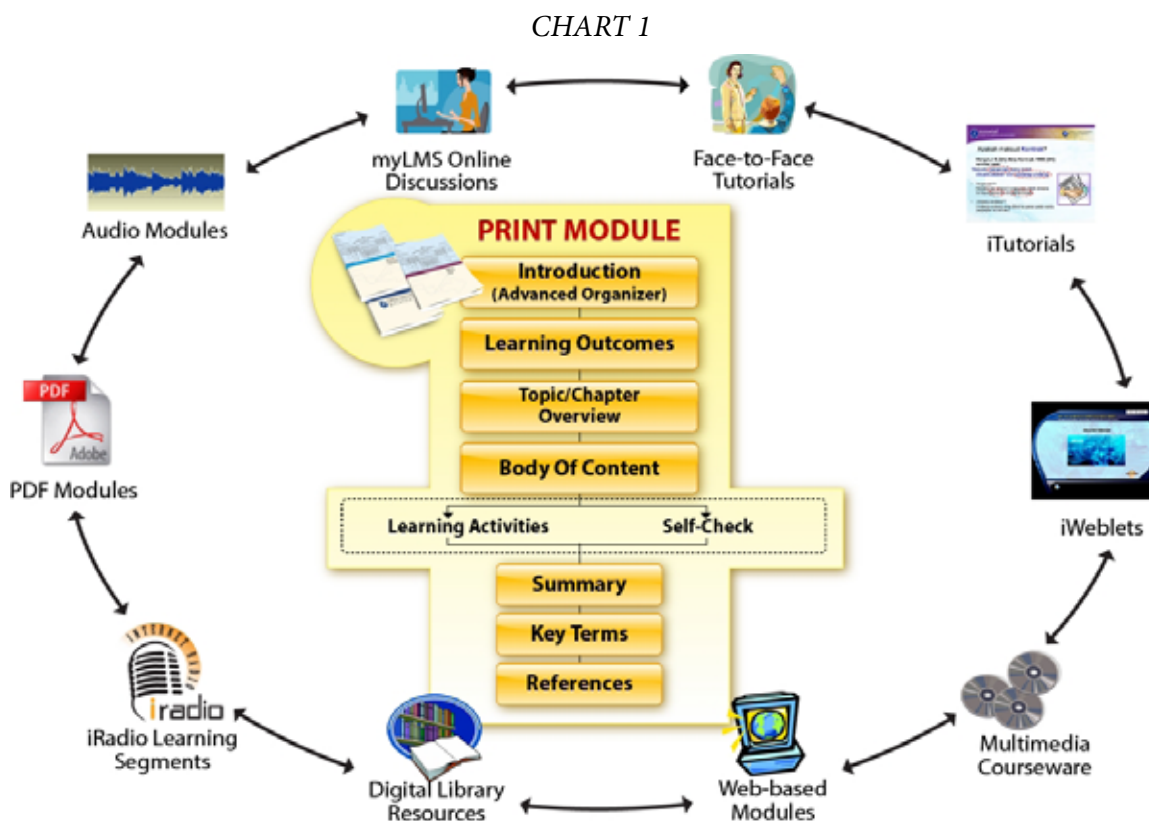
The advantage of self-managed learning is that learners can determine their own learning goals and map out ways to achieve them. However, for effective learning to take place, excellent IT support and the availability of quality learning materials are important. Learning materials in the form of learning objects, courseware, iTutorials, and other interactive media are meant to further enrich the learning experience. OUM learners can also access the Digital Library, iRadio, and other web-based technologies to complement their learning.

OUM's Digital Library is one of the most comprehensive online libraries in the country. It holds a wide range of re-

sources in print and online format. Collectively, the Digital Library has close to 30,000 volumes of printed books and subscribes to over 82,000 e-books, 32,000 e-journals, and about 930,000 e-thesis titles. These digital collections are accessible to all registered learners and play an important role in supporting teaching and learning.

iRadio is a webcast service managed by the university that streams module-related and "infotainment" programs. It is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and even includes podcasts and audio downloads, allowing learners to listen to any of the programs during their spare time. Interestingly, the i-Radio remains a popular information channel and is being accessed by listeners from over 100 countries.

The deployment of mobile technology is one of OUM's latest initiatives to support teaching and learning. Through mobile learning (m-learning), learners who are enrolled into the university's compulsory "Learning Skills for Open and Distance Learners" program receive regular reminders, as well as motivational and educational text messages. These text messages are also registered and can be tracked on the Twitter webpage of the corresponding course. Twitter, a popular social networking website, is an integral component of the m-learning project. It provides quick and convenient access to relevant information, thus making the delivery of ODL more effective.

> **Through mobile learning (m-learning), learners who are enrolled into the university's compulsory "Learning Skills for Open and Distance Learners" program receive regular reminders, as well as motivational and educational text messages.**

Being learner-centered, OUM is constantly searching for ways to enhance its delivery mechanism. Leveraging technology as an important enabler, it is able to fulfill the expectations of learners by providing them with a rewarding learning experience.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Like many other developing countries, Malaysia introduced new legislative acts in the 1990s in a bid to transform the country's higher education landscape. This led to partnerships with foreign institutions of higher learning while at the same time promoting the role of the private sector in higher education.

This is also in line with the country's vision to make Malaysia a regional center of educational excellence. Malaysia targeted 80,000 foreign students by 2010. To achieve this goal, higher education institutions, both public and private, are encouraged to enroll international students. In support of this, the Government allows the offering of a wide range of cost-effective study options, putting in place stringent quality assurance policies as well as allowing foreign universities to set up branch campuses locally. While many educational institutions are providing the impetus to attract overseas students into the country, a few others began exporting their educational services overseas in an effort to realize the Government's vision.

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OUM's internationalization efforts began in 2005 when it collaborated with Universitas Riau, Indonesia, and University of Science and Technology, Sana'a, Yemen. The University's expansion in the Middle East later led to the partnership with Arab Open University in Bahrain. OUM has since expanded into other countries, collaborating with Villa College in Maldives and Accra Institute of Technology in Ghana. Internationalization is vital to OUM's continued success in paving the path to become a cross-border education provider.

The Middle East remains one of the University's important markets, with cumulative enrollment in Yemen and Bahrain exceeding 700 learners to date. OUM offers primarily postgraduate degree programs in business administration and information technology at both Master's and PhD levels. Learners from these countries find OUM's flexible mode of learning a great advantage to their busy work schedule, as the majority of the learners are working adults. About 200 of the learners from these two countries have since graduated. These graduates were generally satisfied with the quality of the programs and services rendered. A significant "pull factor" for these graduates was the flexible mode of learning that allowed them to further their academic ambition without jeopardizing their work and personal commitments.

The Middle East remains one of the University's important markets, with cumulative enrollment in Yemen and Bahrain exceeding 700 learners to date.

Another milestone in OUM's internationalization effort is the "Total e-Learning Solutions" project commissioned by the Ministry of Higher Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). OUM and its associate company, METEOR Technology and Consultancy Sendirian Berhad, were appointed as consultants for the project, which was to be implemented in two stages over a period of five years.

The first phase, which began in February 2007, saw the establishment of the National e-Learning Centre (NeLC) and the introduction of e-learning facilities in institutions of higher learning throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the nine months of the first phase, OUM experts were stationed in Riyadh to supervise the installation of learning management systems and related infrastructure, trained Saudi IT personnel in courseware development, and assisted the Kingdom's Ministry of Higher Education in carrying out awareness and promotion programs on e-learning.

The second phase will begin soon with the geographical expansion of the e-learning facilities and making these available throughout the Kingdom. The strength of this relationship lies in the knowledge, especially from the perspective of the Ministry of Higher Education, the KSA, that OUM and METEOR Technology and Consultancy can together deliver the e–learning platform that is relevant to the Kingdom.

Realizing the importance of reaching out to a global audience, OUM launched OUM International in 2008 to spearhead initiatives for collaborative partnerships with institutions of learning across the globe. OUM International's client portfolio is diverse and the programs it offers are designed to cater to specific client needs. The programs are essentially needs-based training modules aimed at developing human capital, research, and consultancy services, and project man-

agement activities. Other activities of OUM International include organizing conferences and study tours alongside promoting short and long-term training programs in areas of education, public administration, environmental education, financial management, health, and information technology.

OUM International network of international partners include those in Bahrain, Yemen, and the KSA. Among its high-profile training programs is one involving high-ranking officials from the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) in the KSA, which began in 2004. The program is still running, and OUM International has since trained over 500 staff. A significant development of the program was the signing of an agreement with TAFE College, an affiliate of Victoria University in Australia, to offer a niche program for selected TVTC staff.

A new development in OUM's internationalization effort was the collaboration with Eszterhazy Karoly College, Hungary, to offer postgraduate programs involving the Master of Business Administration, Master of Information Technology, and Master of Instructional Design and Technology, a fully online program that is taught by academicians from around the world, including the Middle East.

Malaysia's comparative advantage in terms of socio-cultural and religious similarities in the region as well as the low cost of education and good bilateral ties it enjoys with countries in the Middle East has helped boost Malaysia as a viable education provider. Over the last five years, Middle East students have sought safer and more affordable options closer to home, resulting in an increasing number of Middle East students furthering their studies with Malaysian universities, including OUM.

CONCLUSION

For a fairly "young" university, OUM has to find ways not only to sustain itself but also develop new means and resources to propel itself as one of the leading players in ODL. Constant innovation is a necessity for the university to remain relevant in catering to the increasing demand for quality higher education, both in Malaysia and internationally. In light of this, the University has chosen to tread new paths and seek new ventures with other institutions.

Having been in operation for almost a decade and with a cumulative student intake exceeding 90,000, OUM will continue to rigorously pursue its vision of becoming a Mega University.

Collaborative partnerships with other institutions across the world are crucial in improving the quality of programs offered. Such collaborations are also a source of income, widening the participation of international learners and facilitating OUM's entry into new markets. Collaborative partnerships also lead to resource optimization by distributing costs among partners while expanding services to global learners. OUM is now acknowledged as a reputable global player, evidenced by its increasing number of international student numbers and the establishment of learning centers abroad.

Having been in operation for almost a decade and with a cumulative student intake exceeding 90,000, OUM will continue to rigorously pursue its vision of becoming a Mega University. A part of this strategy is to increase the number of international learners through international partnerships as we have seen in the past five years in the Middle East.

To strengthen its comparative advantage, OUM will continue to focus on the important aspects of higher education, namely quality assurance, accreditation, research capability, and enhanced scholastic development. These are important elements for students when choosing institutions for their higher education. By ensuring the quality of all its programs and effective delivery, OUM strives to complement the Government's efforts in transforming Malaysia into a center of academic excellence and contributes to the development of its human capital.

Experiences of Creating E-Learning Programs in the Middle East

John A. Spinks and Kanishka Bedi

This paper describes a collaborative venture in online education between a global e-university and one located in the Middle East, and outlines some of the difficulties encountered on the way to this successful partnership. Academia itself can by quite conservative in the adoption of new pedagogical approaches to learning, and online delivery of programs is certainly no exception to this. The incidence of purely or primarily online programs in the Middle East is low in comparison with the US and Australia, although, as will be seen, the developmental changes are rapid — there is, for example, a wealth of work on ICT-supported face-to-face degree programs.

The pace of change in the Middle East can be evidenced in a number of ways. First, there is a growing recognition that online education should be seriously considered, as evidenced by the many conferences on this issue held in the region. Second, the past decade has seen the birth of universities set up specifically for online education (e.g., Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University (HBMeU), set up in 2002 as the region's first virtual institution) while U21Global and the Syrian Virtual University, both in Dubai's Knowledge Village, and, more recently, the strongly marketed University of Liverpool/Laureate, have been developing their visibility as a provider of online degrees. The typical advantages of online education apply to the Middle East as much as anywhere, but flexibility with regard to study time, geographically remote access, and the community of global students may be seen as especially important for students there.

Figures for growth of e-learning in the Middle East range widely, but are generally very high (e.g., predicted compounded annual growth rates of 26% for UAE[1]). The UAE 2020 Education Vision second five-year plan argued for a need to update curricula and pedagogical methods through the use of technology, amongst other tools. HBMeU recently held the third annual forum on e-learning excellence in the Middle East, and led the launch, together with UNESCO, of the Middle East e-Learning Association. Indeed, most of the innovations in the direction of online education have been reported in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. It is clear, however, that much thought is being given to the development of e-learning elsewhere. For example, the University of Bahrain has held international conferences on the role of e-learning in supporting knowledge communities, and the Sultan Qaboos University has run similar international meetings — a series of Omani Society for Educational Technology conferences in Muscat.

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Dr. Kanishka Bedi is Assistant Professor and Assistant Dean (Executive Education – India & Middle East) at U21Global. He is currently researching the impact of faculty facilitation in online education, utility of digital storytelling in online classes, learning design of blended corporate training programs, and innovations in improving collegiality amongst faculty.

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1. Data provided by Madar Research Group.

The development of online education in the Middle East, however, is not easy, as will be indicated by the case study of this paper. There is, as elsewhere, a traditional resistance to online education, which could be a combination of any of the following:

- There is a belief among those not familiar with the area that face-to-face education is of better quality;
- The supply of campus-based university programs is high, and there is therefore no need for supplementing this by offering online education;
- There is an overall lack of understanding of the nature, let alone the advantages, of online education;
- There is a perceived preference for blended programs (some face-to-face components such as monthly or weekly meetings/seminars), perhaps because of the perception that online education does not provide for good social networking and interaction;
- The bureaucracy involved in setting up online education is daunting, leading to difficulties in getting online education degrees accredited, despite the strong government strategy to engage in such development.

CASE STUDY

During early 2008, HBMeU joined hands with Singapore-headquartered U21Global to create joint programs for the Middle East. It was perhaps for the first time that two online institutions had come together to leverage each other's strengths. U21Global had vast experience in creating and delivering cutting-edge e-learning programs globally, while HBMeU (then called *e*TQM College) had pioneered e-learning in the Middle East region. HBMeU and U21Global wanted to create two joint programs — Master of Project Management and Master of Management in Entrepreneurial Leadership (MMEL), with, in each of the programs, a number of modules developed by either side.

There are three ways in which institutions and/or degree programs may be accredited in the UAE. Universities that are established by Royal Decree may quality assure their own programs, and no further independent accreditation requirements must be met. For other universities, including overseas universities that have been set up in the Emirates, the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) provides the required external quality assurance (QA) function. However, for those institutions operating within the Free Zones of Dubai, an alternative body, the University Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB) of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority was set up to ensure the near equivalency of the institutions and/or programs to those of the home campus. The CAA system essentially accredits institutions against local standards. The UQAIB, as is implied above, accredits more on the basis of foreign national standards, and may therefore be seen as more flexible in its requirements. The UQAIB system is well described elsewhere[2]; in this case study, the joint program between U21Global and the local HBMeU required that accreditation be sought through the CAA.

2. W. Rawazik and M.I. Carroll, "Complexity in Quality Assurance in a Rapidly Growing Free Economic Environment: A UAE Case Study," *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2009), pp. 79-83.

The CAA, running under the Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Research, mandates that an institution applying for accreditation must have its campus located in the country with infrastructure to support conventional face-to-face learning in physical classrooms. The Ministry does not make any exceptions to this rule for e-learning institutions. This position was exemplified by the CAA's reluctance to accredit a completely online program. The insistence upon having some face-to-face sessions in every course in conjunction with synchronous technologies perhaps reflected the traditional pedagogical approach of face-to-face delivery of lectures by professors. While there is a concentration in the review process on describing learning outcomes down to a detailed level of granularity (a part of the detailed documentation required by CAA), an outcomes-oriented approach clearly does not take precedence over the mode of delivery.

A team of experts visited the HBMeU campus in connection with the accreditation process for the proposed programs. The team comprised two senior professors from the UK and one from the US, accompanied by a Commissioner appointed by the Ministry. All four of them are renowned experts in their respective fields and hail from prominent traditional universities, although they would not be well known as experts in, or advocates for, online education. Some of the suggested online assessment components (that are successfully used by online institutions world-wide and have gained credibility with the online education community, students, and specialist online accreditation agencies) for the courses, were not acceptable to the team. The holistic online environment created by U21Global for its completely online MBA program (Figure 1), which has won awards for its design, failed to convince the team of experts.
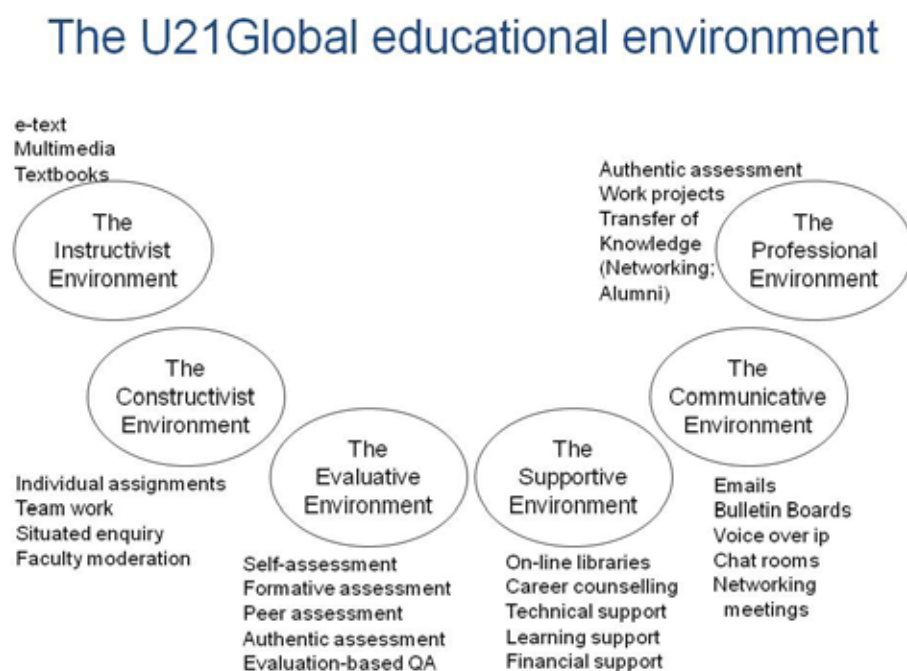

FIGURE 1: A VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The recommendations report received from the Ministry in January 2009 for revising the proposed programs was

comprehensive and provided some useful suggestions for the improvement of the curriculum. However, some other requirements for change were so radical in nature that they would alter the very scope and target audience of one of the two programs, namely the MMEL. The MMEL program initially intended to focus upon entrepreneurs from a variety of industries, including family businesses. However, despite the program viability surveys conducted earlier in Dubai to understand the needs of the prospective students for the program, the review report required the universities to reduce the scope to only entrepreneurs starting small businesses. In this connection, the report suggested that a number of proposed courses be replaced by new ones focusing exclusively on small business entrepreneurship. The Ministry eventually required two more revision cycles before accrediting the two programs, after 1.5 years of effort.
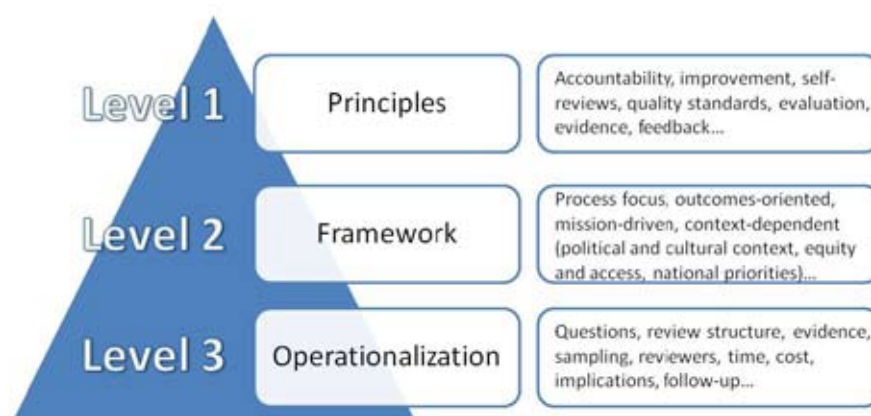
FIGURE 2: LEVELS OF QUALLITY ASSURANCE

HBMeU was the first e-university of its kind in the region — innovators or even early adopters have to do much more to explain the unique character of their provision to authorities than traditional providers. In a sense, this is a knowledge exchange process, with both the accreditor and the institution needing to understand each other's respective positions.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

E-learning is growing rapidly from a small base in the Middle East region. Even corporate education is changing classrooms into webinars. The establishment of HBMeU in Dubai is a testament to the fact that the government is aware of the importance of nurturing different formats of higher education. The UAE can, and often does, serve as a torch-bearer for the region, which makes its understanding of tomorrow's pedagogy and modes of delivery even more important.

Accreditation issues across borders are complex, but those involving online programs doubly so. In online education, the same program may be offered around the world, and thus be subject (or not) to the many different national QA systems in the place of residence of each of the students. In some cases, the provider may not even have a national "home," and, in some cases, it may not be possible to validate whether there are students resident in a particular country.

The first of the present authors[3] has argued that delivery mode is also part of the context in which the QA system should be dependent. So, for example, e-learning QA would concentrate on some criteria, at levels 2 and, certainly, level 3 of Figure 2, that would not be prioritized in a more traditional face-to-face educational environment (such as the need for higher levels of student support and ways of coping with lower student motivation). There is a strong need for sensitivity to these issues in local accreditation systems, as shown by this case study. Relying on a framework based on traditional delivery and pedagogy can slow local development unless there is a clear understanding of the emerging research in this area.

The message from this case study is that the accreditation route is not easy for non-traditional overseas providers if a partnership arrangement is preferred. This difficulty can have an inhibitory effect on local tertiary development through the benchmarking and knowledge exchange that come from educational collaborations. The UQAIB has to be more open and flexible, as its standards are aligned to those of the home country of the institution being accredited, thus operationalizing the UNESCO/OECD principles for cross-border higher education accreditation. However, it could be argued that the national context (e.g., values and goals of education, social and political values, resources) should be aligned with the goals of the QA system. CAA takes into account national issues, such as national priorities for curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. If the review process is such that it ensures an excellent fit between the nation's needs and the institutional offering, then this is an appropriate mode of QA. Unfortunately, this has to be balanced against the tensions that can result from institutions that have a different set of values for constructing their own educational provision, and leads to deep questions about whether those values can be sacrificed.

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3. J.A. Spinks, "Emerging Issues in the Quality Assurance of e-learning Programmes and Institutions," Keynote address to the I-CODE 2006 Conference, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman, March 27, 2006.

Dubai's Knowledge Village and Creating a Knowledge Economy in the United Arab Emirates

Ali S. Ibrahim

In 2003, scholars from the Arab world in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme published the second *Arab Human Development Report: Building a Knowledge Society*. The report emphasized that long-term economic growth in the Arab world was only possible through the development of a knowledge society — a large pool of skilled knowledge workers who would drive entrepreneurship, innovation, productivity and knowledge-based exports.[1] The pool of human capital needed for creating the knowledge society can be developed through a quality education system. The report highlighted, however, that many academic institutions in the Arab world, with few exceptions, were failing to produce enough qualified graduates with skills that served the needs of the emerging knowledge economy.

In addition, the lack of quality higher education institutions, together with the shortage of post-graduate opportunities, meant that the region was losing many of its most gifted students, who would travel overseas in search of better educational opportunities and often never return. The shortage of research facilities and skilled work opportunities led further to the migration of many of the region's already skilled professionals. As graduate students and qualified professionals leave, innovation and economic development in the region is hampered.[2]

Since the tragic events of September 11th, the Middle East region has witnessed a drop in numbers of students applying to US universities due to the tightening of immigration security procedures against males from 25 countries, most of which are in the Middle East. In addition, in most Western countries, international students' tuition fees and cost of living are increasing, thus creating another barrier to overseas education.[3] Regardless of security and expense, many regional students, particularly females, are not allowed to study abroad on their own and many others prefer to study locally due to family ties and cultural traditions.[4]

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1. N. Fergany, F. Bennani, H. Elsadda, F. Jadaane, and A. Kubursi, *Arab Human Development Report 2003*. New York: United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2003.
2. N. Fergany *et al.*, *Arab Human Development Report 2003*.
3. Dubai Knowledge Village, Dubai Academic City Academic Application (2005), http://www.diacedu.ae/contents/file/DIAC%20Setup%20Application.pdf.
4. A. Al Karam and A. Ashencaen, "Knowledge Village: Establishing a Global Destination for Education in Dubai" (2004), http://www.britishcouncil.org/goingglobal-session-2-1225-

The Knowledge Village (KV) was created to retain and develop regional talent needed to drive the creation of a knowledge economy, to respond to changes in overseas education, and to maximize on the large youth population in the region. It was established as a regional meeting point between Middle Eastern students and global education providers.

THE KNOWLEDGE VILLAGE

In 2003, Dubai Knowledge Village was launched in line with the vision of H.H. Shaykh Muhammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai. The KV was founded as a third business entity of Dubai TECOM Free Zone along with Dubai Internet City and Dubai Media City.[5] In founding the KV, Sheikh Muhammad was in a way recreating the success of California's Silicon Valley by attracting a large number of famous international universities, professional training centers, e-learning providers, and research and development centers from around the world.[6] His vision was that as these clusters grow, they will interact, thus complementing and contributing to each other's growth and creating a vibrant knowledge economy base.

As a free zone, the KV offers world-class amenities and services to its business partners including complete foreign ownership, total exemption from taxes, full repatriation of capital and profits, as well as smooth incorporation and visa issuance procedures. The KV hosts over 450 companies, comprising a variety of knowledge-based business entities that range from training and development centers to human resources management and consultancy services. The vibrant growth over the years has gained the KV the reputation as a regional destination for human capital management.[7]

Educational services by the KV [Knowledge Village] tenants focus on specializations that are growing in demand and are most useful for knowledge-based economies.

Educational services offered by the KV tenants focus on specializations that are growing in demand and are most useful for knowledge-based economies. These range from corporate IT training to masters' degrees in business management and engineering. Some of these programs and training courses are offered online to create a new culture of learning and exploit new technologies to aid the process of knowledge dissemination.[8]

Within one year of inception, the KV had attracted 15 regional and international universities from nine different countries including Australia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, Belgium, the UK, Ireland, and Canada. Collectively, at the beginning of its first academic year in 2003/2004, the KV had 2,500 students registered in university programs. As the

thursday-tne-abdulla-al-karam-paper.pdf.

5. UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), National Profile of the Information Society in the United Arab Emirates (2007), http://www.escwa.un.org/wsis/reports/docs/UAE-07-E.pdf.

6. Madar Research Group, *Dubai Knowledge Economy: 2003-2008* (Dubai: United Arab Emirates, 2003).

7. Knowledge Village, "About Dubai Knowledge Village" (2010), http://www.kv.ae/page/about-dkv.

8. Madar Research Group, *Dubai Knowledge Economy: 2003-2008.*

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KV university community became larger, enrollment increased rapidly, and in 2004/2005 that figure had increased to 6,000.[9]

To maintain the high quality of academic programs offered, several criteria were set out for any university applying to Dubai Knowledge Village. A major criterion for a university application is that it must be a reputed and highly ranked institution in its country of origin.[10] In addition, an institution has to apply for a branch campus status, which means that programs, syllabi, teaching methods, degrees, and accreditation must be identical to the parent campus.[11] Beyond these two criteria, the KV selection strategy rests upon a diversification of institution nationalities and programs of study.[12]

In addition to universities, Dubai Knowledge Village is home to over 200 regional professional training centers and education service providers. Training centers provide a valuable learning resource for professionals looking to develop their skills through flexible, part-time education.[13] The cluster also serves a variety of learning support services such as human development resource centers, innovation centers, and research and development institutes.[14] The KV also includes a number of e-learning and online universities.

To maintain the high quality of academic programs offered, several criteria were set out for any university applying to Dubai Knowledge Village.

Dubai Knowledge Village is deeply committed to providing practical programs to sustain the creation of a knowledge economy. For example, to serve the Dubai Internet City, many KV degree programs emphasize IT and business management. Media courses are also offered to support the emerging media industry centered at Dubai Media City, while programs in medicine and accountancy are offered to create knowledge workers to drive the developing healthcare and finance sectors.[15]

The location of the KV among other free zones (Dubai Internet City and Dubai Media City) has allowed learners at the KV valuable first-hand experiences of the latest trends in regional IT, media, and business to apply to their courses. Dubai Knowledge Village has also established internships with other hubs to provide students with invaluable practical experience of the regional business world.[16] Located at the meeting-point of three continents, the KV is an ideal destination for overseas Arab students who would otherwise go to Europe, North America, or Australia. With steady increases

9. Al Karam and Ashencaen, "Knowledge Village: Establishing a Global Destination for Education in Dubai."
10. Dubai Knowledge Village, Dubai Academic City Academic Application.
11. Knowledge Village, Dubai Academic City Academic Application; Al Karam and Ashencaen, "Knowledge Village: Establishing a Global Destination for Education in Dubai."
12. D. McGlennon, "Building Research Capacity in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Strategy, Funding and Engagement," paper presented at the Second International Colloquium on Research and Higher Education Policy, Paris, November 29-December 1, 2006.
13. Al Karam and Ashencaen, "Knowledge Village: Establishing a Global Destination for Education in Dubai."
14. Madar Research Group, *Dubai Knowledge Economy: 2003-2008.*
15. Al Karam and Ashencaen, "Knowledge Village: Establishing a Global Destination for Education in Dubai."
16. Al Karam and Ashencaen, "Knowledge Village: Establishing a Global Destination for Education in Dubai."

in the number of students choosing to study in Dubai, the KV plans to attract additional international universities and to offer other specialized programs, with a strong focus on post-graduate studies, and research and development. The growth of the KV community has resulted in the launching of a separate cluster for university-level education — Dubai International Academic City (DIAC).

DUBAI INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CITY (DIAC)

In 2007, Dubai International Academic City was launched as a free zone dedicated exclusively to international higher education, where educational institutions from Dubai Knowledge Village will move to (DIAC, 2010). DIAC, still under construction and scheduled to be completed in 2012, is located at Dubai Academic City (DAC) but DAC will be concerned with K-12 education and is not a free zone. The intention is for the KV to only host training institutes and educational service organizations. The development of DIAC after a few years of the launch of the KV seems confusing, especially when institutions at the KV will relocate at DIAC. It seemed that at first the KV was thought to incorporate all institutions but with time and growth, the idea of creating a separate city for university and higher education became a necessity.

Dubai International Academic City currently hosts 30 campus branches from 13 different countries including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Russia, Iran, Britain, Belgium, Australia, Canada, France, Singapore, the UK, and the US. These branches include Michigan State University from the US, the University of Wollongong & Murdoch University from Australia, Middlesex University and Heriot-Watt University from the UK, and S.P. Jain Centre of Management from India. A unique feature of the DIAC cluster is that students from different universities and colleges share housing and recreational facilities, allowing them and faculty members from different institutions to interact and learn from each other.[17]

Dubai International Academic City currently hosts 30 campus branches from 13 different countries ...

Currently, programs at DIAC range in duration from one to four years. Most academic programs concentrate in business administration, media and mass communication, computer and information technology, and engineering. Other programs include fashion design, health sciences, tourism, education, and environmental studies. Approximately 15,000 students are currently enrolled in the various programs. The Executive Director of DIAC expects that by 2015, the number of students will rise to 40,000 students who will be attending 40 different institutions.[18]

In the future, DIAC intends to provide universities that have proven their model to be successful with the opportunity to construct their own campuses for a permanent presence in the region with their own student dormitories, accommodation for university staff, and other amenities.[19]

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17. Dubai International Academic City (DIAC), "Why DIAC" (2010), http://www.diacedu.ae/page.php/why-diac.
18. Dubai International Academic City (DIAC), "Why DIAC" (2010).
19. Dubai Knowledge Village, Dubai Academic City Academic Application.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POSSIBLE FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Clearly, Dubai has taken serious steps to provide the environment and infrastructure that guarantee its transformation into a knowledge-based economy. However, there is a lack of rigorous research that assesses the extent to which and the ways in which the KV and DIAC have been successful in creating such an economy. The few written works on the KV and DIAC are mostly descriptive. In addition, no research has been conducted to investigate the extent to which Emiratis, Arabs, or foreign populations are the creators, users, and/or disseminators of knowledge in these two clusters. This is important since 80% of Dubai's population is foreign; the country is in dire need of creating its own national pool of knowledge workers to break the cycle of dependence on the expatriate population.

Second, Dubai utilized a policy of allowing new universities and institutions of higher education to determine the programs they offer based on market demands. It is no surprise that the majority of undergraduate programs are in business and IT and that MBAs are the most demanded graduate program in these clusters. While the UAE and the larger Middle East are in need of other specialized high-quality professionals in Science, Medicine and Engineering, international entrepreneurs do not emphasize this. The extent to which this tendency will affect the knowledge-based economy in the region has not yet been addressed. Further, as mentioned above, the Middle East lacks professional research institutes and centers. The UAE, for example, has very few research degrees that provide skilled researchers and scientists. It is unlikely that newly established for-profit institutions at the KV and DIAC will provide these degrees in the future.[20] The result would be for the UAE to continue its reliance on imported professionals to support its research and development capacity.

> **The production (not consumption) of knowledge is another, more advanced stage of development that should be given attention by leaders and policy makers in the UAE.**

Finally, it should be noted that the term "knowledge economy" can be used to refer either to an economy of knowledge focused on the production of knowledge or to a knowledge-based economy which refers to the use of knowledge to produce economic benefits. The essential difference is that in a knowledge economy, knowledge is a product whereas in a knowledge-based economy, knowledge is a tool. Dubai Knowledge Village mission directly addresses the second meaning.[21] The production (not consumption) of knowledge is another, more advanced stage of development that should be given attention by leaders and policy makers in the UAE.

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20. See D. McGlennon, "Building Research Capacity in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Strategy, Funding and Engagement."
21. Knowledge Village, "About Dubai Knowledge Village" (2010).

Western Education in the Arabian Gulf: The Costs and Benefits of Reform

Juliana G-Mrabet

Educational reform from the West has arrived on a grand scale in the Arabian Gulf, particularly in higher education. American, Canadian, Australian, and British universities are being established throughout the region. In addition, Western-style methodologies and best-practices are being employed. Although there are considerable benefits to adopting Western models of education, such reform does not come without a price.

Historically, the purpose of education in Gulf society was to preserve and transmit traditional culture.[1] Nowadays, leaders throughout the region view education as a basic component in building their nations and the foundation of economic development and social change. In the process of development and modernization, they have realized that in order to limit the erosion of traditional culture, they need to prepare their own citizens to run the business of their country and stop relying on foreign professionals and experts. Consequently, substantial resources have been invested to provide greater educational opportunities; however, developing educational systems that can produce students capable of tending to the needs of a changing society while at the same time preserving traditional Islamic values has been a major challenge. The sudden introduction of foreign concepts and practices has disrupted society, and interaction between Arabs and Westerners has resulted in conflicts in some cases. It has also led to a division within society between those who feel that change is necessary for progress and those who feel that change is an assault of Western morals and values on their societies.[2]

The conceptual framework for this study is based primarily on Diffusion Theory as defined by Everett Rogers.[3] Roger's work provides a synthesis of the last 30 years of diffusion research and offers a set of guiding principles for the dissemination of new ideas. He tells us under what conditions these ideas are most likely to be implemented[4] and delineates the process of adaptation, why some people or organizations adopt new ideas before others, and how they are influenced at each stage.[5] He also helps us to understand the consequences that relate to the adoption of innovations and calls for

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1. Joseph S. Szyliowicz, *Education and Modernization in the Middle East* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973).
2. Khalid Mrabet, "A Glance at the United Arab Emirates: A Setting Analysis," *unpublished paper, 2000.*
3. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 1995).
4. Stephanie Vanderslice, "Listening to Everett Rogers: Diffusion of Innovations and WAC," *Journal of Language and Learning Across the Disciplines,* Vol. 4 (2000), pp. 22-29.
5. Robert Hornick, "Some Reflections on Diffusion Theory and the Role of Everett Rogers," *Journal of Health Communication,* Vol. 9 (2004), pp. 143-48.

more research to be done in this subject area, hence the relevance of this study. According to Rogers, there has been inadequate attention paid by change agents and educators to the consequences of innovations because they are difficult to measure. There is also an assumption that consequences will be positive, which is not always the case. Rogers defines *consequences* as "the changes that occur to an individual or to a social system as a result of the adoption or rejection of an innovation."[6] He classifies consequences into three categories: 1) desirable and undesirable, 2) direct and indirect, and 3) anticipated and unanticipated. According to Rogers, "the desirable, direct, and anticipated consequences usually go together as do the undesirable, indirect, and unanticipated consequences."[7]

FINDINGS

The first finding below supports Roger's classification of "Desirable Consequences" because Western models of education and best practices are seen as useful and positive. They have a desirable impact on those who adopt them, and it is expected that there will be continued desirable consequences resulting from their diffusion. In other words, people see value in the new ideas and therefore adopt them.

The primary benefit of adopting Western-style education and best practices in the Arabian Gulf is to help produce a qualitative shift in the learning styles of the students — to steer them away from rote memory as the sole tool of learning and to encourage them to become self-reliant, independent thinkers. The goal is to provide students with the analytical skills they need to make their own decisions, enabling them to become lifelong learners who are capable of contributing to their societies and communities.

> **The primary benefit of adopting Western-style education and best practices in the Arabian Gulf is to help produce a qualitative shift in the learning styles of the students ...**

The second finding is related to "Direct Consequences," which Rogers defines as the "changes that occur to an individual or a system in immediate response to an innovation."[8] The direct consequences below are the results of the diffusion of innovations from the West both in and outside the classroom.

The changes in education are positive and stem primarily from Western best practices in the classroom. Classroom learning is a two-way process whereby both faculty and students are affected by each other's culture and background. In the past more attention was paid to male students. However, nowadays there is a new positive attitude in education toward female students. This is due, in part, to the adoption of the Western educational system.

Not all change in the Gulf region is due to Western-style education. Much of it is the direct result of extensive exposure to Western lifestyles, pop-culture (via television and computer), and other non-Western expatriates. So, education, technology, and social interaction all overlap to influence change in the region.

6. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 2003), p. 150.
7. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. 441.
8. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1995), p. 415.

Rogers defines "Anticipated Consequences" as "changes brought about by an innovation that are recognized and intended by the members of a social system."[9] In the findings below, Western best practices in education are recognized and viewed as accomplishments by the respondents.

Adopting Western-style education gives Gulf students the opportunity to gain some perspective on Western culture, which will help to minimize differences and bridge gaps of understanding. This kind of cross-cultural understanding is seen as key to helping solve some of the conflicts between the Arab world and the West.

There have been many accomplishments in education due to the adoption of Western standards, such as timelines and best practices. Practical knowledge is also gained from the West, such as the use of technology. However, Islamic guidelines are imperative for striking a balance between Gulf and Western societies. Because Islam is considered part and parcel of daily life, it holds the key to the ethical components of Arab society.

There are many instances where Western faculty — knowingly or unknowlingly — infringe on the cultural and religious beliefs of Arab students.

Rogers' model refers to "Undesirable Consequences" as the dysfunctional or negative effects of an innovation to the adopter. The findings below illustrate how educational innovations from the West can have an undesirable impact on Arabian Gulf society:

Western models of education, best practices, textbooks, and educators inevitably bring Western culture to the classroom and into the learning process. Although it is important to challenge students and foster critical thinking, if what they are learning is totally different from their own cultural norms, contradicts what they've learned, and goes against their Islamic values, there can be negative consequences. Furthermore, students are not changing, but are merely mimicking the behavior of their instructors.

There are many instances where Western faculty — knowingly or unknowingly — infringe on the cultural and religious beliefs of Arab students. The change agent, in this case the expatriate, brings his or her own norms and values, which at times are threatening to the student and society in general. The findings also support Rogers' (2003) contention that it is difficult for a change agent to be objective about the desirability of an innovation in another country.[10] He suggests that the values, beliefs, and attitudes of a particular culture are effective for that culture and should be judged based on their functionality in terms of their own specific circumstances and needs. The norms of the outsider or change agent should not be imposed on the user's culture. Rogers argues that, "Every social system has certain qualities that should not be destroyed if the welfare of the system is to be maintained."[11]

9. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1995), p. 419.
10. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1995), p. 411.
11. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1995), p. 412.

Rogers refers to "Indirect Consequences" as the changes that come about as a result of direct consequences. They are referred to as the "consequences of consequences"[12] as illustrated in the finding below:

Due in part to the post-9/11 backlash many families from the Arabian Gulf are reluctant to send their children abroad. Consequently, Western universities have been contracted to set up campuses in the Gulf states. Western models of education and the recruitment of Western teachers has become a way to "get the best of both worlds." However, sometimes students pick up behavior, concepts, etc. indirectly, and because there is an element of prestige attached to families whose children are taught by Westerners, the potential negative social impact from those teachers is often ignored for the sake of social status. Those Gulf students who do travel to the West often return home with new views and attitudes toward their own culture, not all of them positive.

According to Rogers, innovations do not come without any strings attached. Some consequences may be anticipated, but others are unintended or unexpected, or hidden. These types of potential changes are in line with Rogers' analogy of a social system to a bowl of marbles: "move any of its elements and the position of all the others are inevitably changed also."[13] Adopters do not always fully understand this interdependence; moreover, there is a lack of understanding on the part of the change agents of the internal and external forces at work when a new idea is introduced, as is illustrated in the finding below:

Although influence from the West is transmitted through education, such education would not have come about had it not been for the discovery of oil.

Although influence from the West is transmitted through education, such education would not have come about had it not been for the discovery of oil in the region. All of this "Western influence" is seen as the by-product of a "boom economy." Many people of the region have the financial means to make choices about where they go and how they live, which is believed to have affected tradition to an enormous degree. Change is happening too fast and has already distorted local customs and traditions. Classes are more and more mixed, females are much less reserved, nuclear families are replacing extended families, there are more mixed marriages, children are being raised in both Eastern and Western cultures, *Abayas* in Saudi Arabia are changing colors, women are taking off headscarves and going out on their own (unaccompanied by a male), and mass media is disseminating information faster than ever before.

Re-invention is another aspect of Roger's Diffusion Theory. This is "the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by the user in the process of its adoption and implementation."[14] What is perplexing is that often, Western universities come to the Gulf with the idea that they can "cut and paste" their model of education into the region only to discover that it is doesn't work that way. Western educational programs must be modified, tailored, and adapted to the local Gulf context. In other words, as Rogers points out, an adopter is not always a passive recipient of change, but

12. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1995), p. 415.
13. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1995), p. 419.
14. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (1995), p. 174.

can also be an active adapter of new ideas.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Continued change in the Arabian Gulf is inevitable, but the resistance to reform is powerful and in some cases, extreme as is evident with some of the fundamentalist movements. As one respondent explained during an interview, "There is a battle going on."[15] People want to move forward like Western societies but they are afraid that they will take on all of the West's problems. It is very important to keep in mind that that each country must evolve at its own pace. Furthermore, it is imperative that the change agent understands fully his or her own culture in order to understand how he or she may be perceived by the host culture and thus communicate better and avoid some of the misunderstandings that are repeated over and over. Equally important, experts and consultants need to take the time to understand their clients and analyze the setting where their educational projects are to be implemented.

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15. This phrase was used by a respondent to sum up the tension in the Gulf region with regard to influence from the West.

Turkey's Distinctive Position in the Internationalization of Higher Education

Yasar Kondakci

There is a tendency to associate the internationalization of higher education with economically developed and Anglophone countries (e.g., the US, UK, Canada, and Australia). Although there are various different rationales behind internationalization (e.g., social, political, and academic),[1] economic rationales are more prominent for these countries. However, several recent developments have made internationalization one of the top issues on the agendas of countries in a wider geographic and economic landscape — including developing and non-Anglophone countries.

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Turkey's engagement in the internationalization of higher education has several distinctive attributes. First, although Turkey is characterized as a sending country in the global scheme of student movement, the comparison of in-bound and out-bound student mobility in Turkey shows that the number of out-bound students has significantly decreased while the number of in-bound students has slightly increased since 2000. It is important to note that a great majority of these in-bound students are from the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Balkans. Second, Turkey's government has actively supported higher education institutions in their efforts to establish joint universities and develop joint programs with partners from countries in these surrounding regions. Third, the government has played an active role in establishing international universities, determining the scale of student exchange, and facilitating the development of joint programs (e.g., implementing a scholarship policy for foreign students). The extent of the involvement indicates that Turkey is using higher education as a foreign policy tool.[2]

These developments suggest that, compared to other developing and non-Anglophone countries as well as developed and Anglophone countries, Turkey's internationalization of higher education is a distinctive process. A close examination of Turkey's geopolitical, historical, cultural, economic, and educational characteristics suggest several key insights about this process.

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1. Jane Knight, "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* Vol. 8 (2004), pp. 5-31.
2. Yüksel Kavak and Gülsün Atanur Baskan, "Educational Policies and Applications of Turkey towards Turkic Republics and Communities," *Hacettepe University Faculty of Education Journal*, Vol. 20 (2001), pp. 92-103 (in Turkish).

First, it can be argued that Turkey's geopolitical position is the most important factor defining its role in the internationalization of higher education. Turkey is a natural bridge between the East and the West. Turkey is also a gateway for neighbors seeking access to advanced industrialized European economies, which suggests that there is a parallelism between international migration and student mobility. However, Turkey is more than just a geographic bridge between the East and West. It is a secular state that has a relatively long experience with Western parliamentary democracy. Its multiparty system is more mature than many other countries in the Balkans, Caucasia, and the Middle East. This distinctive characteristic makes Turkey a model for these countries. Turkey's political atmosphere is likely to be one of the key elements attracting foreign students and institutions to the country.

Second, the capacity and diversity of Turkey's higher education system as a whole is another factor contributing to Turkey's distinctive position in the internationalization of higher education. Since 1950, almost all higher education institutions have been established according to the Anglo-Saxon university tradition. It is important to note that Turkey's higher education system suffers from several structural and functional problems such as excessive demand, unequal quality, a high degree of centralization, and a lack of academic autonomy. However, compared to other countries in the region, Turkey's higher education system has a longer tradition of engagement with the Anglo-Saxon-type. Indeed, it can be argued that

> **The quality of some of Turkey's universities is well above that of most of their counterparts in the region.**

because of this tradition, the country has encountered fewer problems in the Bologna Process — through which many European countries are trying to convert their higher education systems to an Anglo-Saxon type system. In addition, together with the recently established universities, the number of institutions and the diversity of academic programs have increased in Turkey. More importantly, a significant number of these programs are English-medium programs. However, the distinctive nature of Turkey's higher education is not limited to quantitative capacity. The quality of some of these institutions is well above that of most of their counterparts in the region. Finally, in public universities the tuition fees are extremely low. These distinctive qualities make Turkey's higher education system attractive to foreign students and foreign institutions seeking to establish joint programs or universities.

Third, Turkey's historical and cultural characteristics are sources of attraction for foreign students and institutions. Turkey's Ottoman heritage contributed to the development of a common culture between Turkey and the different communities living in the Middle East, the Balkans, and North Africa. It is essential to indicate that several governmental policies and non-governmental initiatives intend to extend historical and cultural ties. Besides, cultural proximity makes Turkey a natural harbor for communities in the surrounding regions in the face of political, social, and economic calamities. Likewise, cultural proximity has been a source of attraction of foreign students. Whereas some of the students from Western and economically developed countries choose Turkey for the purpose of learning about and experiencing living in another culture, students from the Balkans, Caucasia, Central Asia, and the Middle East believe that cultural proximity increases their chances of "fitting in."

Fourth, Turkey's macro-economic performance is another defining characteristic behind the internationalization of

Turkish higher education. Compared to all other countries in the region, Turkey has a longer engagement with a Western economy. In addition, compared to the economic performance of the other countries in the surrounding regions — including Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Greece, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Iran, and Albania — Turkey has a relatively more rapidly growing and larger economy. Moreover, in the last ten years Turkey has resolved some structural economic problems (e.g., high inflation). Though not a prime reason, Turkey's economic performance attracts foreign students for study abroad and foreign institutions to consider partnerships with Turkish higher education institutions. A considerable number of foreign students choose Turkey with the prospect of finding a job and staying in Turkey for the purpose of improving their living standards.

Turkish higher education facilitates the movement of people at the intersection of the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. Hopefully, the increased movement of people will foster interactions among different nations and communities and ultimately help reduce the risk of conflicts between them.

Liberal Education and the American University of Beirut (AUB)

Betty S. Anderson

In October 1970, *Newsweek* magazine christened the American University of Beirut (AUB) "Guerrilla U" because "politics at AUB today is tied directly to the Palestine guerrilla movement."[1] In the 1950s, students conducted large-scale protests in support of Palestinians and Algerians and against the Western-led Baghdad Pact. Going back even further, what was possibly the first student protest in Arab history occurred in 1882 when medical students at the school's predecessor, the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), rallied in support of a professor who had praised the work of Charles Darwin in a graduation speech. AUB's students are not unique in their desire to protest on behalf of political goals; with the exception of the events of 1882, these other eras saw similar protests all over the Arab world. AUB's experience does, however, highlight how the American liberal education system intersected with an increasingly politicized Arab world.

Regardless of what specifically sparked a particular protest, every conflict between the American administration of AUB and the students addressed the parameters of the American liberal education system itself. The Americans set forth a structure that encouraged students to be active participants in their own educational experience, to seek to learn the tools necessary for validating and producing knowledge on their own rather than merely memorizing a text or lecture. While the many AUB administrators and students over the years embraced this concept of student participation as an integral element within the educational process, conflicts arose repeatedly over the level of authority students could actually wield over their campus and curricular lives.

Exacerbating the issue, American universities have never fully codified the rights students should hold specifically as students. Although they assuredly have the right to be admitted without discrimination, to choose speakers to invite, and to publish school newspapers, they have not been provided, as faculty members have, with clear-cut guidelines for academic freedom. Mario Savio, leader of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement (FSM) in 1964, criticized his university because "students are permitted to talk all they want so long as their speech has no consequences."[2] By this statement, he claimed that American university leaders praise freedom of speech as vital to educational growth but often block attempts by students to act on their political convictions. From the student

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1. "Guerrilla U,'" *Newsweek*, Vol. 6, No. 15 (October 5, 1970), p. 68.
2. Mario Savio, as quoted in E.G. Williamson and John L. Cowan, *The American Student's Freedom of Expression: A Research Appraisal* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1966), p. 88.

The views expressed in these *Viewpoints* are those of the authors; the Middle East Institute does not take positions on Middle East policy.

perspective at AUB, this problem has often meant that the method of open inquiry ostensibly defining liberal education could be arbitrarily withdrawn whenever other administrative goals took precedence, limiting the freedoms student sactually hold while on campus.

The founders of SPC opened the school in 1866 as an institution for proselytizing for Protestantism; the earliest student protests opposed this framework and demanded that a freedom to learn coincide with a freedom to worship. In 1882, the medical students walked out of class in protest against President Daniel Bliss's prohibition of the teaching of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. For the students, the most egregious mistake was the forced resignation of one of their favorite professors, Edwin Lewis. However, connected to this grievance was the belief that Bliss was curtailing their educational growth by pushing a proponent of Darwin's ideas off campus. The students lost the initial battle but new scientific ideas could not be kept out of the curriculum indefinitely;

Rapid changes in the political, economic, and social life of the 20th century Arab world meant that education was necessarily political ...

by the 1890s, the theory of evolution was required reading in the geology class. In 1909, Muslim and Jewish students protested against obligatory Bible class and church attendance, building on a regional discussion of religious freedom catalyzed by the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Despite the cogency of the arguments put forward by the students, then President Howard Bliss refused to change what he considered the school's basal element: its Christian evangelicalism. In 1920, however, when the Board of Trustees changed the name to the American University of Beirut, obligatory religious requirements disappeared from the school's statutes. In neither case did the students see an immediate redress of their grievances, but their complaints helped move the school gradually away from its religious parochialism and toward an educational curriculum that valued discussion and analysis over the search for religious truth.

While student protest served as a potent pressure point for curriculum changes during SPC's existence, succeeding generations of students found themselves struggling to bring the Arab world inside the Main Gate. Rapid changes in the political, economic, and social life of the 20th century Arab world meant that education was necessarily political, that students naturally involved themselves with political events whenever they interacted with their own societies. Students argued that they could never truly be helpful to their societies if they could not engage the political world as part of their educational experience; the freedom to act equated with the freedom of expression for these students. They also wanted the Arab world, rather than Western experience, to form the core of their curriculum. Students articulated these demands using the language of liberal education, demanding that the school recognize their authority to determine the parameters of their educational lives.

Repeatedly, students came out in protest because the American leadership of the school did not want the politics of the Arab world to seep into campus life; in this administrative perspective, politics had to be kept outside of the campus walls because they could only disrupt the educational process. University life was a training ground for what students would do in the professional and political realm after graduation; they should not engage these elements as students. In a pointed critique of the administration's policy on political activism, a 1955 editorial in the schools newspaper, *Outlook*

declared, "It is the university's function to train us, its students and future spokesmen of our countries, to face the problems of everyday life ... how can we be the future liberators of our respective countries if we are not taught how to practice the basic important factors that lead to freedom from oppression?"[3] In the late 1960s, frustration with what students considered an outdated curriculum led them to establish a "Free University" so they could teach courses they deemed relevant to their lives. Simultaneously, they introduced a Speakers' Corner to serve as a weekly forum for open discussion about any and all issues. Large groups of students occupied campus buildings on two occasions, in 1971 and 1974, demanding that they have an institutional voice regarding any decisions concerning their campus lives. When President Stephen Kirkwood suspended the 1970-1971 academic year as a result of the occupation, Student Council President Maher Masri declared, "this is just what we expected. From now on this is our university, not Kirkwood's university."[4]

In the case of this 1971 protest, the administration regained control of the school during the next academic year, but the statement reflected long-standing student claims that liberal education necessitated the institutionalization of student voices. The system itself encouraged student participation in the educational experience, and the history of student activities at SPC and AUB shows that students took up the challenge and pressured the administration to constantly widen the scope of student agency. Students served, as a result, as influential actors helping to embed AUB into Arab political life; the school became of Beirut rather than merely existing in it.

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3. "We Want to Learn," *Outlook*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (November 19, 1955), p. 2. American University of Beirut/Library Archives. Hereafter AUB.
4. "Academic Program Is Suspended Following 'Not Vote' to Proposals and Occupation of Jessup, Fisk Halls, Including Office of the Dean; Masri: 'It's Just What We Expected!'" *Outlook*, Vol. 27, No. 15 (May 25, 1971), p. 1.

Policy Privatization and Empowerment of Sub-National Forces: The Case of Private English Language Institutes in Iran

Maryam Borjian

In the past, there was no need for learning a foreign language. Today, however, learning foreign languages should be included in school curricula … Today is not like yesterday, when our voice could not reach beyond the national boundary. Today, we can stay in Iran but publicize [our ideology] and export our revolution to other parts of the world in different languages.

Ayatollah Khomeini, 1980[1]

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After the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, which put an end to a 2,500-year old monarchy and replaced it with the governance of the religious jurisprudent (*velāyat-e faqih*), the attitude towards English language was profoundly negative as it was closely associated with the United States of America, or the "Great Satan." The attitude toward individuals who were fluent in English was equally negative, as they were perceived as Westoxicated, upper class, secular liberals alienated from their own great Islamic heritage.[2]

Within such a climate, there was a heated debate among the members of the newly established ruling party about what to do with English. Eventually, a consensus was reached — English remained in school curricula and continued to be offered from the first year of junior high school (grade six) onward.[3] Yet the goal, or aspiration, was to create an "indigenized" and "homegrown" model of English education free from the influence of English-speaking nations — a model that could be used to promote Islamic ideology and disseminate the "revolution" to other parts of the

1. Quoted in P. Birjandi and A. Soheili, *The 8th Grade English Textbook* (Tehran: Organization for Educational Research and Planning, 2000); author's translation.
2. The best illustration could perhaps be the imprisonment of Dr. Mohsen Shokuh, the founding director of Shokuh Language Institute. This was the first English language institute established by an Iranian in Iran (in 1950). It was one of the most popular language institutes in pre-revolutionary Iran. Dr. Shokuh, who was arrested, charged with the promotion and dissemination of cultural and linguistic imperialism (i.e., offering English courses via his language institute), and sentenced death, was freed after several years of imprisonment, At the request of the government, he was invited to re-open the Institute (Personal interview, winter 2008).
3. It should be noted that, over the past decade, English has begun to dwindle in secondary and post-secondary curricula in Iran. At the secondary level, teaching English was delayed one grade, from sixth to seventh grade, while at the post-secondary level, English for General Purposes (EGP) was reduced from two courses (each of two credits) to one three-credit course.

world and that could be lent to other nations, Muslim countries in particular. To achieve this end, the authorities took several measures. First, foreign experts and teachers of English, the majority of them Americans, were expelled from the country. Second, foreign-run and private-run English language institutes were shut down, and, over time, converted to state-run language institutes.[4] Third, teaching English in school curricula became largely restricted to the phonological, morphological, and syntactic aspects of the language. The socio-cultural aspects of the languages were regarded as "unwanted" and "undesired" and thus were all eliminated from school textbooks and curricula. Fourth, by order of Ayatollah Khomeini, a state-run publishing house (SAMT) was established to produce indigenized and homegrown textbooks for local use. Fifth, as a counterweight to English, Arabic, the language of scripture, was expanded in school curricula as a means of promoting a religious identity on the part of students. Thus, in the absence of private-run and foreign-run language institutes, the state became in charge of teaching English via home-grown textbooks and curricula throughout the country.[5]

However, the climate began to change gradually in favor of the private sector with the implementation of school privatization in 1991. School privatization came as a surprise for a country whose leaders had claimed unconditional support for the deprived and dispossessed.[6] Yet, the gloomy reality at the time — with Iran suffering from a war-ravaged economy (Iran-Iraq War, 1980-88), the rapid increase in the school-age population throughout the 1980s,[7] and the failure of the country's public school system to provide free education for all — set the stage for then-president 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1988-1997), an advocate of free-market economy, to abandon some of the early revolutionary promises and accept some technocratic solutions to domestic problems.[8] The result was the importation of policy decentralization and privatization of state-run establishments — a function of World Bank loan conditionality.[9] The objectives and rules of school privatization were first outlined in the country's First Five-Year Development Plan (1989-1994) and were later elaborated further in the Second (1995-1999), Third (2000-2004), and Fourth (2005-2009) Five-Year Development Plans. It should be noted that school privatization never entailed a decentralization of curriculum, which at all levels — from K-12 to post-secondary education — remained

> **... private English language institutes ... were permitted to offer their own chosen curricula and textbooks as long as they complied with the numerous rules and regulations set by the state. This was, in fact, a leap forward for the private sector.**

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4. Perhaps the best example was the closure of the Iran-America Society (*Anjoman-e Irān o Amrikā*), the most active American center of English language in pre-revolutionary Iran. Later, a governmental-affiliated entity with a new name, Iran Language Institute (*Kānun-e Zabān-e Irān*), was established in its place.

5. M. Borjian, *English Education in Post-Revolutionary Iran (1979-2009): The Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*, unpublished doctoral dissertation (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2009).

6. See also G. Mehran, "Education in Postrevolutionary Persia, 1979-95," in E. Yarshater, ed., *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. 8, Fascicle 2 (2007).

7. Iran witnessed a high rate of fertility, with an annual rate of 3.4% since 1979. The country's population increased from 34 million in 1976 to an estimated 66 million in 2009.

8. H. Amirahmadi, "From Ideology to Pragmatic Policy in Post-Revolutionary Iran," in H. Amirahmadi and M. Parvin, eds., *Post-Revolutionary Iran* (Boulder, CO and London: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 1-10.

9. M.A. Weiss and J.E. Sanfor, "The World Bank and Iran," CRS Report for Congress, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22704.pdf.

under the close supervision of the state. Thus, it is still highly centralized, nationalized, and top-down.[10]

The result of school privatization has been the rise of private English language institutes throughout the country since 1991. Unlike their counterparts in the secondary and post-secondary education system, private English language institutes — which target fee-paying students across all age and proficiency levels who desire to acquire English for their own personal reasons — were permitted to offer their own chosen curricula and textbooks as long as they complied with the numerous rules and regulations set by the state. This was, in fact, a leap forward for the private sector — albeit indirectly and on a limited scale — in the educational decision-making process, in which the government had had a virtual monopoly.

In order to attract fee-paying students, private language institutes began to look abroad for promising English Language Teaching (ELT) models to emulate. The result was the importation of English-teaching methodologies, including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) English textbooks (e.g., *Headway* and *Interchange*, among many others), together with many audio-video products from various English-speaking nations, the United Kingdom in particular. The borrowing process was accelerated due to the absence of a copyright convention for foreign-produced materials in Iran.[11] The influx of pirated foreign textbooks placed the country's politicians in an awkward situation — their absolute monopoly over English education was dwindling. To prevent a wholesale borrowing of ELT materials from abroad, the state put the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in charge of supervising the production of all pirated English textbooks.

> **... Iranian youth have displayed an enormous desire to engage the outside world. They wish to acquire the type of English they want to learn, not the type of English the government wants them to learn.**

Yet, in spite of the many obstacles that the authorities created, Iranian private English language institutes have continued to emulate the so-called "best" ELT models from aboard, and students have continued to attend these institutes regardless having to pay fees. Today, the private language institutes have even gone one step further — portraying themselves as representatives of foreign English language institutes such as Oxford, Cambridge, and Longman in particular and even promising students admission to a foreign university upon the completion of English courses.[12]

The private language institutes should perhaps be considered pioneers and the most active forces in shaping the destiny of English education in post-revolutionary Iran. It would be misleading, however, to assign absolute agency to them. It is hard to imagine the accomplishments of the private sector without considering the enormous interest shown by Iranian youth in attending these institutions. The reason for such profound interest is the failure of the state-designed

10. See M. Borjian, *English Education in Post-Revolutionary Iran (1979-2009): The Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending.*
11. Ayatollah Khomeini is known to have issued a *fatwa* allowing a person who purchased a book to copy or reproduce it as his property. See K. Emami, in E. Yarshater, ed., *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. 6 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1993), pp. 264-66.
12. See M. Borjian, *English Education in Post-Revolutionary Iran (1979-2009) The Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending.*

"homegrown" English textbooks and curricula offered at the secondary and post-secondary school levels. The so-called "indigenized" textbooks and curricula hardly promote anything but the satisfaction of the ideological needs of the country's politicians. They only teach reading skill and grammar via the outdated Grammar Translation method and ideologically-driven passages with no reference to the socio-cultural or communicative aspects of English. The insight of an Iranian English professor alerts us:

> Teaching a foreign language cannot be done in a void. It necessarily involves teaching the culture(s) in which the language has flourished. The biggest drawback to teaching English as a foreign language in Iran [secondary and post-secondary education] is that this culture and literature does not exist and has been entirely ignored; hence, the language that is taught is flat, lifeless, and dead.[13]

Unlike the country's politicians, Iranian youth have displayed an enormous desire to engage the outside world. They wish to acquire the type of English they want to learn, not the type of English the government wants them to learn. This has been a major concern, especially for those individuals who wish to go abroad for study or for other reasons. Given that Iran has one of the highest rates of "brain drain" among the developing nations, with an annual estimate of 150,000 emigrants per year,[14] it is evident that the type of English which Iranians want to learn is sharply different from the one offered to them by the government.

School privatization has created a unique situation for Iranian sub-national forces, and private language institutes and students in particular, to be able to resist the top-down pressures by voicing, albeit indirectly, their concerns, likes, and dislikes. This has in turn allowed them to participate in the educational decision-making arena, at least in the realm of English education, where the government had exercised a monopoly. Yet, the negative implications of school privatization upon the sub-national forces, especially upon the fee-paying students and their families, remain to be determined by further research.

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13. TEFL Professor, Electronic Survey, Winter 2008; cited in M. Borjian, *English Education in Post-Revolutionary Iran (1979-2009): The Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending.*
14. F. Harrison, "Huge Cost of Iranian Brain Drain," BBC News, January 8, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6240287.stm.

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