



Viewpoints Special Edition

Higher Education and the Middle East: Building Institutional Partnerships

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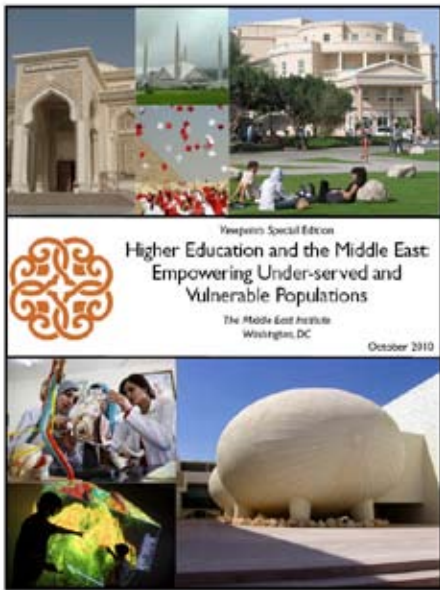
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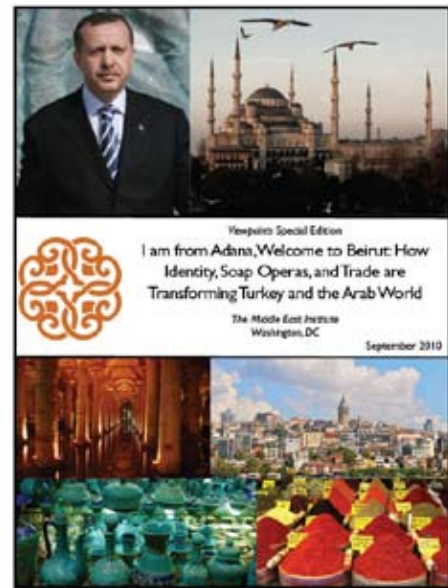
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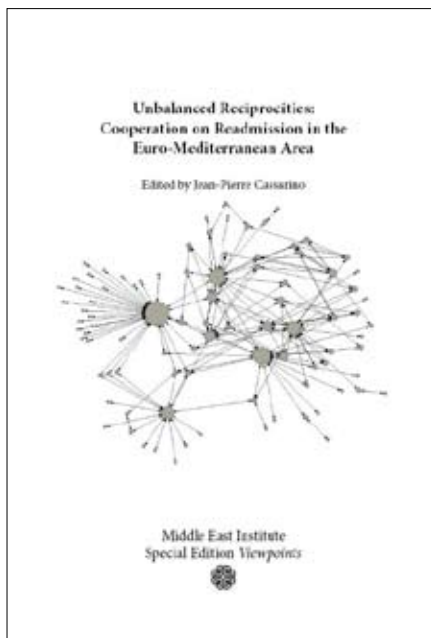
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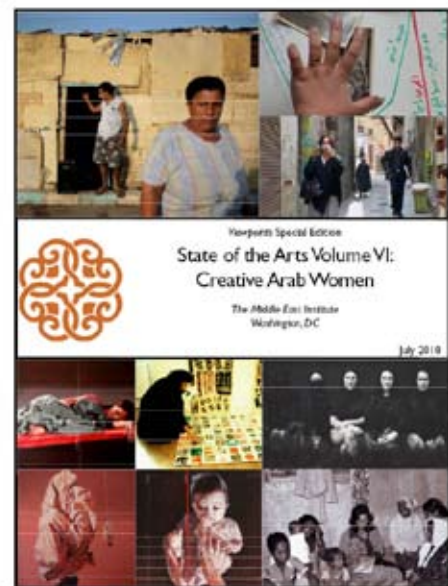
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Introduction

The first volume of essays in MEI's special series on "Higher Education and the Middle East" dealt with "Serving the Knowledge-based Economy." Volume 2 addressed "Empowering Under-served and Vulnerable Populations." This final volume examines yet another feature of the changing landscape of higher education in the region, namely the proliferation of institutional partnerships. As this collection makes clear, there exists a rich variety of such partnerships, ranging from the establishment of joint programs and foreign branch campuses to individual mentoring relationships. These partnerships, which serve as vehicles for the transmission of ideas, information, and pedagogical practices, are aimed at equipping the next generation with the requisite knowledge and skills to flourish. They also provide new ways to stimulate creativity and foster cross-cultural harmony. Many of them do just that. Yet, as a number of the authors point out, some of these partnerships are not without their limitations and challenges, including how to link pedagogy to culture and how to ensure that a high quality of education is made available to students by foreign educational providers. To be sure, the future of the Middle East hinges on unleashing the potential of the region's human capital. As this series shows, investment in and reform of higher education is underway across the region. The hallmark of many of these initiatives is educational "borrowing" of one form or another. However, neither the learning outcomes that they have generated nor their effects on Middle Eastern economies and societies have yet to be fully felt.

Considering the Information Infrastructure for American-style Universities in the Middle East

Patricia A. Wand

In the past 15 years, American educators — faculty, librarians, and administrators — have been invited to transfer their expertise to the Middle East and to assist in developing American-style universities. Attempting to transplant a culturally-based educational system into new nations with different values poses unique opportunities to reflect on what constitutes American education and what components must be included in the transfer.

The focus of this essay is on information centers (i.e., libraries, archives, museums, and electronic databases) and their role in improving education and developing research in the Middle East and their culturally based characteristics.¹

ROLE OF INFORMATION CENTERS IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Many scholars carry out their research without giving a second thought to the organizational infrastructure that keeps information at their fingertips or makes it available to them upon request. Innovation and creativity is dependent upon a web of interconnected information hubs that store and disseminate data just in time for an inventor to solve a knotty problem or to inspire a scholar to write the seminal article.

Information centers, whether they are libraries, archives, museums, or electronic databases, have evolved in cultures where education is highly valued and where research productivity has fed economic, social, and political development. The purpose of information organizations is to collect, describe, organize, store, preserve, and disseminate information in all formats.

Information centers have evolved because political leaders and nations want to:

- Preserve the records of society and the knowledge it generates
- Create centers for learning and research

Research and information hubs are so closely allied that one cannot fathom one without



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1. For over four years (2006–2010) the author worked as Dean of Library and Learning Resources in the United Arab Emirates, helping Zayed University achieve its mission of providing American-accredited education to Emirati women.

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the other. Their relationship is an example of the old adage: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” How can scholars conduct research without access to information and from where did information come if there were no research preceding it?

Several countries in the Middle East, particularly the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are working proactively to develop effective education systems and productive research agendas. Some are committed to developing a knowledge society that will contribute to economic development.²

Historically, the societies in the Arabian Gulf have a rich oral tradition that previously precluded the need for libraries, archives, or museums. Now, along with improving their education and research efforts, comes the need to address their information infrastructures.³

For young nations such as the UAE and others in the Arabian Gulf with few textual records of their history and a short tradition of providing education to their populace, the value of investing in information centers may not be readily apparent nor easily articulated to decision makers. Those decision makers, however, are often the ones aspiring to build a knowledge-based society that can sustain itself and contribute to the world economy. Hence, support from those leaders is essential for developing information centers.

Library cooperation has evolved into formal consortia This network of information sources plays a vital role in the plethora of research generated in western society. Scholars practicing in the Middle East, Asia, or Africa cannot freely access the same information bounty.

COOPERATION AMONG INFORMATION CENTERS AS A COMPONENT OF THE INFORMATION INFRA-STRUCTURE

New knowledge is created on the backs — or, better said, the brains — of scholars who have gone before; hence, their knowledge is preserved and assimilated by other scholars. Scholarly communication in western society has evolved into an effective system of exchange, carried out on numerous levels and in various venues.

One important venue is the internet, through which all electronically-formatted information and finding aids for print

2. Founding UAE President Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan established public schools for all children shortly after independence from Great Britain in 1971. He founded three federal universities; namely, United Arab Emirates University (1978), Al Ain Higher Colleges of Technology (1988), and Zayed University (1998). The political leaders of the UAE and its Emirates are forward-thinking and aspire to raise the intellectual capital of Emiratis through education and research, and to empower UAE citizens with skills to sustain the country economically even when the oil money dries up.

3. Emiratis have a rich tradition of storytelling in which stories are passed orally through generations rather than preserved in print. In earlier times when cultural heritage was transmitted orally and not committed to text, when government records were not recorded locally, and when business transactions were few and simple, there was little need for archives or libraries. Oral expressions and creative arts and design are highly developed cultural traits and part of the vibrant national identity of the UAE. That identity must be preserved even while the country's agenda expands. As it focuses on becoming a knowledge society, the UAE is developing its libraries, archives, and museums — its information infrastructure — along with improving its education system and launching research initiatives.

resources are transmitted. Another important venue is an older but still vigorous practice of resource-sharing that has evolved among western-style universities and research centers. Libraries associated with these institutions began sharing resources in the early 20th century and have been doing so in increasingly sophisticated modes ever since. Interlibrary lending and aggregated library catalogs are among the most visible forms of resource-sharing.

Characteristics of effective cooperative systems among information centers often include:

- Agreement for sharing resources to support scholarship in all member institutions
- Accepting responsibility to collect in specific disciplines thereby enriching resources available to constituents in all member institutions
- Making resources readily available to learners and researchers (e.g., intellectual freedom, open stacks, reliable connections to electronic databases, collection development procedures that respond to user requests, etc.)
- Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all readers
- Providing information service equitably without regard to social status of learners and researchers
- Teaching learners and scholars how to search for and use information effectively

Library cooperation has evolved into formal consortia that may be regionally, nationally, and even internationally-based. This network of information sources plays a vital role in the plethora of research generated in western society. Scholars practicing in the Middle East, Asia, or Africa cannot freely access the same information bounty and hence they operate under considerable disadvantage.

CULTURAL VALUES AND THEIR ACCOMMODATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INFORMATION INFRA-STRUCTURE

The development of information centers and cooperative agreements among them is based on a number of cultural values that are not held universally throughout the world. Examples of those values include:

- Inherent worth of every human being as an individual citizen who has a right to education, is literate, and is able to form an opinion by which to vote
- Expectation that every individual contributes to the economic development of society, either as a worker or as a consumer, or both
- Right of every person to pursue one's own intellectual interests without interference by the government or organized religion
- Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of every reader's intellectual pursuits
- Assumption that people understand and respect community-held property and responsibly borrow and return material from a lending collection

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A commitment to intellectual freedom — the right of learners and scholars to analyze the full spectrum of an issue, even sensitive issues — is a basic cultural value that influences the development of library collections and resource-sharing in the West. In societies where the government controls the flow of information for religious, political, and social reasons, it is much harder for scholars to access the information they need for thorough research and virtually impossible for learners to examine a full spectrum of topics.

One of the first items of business as negotiations are undertaken to transplant or adapt an American-style university to the Arabian Gulf region is to discuss the issue of censorship, particularly as it relates to the internet but also how it affects developing the print collection.

Most American-accredited universities in the Gulf have secured a governmental commitment to unfiltered internet access on campus so that learning and scholarship can be freely pursued in that physical environment.

Among American-accredited universities in the Gulf, collection policies that guide which books are acquired and which databases are licensed are linked to the curriculum and to the research agenda of the institution and nation. Respecting local culture, however, selectors take care to observe certain sensitivities, particularly those related to Islam.

Of approximately 90 challenged items reviewed over eight years at Zayed University, three were removed from the collection.

At Zayed University in the UAE, for example, a procedure is established through which students and faculty may object to material acquired by the library. In those cases, a “Challenged Material” complaint is filed and the objectionable item is reviewed by a committee of faculty and staff. The committee decides if the item should be 1) returned as is to the collection, 2) redacted in part and returned to the collection, 3) shelved in “special collections” where students may enter with a signed authorization from a faculty member, or 4) removed from the collection.

Of approximately 90 challenged items reviewed over eight years at Zayed University, three were removed from the collection. In accordance with committee decisions, some were placed in special collections and most were returned to the shelves with or without redactions of sensitive images or texts.

Another issue affecting collection policies is the ability of students to learn in a second language. In American-style universities in the Gulf, classroom instruction is usually carried out in English, which is the second language of virtually all students. Many students must improve their English and Arabic literacy and their numeracy skills before they begin their baccalaureate studies.

For the library, this means acquiring material to support all reading levels and mathematical skill development as well as scholarly material and books in both English and Arabic. Leisure reading is encouraged and supported by fiction and non-

fiction on many topics. Most universities offer a fully-equipped learning enhancement center and some students spend up to two years focusing on language, numeracy, and study skills before entering an undergraduate degree program.

Customer-oriented library service and interlibrary cooperation arise from the cultural premise that every person, without regard to one's socio-economic strata, has a right to equitable access to information. This premise is not traditionally part of hierarchical societies where access to education, information, or power is more likely to depend upon whom one knows, to whom one is related, or into what group one is born.

Training for equitable information service is an ongoing activity when library staff are hired from many different cultures as they are in the Middle East. In 2010, Zayed University employed 37 full-time library workers from 17 different countries. They included 14 expatriate professionally qualified librarians and 12 Emiratis in paraprofessional roles. Professional librarians are recruited from North America, Australia, and Europe because very few Emiratis have earned the master's degree in information science from an accredited program. Related to the value of providing access to information equitably to all users is the status of women and their ability to move freely within a society. Western-style education is gender-blind with men and women studying in the same classroom and accessing the library at the same time.

Mixing of genders outside the family is not permitted in some Gulf societies. This creates challenges to libraries where the print collection, the technology, and library employees represent major capital investments that preclude duplication. Many American-style universities respect these societal norms by either creating separate facilities for men and women or opening the single facility to each gender at different times.

When cultural values are as diverse as these examples, establishing a Western-style information infrastructure becomes more of an adaptation than a straight-across transplant. It works best when the differences are addressed openly and compromises are reached by all stakeholders.

Once the need for libraries, archives, and museums is accepted, a shared vision of their purpose and outcomes can be articulated and general guidelines for their operations are developed. Then the most difficult part begins: Finding the right human resources to bring the plan for an information infrastructure into tangible reality so that it can support the education and research aspirations of the country.

CONCLUSION

When one wishes to transplant Western-style education into non-Western cultures, one begins to look at core values of both societies. Which cultural values held by Western-style education are essential and which can be modified or put aside? Which cultural values of the non-Western society are essential to preserve? How does a culture preserve its identity and values while new educational methodology and research aspirations are introduced?

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These questions affect not only classroom education and research by faculty but also information centers and how they operate. When a non-Western society wishes to attract and offer Western-style education or to develop a research agenda, attention must also be given to developing information centers and cooperative agreements for information resource-sharing.

Kān Yāmā Kān¹: Curriculum Development in the GCC — Adopting (Adapting) Models of Higher Education

Tim Walters, Lynne Walters, and Jack Barwind

Once upon a time in the land where the light of creation first shone, the fertile grounds around Baghdad nurtured the House of Wisdom. Even as Europeans were looking for the light at the end of the Dark Ages, Caliph Haroon al-Rasheed and his son Caliph al-Mamoon had made Baghdad a center of learning. In Baghdad, scholars put words on “real” paper. They preserved Aristotle, Plato, Hippocrates, Euclid, Ptolemy, Pythagoras, and Brahmagupta and translated Greek, Persian, and Indian manuscripts. In Baghdad, they built upon the knowledge of the greatest ancient scholars and evolved the scientific method of observation and experimentation.²

About a millennium and a third later, much of the Arab world has lost its educational vision, needing an incarnation of Diogenes to find its honest educational soul. On the surface, impressive new facilities, millions of words, and reams of documents with elegant course maps point forward to a better future.³ Unfortunately, little fuel for a knowledge-age economy has resulted from this feverish activity. Most observers agree that the root cause remains educational systems that do not develop motivated and enquiring minds; many, such as experts at the Rand Corporation, have made tangible suggestions for governments; but, few, if any, entities have been able to transform the Arab world’s educational systems or their curricula.⁴

Multiple reasons exist for repeated failures. Topping the list is the ability of the educational bureaucracies to resist change. Originally, many of these bureaucracies mostly replicated the pedantic and stultifying structure of the Egyptian educational system.⁵ Today, the Gulf Cooperation countries of Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) arguably have tried to move away from this inefficient and antiquated system, but bureaucrats have exhibited a rubber band-like elasticity — stretching, but not breaking, while successfully thwarting advances. Often, wrapping themselves in their nationalistic

1. “Once Upon a Time,” translated from Arabic using <http://translate.google.com/#en|ar>.

2. Huda, “Baghdad in Islamic History,” Retrieved on August 2010 from About.com, <http://islam.about.com/cs/history/a/aa040703a.htm>.

3. Bernadette Redfern, “Educational Reforms Will Reap Benefits for the GCC in Years Ahead,” MEED Educational Supplement (2010), <http://www.meed.com/supplements/2010/gcc-education-survey/educational-reforms-will-reap-benefits-for-the-gcc-in-years-ahead/3008120.article>.

4. D.J. Brewer, C.H. Augustine, G.L. Zellman, G.W. Ryan, C. Goldman, C. Stasz, and L. Constant, *Education for a New Era: Design and Implementation of K-12 Education Reform in Qatar* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG548.pdf.

5. Gulf Research Meeting, (July 7–10, 2010), <http://grcevent.net/cambridge/index.php?page=program>.



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Lynne Walters worked for the College of Education at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX and has written extensively on issues related to education in international contexts.



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

flags, bureaucrats have successfully shifted the dialectic ground from change and modernization to job preservation and affirmative action. If all else has failed, bureaucrats can draw upon wellsprings of ambivalence, reservoirs of distrust, and the web-like connectedness of *wasta*-based tribal politics. Practically speaking, these causes combined with endless, mentally exhausting rework after rework of policies and programs, has generated much sound and fury, rarely signifying actual reform.

A few governments, having thrown up their hands in disgust at the existing quagmire, have erected entirely new institutions from the sand up. In the UAE, the Abu Dhabi and Dubai branches of Zayed University were created in direct response to the political nightmare of reforming existing federal institutions. In Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology was sculpted from the desert along the Red Sea at Thuwal — about 80 kilometers north of Saudi Arabia's second largest city, Jiddah.⁶ The goal is to have a community working in a self-contained learning environment far from the madding crowd.

Even if educational reform could gather steam in wonderful new facilities, armed with bright new attitudes, the glaring lack of learning materials with culturally-appropriate, localized examples remains a critical flaw. While the stuff of science, math, and engineering is similar anywhere on earth, the same cannot be said of most liberal arts and professions, such as business. Business students in the Arab world sometimes study commercial law and uniform commercial code law based upon European examples; communications students look at how ethnic campaigns are executed in the United States and examine the history of American newspapers; architecture students learn about Bauhaus, but are woefully ignorant of wind-tower architecture. Urban planning students can gaze at derivative “master-planned communities” reminiscent of golf course suburbs in Texas.

Even if educational reform could gather steam in wonderful new facilities, armed with bright new attitudes, the glaring lack of learning materials with culturally-appropriate, localized examples remains a critical flaw.

Unfortunately, few academic administrators are interested in creating learning materials in electronic, print, or other forms. Many Western administrators, who yo-yo in and out, view a university press as a money-losing proposition. Most are unwilling to create fundamental materials. On the surface, this reluctance makes economic sense because GCC countries comprise a tiny market. Yet, such a stance makes little educational sense over the longer term. That is because the dearth of localized materials disengages students who need appropriate examples in appropriate forms and discourages development of critical thinking skills in context. Instead of spending cash on developing a vernacular voice and an intellectual infrastructure, administrators engage in pornography-of-excess “world-class” pseudo-events, which generate more media heat than academic light.

The substance of learning materials aside, sensitive (and natural) educational issues revolve around the survival of Arabic, Islam, and the local culture. Gulf Arabs are rightly worried about their children's future. Some have fears about the

6. See <http://www.kaust.edu.sa/about/about.html> for further information.

cultural confusion that Westernized curricula might create and the possibility of rearing a child of two cultures, with no firm grounding in either. Educational policymakers have added to this angst by inviting American academic superpowers, such as Cornell, Northwestern, American University, and Texas A&M, to create campuses in the Arab world. Lured to the Middle East with promises of petrodollars, illusions of global prestige, and assumptions of motivated and prepared students, most of these universities have been gravely disappointed on all fronts and have scaled back their presence and programs.

These and other private pay-to-play institutions often have fancy facilities and tuitions to go along with them. They cater to the rich and to those whose employers pay the bills. Less fortunate students are doomed to substandard, rote education that does not stretch the imagination or exercise critical thinking skills. Given the choice and the ability to pay, parents always choose private school education, leaving the public system without a base of popular and political support.

This is not the pathway to happily ever after for the Arab world. The road so far not traveled suggests adapted, but not adopted, curricula in modern form and in substance, choosing the best of both Western and Arab/Islamic worlds. On a practical level, what this perspective means is developing a strong, and region-specific, intellectual infrastructure. Academic talent must be homegrown, not imported, ending the reliance on the Western university brands. Modern educational materials, developed (not merely translated) in cultural context and using pertinent examples must support locally-designed programs and courses, offered in English and Arabic. This perspective also means respect and adequate pay for teachers within the public school system; development of native colleges of education, meant to study local solutions and create fundamental studies; less dependence upon Westerners who come and go; and a system rewarding merit both inside and outside the classroom. Lastly, the pathway suggests a need for a House of Wisdom redux, founded to develop local scholarship, teaching methods, and learning materials, and providing the people of the Arab world with the possibility of a happy ending.

Partnerships, Collaborations, and International Education in the UAE: The Question of Context and Relevancy

Janet Y. Thomas

Education reform is essential for the continued social and educational development of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).¹ The country has grown considerably over the past decade, and opportunities for business and professional opportunities have expanded. Educational development has been deemed necessary for the citizens of the country to take advantage of such opportunities. This is particularly important to the young citizens of the country, as they are looking to become active participants in their growing and increasing multinational society. In preparation, the country is focused on improving and developing the educational system in order to provide learning experiences that will prepare Emirati youth to be employable and successful in the workplace. More emphasis is being placed on training teachers, adopting new curricula and educational programs, and building collaboration with institutions abroad.²



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Education reform is also focused on meeting international standards of excellence and building a system according to globally accepted measures. The *United Arab Emirates Vision 2021* statement identifies creating a first-rate educational system focused on preparing the next generation for the changing society as a major priority of the next decade, stating, “a progressive national curriculum will extend beyond rote learning to encompass critical thinking and practical abilities equipping our youth with essential skills and knowledge for the modern world.”³

Building an internationally regarded educational system in the UAE requires partnerships and collaboration with international higher educational institutions, organizations, centers, programs, and consultants to ensure that the country develops the best system necessary for its citizens. Similar to education reform in many Western nations, the UAE must take into account context, culture, and relevance of reforms for their country. It is important that policies, practices, and programs are adopted to meet the needs of the UAE and its citizens.

1. *United Arab Emirates Vision 2021: United in Ambition and Determination*; “Education for Development,” *Gulf News*, July 8, 2010.

2. See various articles from *Gulf News*, including “Teachers across the U.A.E. Will Now Require License,” September 11, 2008; “Accreditation a Must for All Public Schools by 2010,” October 28, 2008; “New Teachers Must Get Teaching Certification: Educators Already Working Will Be Retrained,” December 20, 2008; “School Inspections Are Proving to Be a Catalyst for Better Education,” April 21, 2009; “Education for Development,” July 8, 2010; “Quality Education is Key for U.A.E. Continued Success,” July 22, 2010.

3. *United Arab Emirates Vision 2021: United in Ambition and Determination*, p. 23.

Higher education institutions, particularly Colleges of Education, will play a major role in reforming the overall educational system, and improving teaching and learning in schools. They will play key roles in building the partnerships necessary to meet international standards and certification requirements for education. It is important that educational professionals in the UAE develop an understanding of the educational needs of Emirati citizens, and the culture and context of education in the country in order to implement appropriate reform. This is a growing issue of concern to UAE citizens. Although they generally support improvement and modernization of the educational system, they are concerned that the internationalization of education will impact national identity, language, and culture.⁴

Scholars have examined the impact of globalization/internationalism and argued that it is a process of social transformation in which global and local forces interact to shape cultural and economic activities and that this process is the assimilation of global forces into the context of local traditions.⁵ This theory has been discussed in the context of globalization in other countries. However, the UAE is unique in that Emirati citizens constitute only 19% of the country's population.⁶ Therefore, it is imperative that educational reforms for the UAE are developed in the context of local culture and are designed to meet the specific needs of the country.

Keeping reforms focused on the needs of the Emirati people will require expertise in culture, curriculum, and pedagogy. It is important that a knowledge base is developed to create a model for education in the UAE that is intellectually and socially appropriate. Models used in other countries have their value and are good blueprints. However, reforms will need to be developed specifically for the UAE and its citizens. Attention will need to be given to three specific things when forming partnerships and collaboration with international entities: contextual appropriateness, cultural responsiveness, and relevancy.

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CONTEXTUAL APPROPRIATENESS

Educational reforms for the UAE must be designed in a contextually appropriate manner and take into account the needs of the students that the reforms are being adopted to serve. This ensures that the programs and practices being implemented will be successful and have an overall impact on student learning outcomes. For instance, there is an emphasis in the UAE on learning the English language and providing English language instruction in the schools and universities. UAE students in post-secondary and higher education are largely second-language learners (ELL). Any reforms regarding teaching and learning should take into account effective teaching practices for ELL students, as stu-

4. *Gulf News*, "Fostering National Identity is Vital," December 24, 2009; "Heritage Must Be Taught in Schools," August 26, 2010; and "Emphasis on Foreign Languages Does Not Contradict UAE Policies," October 6, 2010.

5. A. Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (New York: Routledge, 2000); D. Held, *Global Transformation: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); and A.W. Little, "Globalization and Educational Research: Whose Context Counts?," *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1996), pp. 427–438.

6. World Facts Index, *Facts about the United Arab Emirates*, <http://worldfacts.us/United-Arab-Emirates.htm>.

dents who are taught in languages that are different from their own are at an academic disadvantage.

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS AND RELEVANCE

Educational reforms must also be culturally responsive and relevant to be successful with the Emirati people. There is a large body of work on culturally relevant pedagogy and practices.⁷ Scholars have pointed out the importance of linking culture to teaching particularly when students are being taught from those whose backgrounds are different from their own.⁸ In the UAE, this means incorporating the language, traditions, and customs of the Emirati people into their learning experiences. Most importantly, to be responsive to the academic needs of the students requires a developed understanding of their learning styles and knowledge of how to best complement them.

For example, my experiences teaching in the UAE have taught me that most Emirati students learn better through active engagement. The Emirati culture, like many other cultures, is one of an oral tradition. Linking culture to pedagogy is one of the best methods for preparing students to become academic high achievers. Classroom instruction will complement their culture — making it relevant, responsive, and contextually appropriate. These are major issues to be discussed when forming international partnerships to improve education for Emirati children and youth.

CONCLUSION

There are many different aspects of context, cultural relevancy, and responsiveness that can be discussed regarding the UAE's pursuit of education reform. This essay has drawn attention to just a handful of things to consider when fostering partnerships with international entities — keys to ensuring that Emirati learners indeed prosper.

7. G. Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000); T. Howard, "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Ingredients for Critical Teacher Reflection," *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2003), pp. 195–202; G. Ladson-Billings, "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (1995), pp. 159–165; G. Mohatt and F. Erickson, "Cultural Differences in Teaching Styles in an Odawa School: A Sociolinguistic Approach," in H. Trueba, G. Gurthie, and K. Au, eds, *Culture and the Bilingual Classroom: Studies in Classroom Ethnography* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1981), pp. 105–119.

8. Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*; T. Howard, "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Ingredients for Critical Teacher Reflection," pp. 195–202; Ladson-Billings, "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," pp. 159–165; Mohatt and Erickson, "Cultural Differences in Teaching Styles in an Odawa School: A Sociolinguistic Approach," pp. 105–119.

Internationalization of Higher Education in Jordan

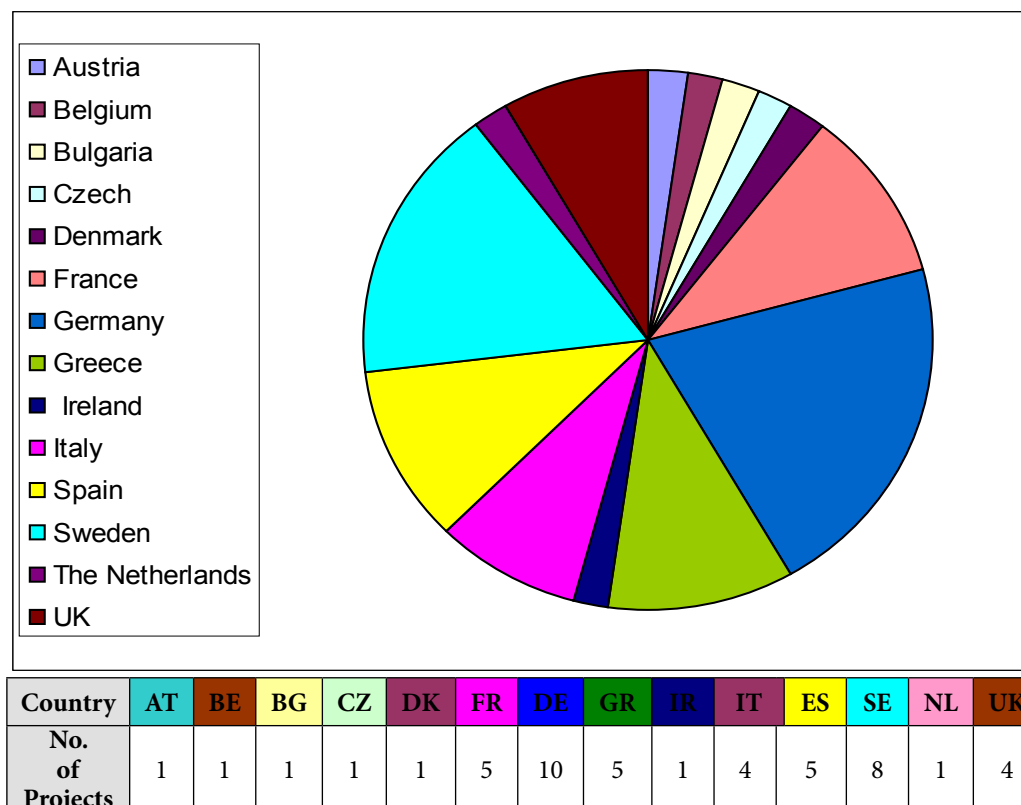
Nassar Massadeh

There is a growing need in Jordan for universities to establish joint programs with overseas universities in countries such as the United Kingdom and to uphold partnerships with universities in the United States, Europe, and the Gulf states. Public universities are already highly regarded. Private universities are also seeking partnerships or joint programs with foreign institutions. So far, the Higher Education Council has not placed any restrictions or regulations on such arrangements, but all academic agreements with overseas universities have to be vetted by the Ministry of Higher Education. As depicted in Chart 1, the United States, Canada, the American universities in Cairo and Lebanon, and European universities are the main competitors in the market. Nevertheless, Jordan's Ministry of Higher Education is hesitant to give accreditations to international universities to operate in the country, especially those which are completely foreign-funded and supported. The Ministry wants all functioning universities in Jordan to be under its umbrella and its accreditation legislation. To compensate for



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Chart 1: Participating European Countries in Higher Education and number of Projects in Jordan



Source: Europe Education Formation France, "Higher Education in Jordan," <http://www.europe-education-formation.fr/docs/Tempus/priorites-jordanie.doc>.

the lack of international presence, one of its policies is to sign cooperation programs between public Jordanian universities and international institutions, such as the cooperation between the University of Jordan and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GTZ,¹ the International Program for Foreign Students, and the Council for International Education Exchange (CIEE).² This program aims to prepare the students to understand the practices and procedures of international trade,³ and to enable them to become more confident in dealing with the international community in general.

There were cases of international universities opening their doors in Jordan and having to close them after a year or two when they were unable to obtain their accreditation from the Ministry. For example, none of the four international universities which applied to the Ministry for accreditation in Jordan in 1997 — the American University of the Middle East, the American University of Amman, Fatima Al-Zahra University, or the American University of Aqaba — have been approved.

Overseas universities have the right to operate in Jordan only if they do so in partnership with a Jordanian university, and are subject to an agreement made with the Higher Education Council. At present, there are nine such programs, mainly at the postgraduate level, involving nine different foreign universities and five Jordanian universities.

As the following examples of recent developments in program and provider mobility attest, Jordan's higher education system is engaged in the process of internationalization:

- The German-Jordanian University was established three years ago and operates through a joint management contract between the governments.
- The British-Jordanian University and Vatican University are under development.
- The establishment of the American University for Marine Sciences and Environment-related subjects in Aqaba is in discussion.
- The University of Jordan plans to open a branch campus in Yemen and already has opened a campus in Aqaba.
- The University of Jordan allows its students to study for a semester or year abroad and have their overseas studies accredited to their Jordanian degree.
- Amman Open University offers a distance-learning program.
- The New York Institute for Technology is functioning under the accreditation of the University of Science and Technology.
- Mut'ah University signed an agreement with the University of Huddersfield in 2009 to offer a Master's degree program in Marketing. This program allows students wishing to complete their higher studies in Jordan in marketing to do so without travelling abroad.

1. See GTZ, <http://www.gtz.de/de/weltweit/maghreb-naher-osten/jordanien/12019.htm>.

2. See <http://www.ju.edu.jo/Pages/Programs/CIEEProgramatUJ.aspx>.

3. See <http://www.ju.edu.jo/Pages/Programs/InternationalTradeProgram.aspx>.

- The Erasmus Program encourages many Jordanian students to pursue two-year Master's or joint degrees in Europe.
- The increased mobility of students and teachers, both internally and abroad, means that there are a large number of Arab and foreign teachers who are working at Jordanian public and private universities.

The increasing demand for obtaining foreign qualifications is a major reason for opening the national education market to international institutions of higher education. Students are aware that obtaining an internationally recognized qualification can vastly improve their career chances, lengthen the duration of their job contracts, boost their wages, and further their education. Cross-border education in this case may save the expenses of obtaining these qualifications abroad.

The main reason for the accelerated expansion of joint programs is Jordan's participation to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which resulted in the lifting of barriers on importing and exporting services, including education services at all levels.⁴ Since signing the GATT agreements, Jordan has taken advantage of and has profited from cross-border education. According to the GATT agreements, the focus on facilitating academic mobility is defined in the four modes of trade of any service. These modes are known as "modes of supply" and apply to the services sector in the GATT agreements. All these modes are to be seen in the Jordanian higher education system (Table 1).

Table 1: Four Modes of GATTs Supply

GATT Mode of Supply	Example of Higher Education
The cross-border supply	Distance learning, e-learning
Consumption of the service abroad	Student mobility, going to another country to study
Commercial presence	The education provider establishes its presence in the host nation by opening a local branch, signing twinning or franchising agreements
Presence of the natural person	Movement of the teachers and researchers across the borders

Source: Jane Knight, "Cross-Border Education as Trade: Issues for Consultation, Policy Review and Research," JHEA/RESA, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2004), pp. 55–81.

As a GATT member, Jordan opened its education sector, enabling the higher education market to flourish and making education accessible on an international level. Foreign students can study in Jordan, and there are incentives for other

4. Munir Bashshur, *The Impact of Globalization and Research in the Arab States*, 2nd Regional Research Seminar for Arab States, Rabat, Morocco, May 25–26, 2007, Summary Report, UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research, and Knowledge (2007), p. 6.

higher education providers to invest in the country. Cross-border education is expected to grow due to the demands of the Jordanian people to receive higher qualifications. This explains the increased number of virtual universities and programs offered in the country and why the Ministry allows them to function.

However, while Jordan has actively encouraged imports of higher education in a variety of forms, it has strong reservations about making formal or binding commitments for all of the modes of delivery. As indicated in the Higher Education Accreditation Commission's (HEAC) 2009 General Framework of Joint Programmes (Articles 1-14), Jordan's Ministry of Higher Education will not license or accredit new providers simply on the grounds that they have an affiliation agreement with a recognized domestic institution, disregarding the provider's state of accreditation in its home nation. This attitude is related to a major concern of the Ministry regarding internationalization, namely, the possible loss of sovereignty over a sector that is considered vital to the country's identity (i.e., its language and culture).

According to Sameh Abu Magly, higher education in Jordan is in a “state of chaos.”

The majority of Jordanians and Jordanian higher education institutions appear to share the Ministry's preference for controlled internationalization of higher education. For example, some Jordanian universities conduct their medical sciences and engineering curricula in English. Nevertheless, there are major concerns about the internationalization of the Jordanian higher education sector regarding quality assurance in distance learning in particular and in the recognition of its qualifications. In the normal cases of students studying abroad, the Ministry controlled their obtained certificate by controlling the provider, but when the students receive their certificate via distance education programs, there is a risk that the student is dealing with a fake provider, or a so-called “rogue university.”⁵ Since the providers have no physical presence, it is impossible to control their licensing and the accreditation of their programs as well as student registration. Many of these providers are operating as “degree mills” where they award certificates according to student curriculum vitae, with no or minimal course work; they could just be web-based companies (providers) who simply sell certificates. Consequently, the emergence of cross-border education and its successful extension have introduced new groups of providers and new modes of supply which need close review in regard to quality-control legislation.

There are groups in Jordan, mainly comprised of academics, who oppose the internationalization of higher education. According to Sameh Abu Magly, higher education in Jordan is in a “state of chaos.”⁶ Moreover, he regards internationalization as a threat to the national identity, values, and quality of the Jordanian educational system. He is concerned that Jordanian higher education might be dominated by virtual education providers focused on profiteering. The opponents of internationalization argue that it will lead to a decrease in the quality of education received by graduates since it is not possible to control the quality of the providers.

5. “Rogue universities or providers” are those not recognized by the accreditation/licensing bodies in either the sending or receiving countries, are commonly known as low-quality providers, and are often accredited by self-accrediting groups or by agencies that sell accreditation. Jane Knight, “Cross-Border Education as Trade: Issues for Consultation.”

6. Sameh Abu Magly, “Developing Higher Education, A Future View,” research paper presented at the conference on “Jordanian Higher Education: Between Reality and Ambition,” May 17–18, 2000, Zarqa Private University, Jordan. (Arabic Edition).

Jordanian higher education is on the path of internationalization, and the quality question remains a challenge — one faced by all countries involved. Over the long term, Jordan could benefit from this trend if it could play the role of an exporter, not merely as an importer of these services. Internationalization could also help raise the awareness of its universities and students for intercultural and multicultural understanding. Nevertheless, there is a fear that this increased availability of foreign qualifications will release a new wave of credentialism.

CONCLUSION

Whereas global education in the sense of independent international universities located in Jordan does not exist, global education in term of joint programs does. As a matter of fact, Jordan may be a pioneer in this field. Jordan has integrated e-learning tools into its universities. The Ministry and the HEAC strongly believe that Jordan should be part of global education, not isolated from it. However, other issues requiring immediate attention must be tackled before locating independent European, American, or international universities in the country.⁷

Meanwhile, however, Jordan has responded to the increasing social demands at all levels and in all forms of higher education by the accreditation of joint program universities and new fields of study and by granting domestic universities greater autonomy. Jordan has thereby become an attractive alternative center of higher education in the region for many students from many different countries and a partner in many higher education programs with foreign universities.

7. Personal interview with Dr. Klaif Altarahwneh, President of the Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC), November 2, 2009, Amman, Jordan.

Benefitting from the Knowledge Economy? Examining Secondary Education Reform in Jordan

Roozbeh Shirazi

Jordan today, in spite of the scarcity of its natural resources, is at the forefront of the region's states in several areas, primary among them are education, economic growth rates, and the qualifications of the Jordanian youth who have always proved their excellence nationally and abroad.

— King Abdullah II¹



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Citing concern over high youth unemployment rates and the need to grow its private sector and create jobs for its growing and youthful population, Jordan has recently partnered with private sector actors and international development organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and The World Bank to reform its education system. Since 2003, The World Bank has contributed more than \$120 million to Jordan's education sector through its "Education Reform for Knowledge Economy" program, which focuses on improving governance and decision-making within the education system and transforming teaching and learning methods through a new curriculum that draws heavily upon the use of new technologies such as e-learning. While the long-term effects of these public-private partnerships in Jordanian education remain to be seen, Jordanian student and educator perspectives challenge some of the theoretical underpinnings of such initiatives. Using findings from a recent study of secondary schooling for boys in Jordan, for which this writer was principal investigator, this essay suggests that the educational reforms driven by Jordan's international partnerships targeting secondary school populations neglect important factors that constrain job-seeking in Jordan, and thus may not produce the anticipated economic benefits.

GLOBALIZATION, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Contemporary educational policymaking is increasingly defined in terms of economic growth and global competition. How knowledge is organized, disseminated, synthesized, and applied is of increasing import to education policymakers and donor agencies funding development initiatives. According to the World Bank, the present era is one where "knowledge has become the most important factor for economic growth" and nations must be able to contribute and synthesize knowledge to participate effec-

1. Independence Day Speech, May 25, 2008, <http://www.kingabdullah.jo>.

tively in the global economy.² The concept of the “knowledge economy” is intricately bound up with the notion of human capital. “Human capital” refers to the concept that a nation’s economic growth is directly correlated with the knowledge, abilities, skills, and health of its workforce.³ Correspondingly, investments in education are expected to generate a better-equipped and more innovative workforce, which in turn is expected to help attract investment that would fuel economic growth.

DISCOURSES OF EDUCATION REFORM IN JORDAN

The Jordanian government, which has a strongly centralized educational system and approach to policymaking, has based its educational reform agenda upon this understanding of education and economic growth. Likewise, the ruling family of Jordan has called for an educational system that creates economic opportunities and encourages creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration among students as well as the increased use of information communication technologies (ICT) in learning and teaching. These reforms are intended to more closely match student skills and knowledge with labor market needs.⁴

In government secondary schools, these changes have materialized with the introduction of a new academic concentration in ICT, greater integration of technology in instruction, as well as online learning activities supported by the Ministry of Education. For these and other reform efforts, Jordan has received recognition and support from its international partners. Jordan joined the World Trade Organization in 2000, and has since signed free trade agreements with the United States and the European Union. Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has noted that Jordan is an important strategic ally and friend of the United States, owing to its shared vision of reform in the Middle East.⁵

Since 2003, The World Bank has contributed more than \$120 million to Jordan’s education sector ... While the long-term effects of these public-private partnerships in Jordanian education remain to be seen, Jordanian student and educator perspectives challenge some of the theoretical underpinnings of such initiatives.

This educational policy landscape has also attracted private sector partners who are piloting e-learning initiatives in Jordan as well. One such program is the Jordan Educational Initiative (JEI), which is being run in 100 “Discovery Schools” throughout Jordan spearheaded by Cisco Systems, Microsoft, Oracle, and other private sector partners. Jordan was selected for this initiative in part because of the state’s commitment to partner with the private sector and the stability of the top-down governance structure afforded by the monarchy.⁶ Taken together, these developments reflect Jordan’s strategy to develop an educational system that will drive economic growth and equip students with the skills necessary

2. The World Bank, *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002).

3. G. Becker, *Human Capital* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).

4. Queen Rania website, <http://www.queenrania.jo>.

5. R. Shirazi, “Building a Knowledge Economy: The Case of Jordan,” *World Studies in Education* (submitted).

6. R. Shirazi, “Building a Knowledge Economy: The Case of Jordan.”

to participate in the knowledge economy. In reviewing the statements of King Abdullah II, Jordan's government policy documents, and the press releases of Jordan's international educational partners, there is a clear convergence in public-private orientations towards market-oriented educational reform, but little to suggest that these assumptions have been critically evaluated or reflect the perspectives and aspirations of Jordanian students and educators.

CONSTRAINTS OF KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY-BASED POLICIES

Scholars of comparative and international education have raised important criticisms of educational policies geared towards aligning education with market demands. As noted by Spring, "one criticism of focusing schools on preparing students for the needs of the knowledge economy is that there is not enough jobs in the knowledge economy to absorb school graduates into skilled jobs and that the anticipated demand for knowledge workers has not occurred."⁷ While Jordan enjoys comparatively high rates of educational attainment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, high unemployment levels remain an area of domestic concern in Jordan, with unemployment in Jordan officially estimated at 12.9% and unofficially at 30%.⁸ Youth (aged 15–29) constituted 71.7% of the unemployed in Jordan in 2009.⁹ Behind this age group, the population under 15 years old in Jordan constitutes 37% of the total population, meaning that 70,000–80,000 persons are entering the workforce annually.¹⁰ As Queen Rania has stated, "In order to prevent unemployment rates from rising in Jordan, we have to create 80,000 jobs annually, or, in other words, a job every seven minutes."¹¹ Unemployment in Jordan is also heavily gendered. In 2009, the unemployment rate for female university graduates was 50.8%, as opposed to 17.5% for their male counterparts.¹²

MALE SECONDARY STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Male secondary students are cognizant of the increasingly competitive nature of job seeking in Jordan, and recognize that simply "being educated" does not guarantee employment or a high standard of living. This corresponds to the phenomenon known as "brain waste," where "well-educated school graduates are unable to find a job commensurate with their skills."¹³ While students acknowledge that being educated is important and confers social status, they identify *wasta*, a form of social capital and/or relationship that provides benefits that one would not otherwise be able to access, as a key determinant of one's future prospects or employment benefits. As one student said:

In 2009, the unemployment rate for female university graduates was 50.8%, as opposed to 17.5% for their male counterparts.

7. J. Spring, *Globalization of Education* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 50–51.

8. CIA World Factbook. Unemployment Rate, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2129.html>.

9. "Percentage of Unemployed Jordanians (2005–2009)," Al Manar Project. National Center for Human Resources Development, <http://www.almanar.jo/>.

10. Naseej-Community Youth Development Initiative. Jordan Country Profile 2008, <http://www.naseej-cyd.org/index.php>.

11. Arabian Business Report, "Jordan Needs New Job Every Seven Minutes," April 30, 2008, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/517944-jordan-needs-new-job-every-seven-minutes?ln=en>

12. "Percentage of Unemployed Jordanians (2005–2009)," Al Manar Project. National Center for Human Resources Development, <http://www.almanar.jo/>.

13. Spring, *Globalization of Education*, p. 51.

Nothing gets done here without *wasta*. Even working hard gets you nothing when you are head to head with someone with *wasta*. The stupidest people on earth get by and get better opportunities because they have someone, or their fathers know someone. Some people might be opposed to it, but it is how the system works — people get ahead or stay where they are based on *wasta*.

This statement not only illustrates an important factor that delimits job opportunities in Jordan, it also challenges the uncritical view that investments in education will necessarily produce greater equity and opportunity for graduates. These challenges of high youth unemployment and practices of *wasta* are also accompanied by hiring preferences that favor foreign workers.¹⁴ These constraining factors are productive of important job seeking strategies on the part of Jordanian male secondary students. Namely, many of the students in this study stated that they planned on seeking employment abroad, particularly in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region. As one student said, “I will attend university here, but I do not know what comes next. Even though I wish to remain in Jordan, I don’t think I can if there are no jobs for me, because life here is expensive. Everyone knows the salaries in the Gulf are much higher.”

IMPLICATIONS

Given that Jordan faces the challenges of having high rates of unemployment and rising costs of living along with a well-educated and youthful population, will investments in education and the state’s private-public partnerships produce sustainable economic growth and additional high-skilled employment? While the long-term implications of this policy approach remain to be seen, student perspectives highlight a different socioeconomic challenge emerging. A central tenet of human capital theory and by extension, the knowledge economy, posits that investments in education will generate the skilled workforce necessary to attract investment and economic growth. If growing numbers of secondary students, upon completing their university education, decide to leave Jordan owing to rising costs of living, increasing competition for jobs and the prevalence of the need for social connections to access opportunity, can investments in market-oriented education policies be deemed “successful?” Similarly, if the expanding supply of highly skilled graduates, Jordan’s “human capital,” is increasingly migrating overseas for employment in high-skilled sectors, it raises the issue that the receiving countries are potentially benefiting more than Jordan from Jordan’s own investments in education. While there is debate over the economic impact of highly skilled emigration on sending countries, it is likely that the benefits of education reform for the knowledge economy in Jordan will not materialize linearly or as anticipated by policymakers.

14. Millennium Challenge Account-Jordan, Constraint Analysis Report, http://www.mca-jordan.gov.jo/index.php?page_type=pages&page_id=246.

External and Internal Partnerships in Israeli Education

Judith Cochran

Educational reform in Israel has repeatedly shifted from expecting individual excellence to expecting access for all. Excellence and access reflects the early history of the country when Jewish funders from France, England, and Germany established educational systems for Jewish children. The Zionist organizations that structured much of the curriculum and the external funding streams insured the Jewish schools were far better funded than the British-supported schools during the Mandate.

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

In the early part of the 1900s, wealthy European Jewish families became interested in investing in education for Middle Eastern Jews. External partnerships were started throughout Europe. As these families lived in different countries, they demanded that the curriculum and language of instruction had to be that of their home countries. So Palestinian schools started by the Rothschild family were taught in French, by the Montefiore family were taught in English and by the Laemel family were taught in German. French, German, and English, Jewish groups sponsored partnership schools and hired teachers for them who taught in languages other than the Arabic or the Yiddish spoken by most Jewish children in Palestine. Each of these systems emphasized individual excellence for its graduates.

One exception in these partnerships, the Hebrew Teachers' Union, took over a system of schools started by the *German Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*, as the Union objected to German being the language of instruction. The emphasis in these schools was on teaching in Hebrew, rather than in German. This nucleus of schools became the Hebrew school system that operated from the end of World War I in 1919 through the end of the British Mandate in Palestine that ended around 1939.¹ Thus the beginning of Israeli schools was built upon the structure and curriculum of German education.

Initially, access for all students took place in three separate educational systems for Jewish students and one separate system for Palestinian Arab students who lived in physically separate — and for the Palestinians — restricted spheres. By 1966, 1,253 Jewish primary schools existed compared to 181 Arab primary schools. There were 131 schools for handicapped Jewish children and one for handicapped Arab children. There were



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1. Iram Yaacov and Mirjam Schmida, *The Educational System of Israel* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 5.

167 Jewish secondary schools and eight for Arabs. And there were 187 Jewish vocational schools and 4 for Arabs.² It is clear that there were less educational access and opportunities of all types available for Arabs while Hebrew education was expanding rapidly throughout the country.

One of the reasons for the limited educational access for Palestinian Arab students was the funding. For each Jewish student, schools have an average of 4,935 NIS per year while for each Palestinian Arab student, schools have 862 NIS per year.³ This number for funding does not itemize the external support provided by Jewish sister school affiliates in the US and Europe. In the US alone, there are also external partnerships with over 260 Christian organizations that support education in Israel. In addition, as a part of the Camp David Accords signed in 1979, Israel receives \$6 billion annually as an incentive for keeping peace in the Middle East. Part of this money is allocated for education.

... as a part of the Camp David Accords signed in 1979, Israel receives \$6 billion annually as an incentive for keeping peace in the Middle East. Part of this money is allocated for education.

Today, the Jewish people are not united through education, possibly as a result of external partnerships supporting conservative, reform, and Orthodox religious education. It is obvious that the Israeli school system is divided according to sects with the Orthodox Jews given preference among all state-funded religious schools. Religious instruction in schools is representative of specific faith communities; liberal composed of reform and conservative Jewish children, Orthodox Jewish children, and secular Jewish children. In the conservative and reform instruction, parents are allowed to bring resources and assist in the design of the coursework which comprises 25% of the instructional time. In the Arab Israeli schools, children study Islam and Christianity. However, they spend less time on their own religious studies than they spend studying the Jewish faith. Interestingly, Arab Israeli children are tested on the Jewish faith but not their Muslim or Christian faiths in the matriculation exam that must be passed for graduation.⁴

INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

One of the most important internal partnership programs was begun to integrate children who had lost the mentoring of adults as a result of the Holocaust or other immigration traumas. Begun by Revuen Feuerstein, an Israeli educator, the program focuses upon the use of learning mentors who are frequently adults who lead the child in contextualizing information and concepts to increase readiness and the potential to become engaged in learning the classroom and culture. The mediator helps organize the world for the child. He or she helps children understand events, objects, and people that have a meaning beyond themselves and that the universe has a predictable structure.

Understanding cultural structures helps students know what to do in a wide variety of future situations. Feuerstein also

2. Central Bureau of Statistics, Table T/1 (1996).

3. Daphne Golan-Agnon, *Next Year in Jerusalem: Everyday Life in a Divided Land*, trans. by Janine Woolfson (New York: The New Press, 2005).

4. Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, *Legal Violation of Minority Rights in Israel*, Shfaram, Israel (1998).

proposes that it is possible to make explanatory rules that help one organize observations. The targeted students can acquire fundamental cognitive functions that underlie the ability to effectively learn in many content fields. The power of this approach is that it provides a means of learning for special education or culturally-disoriented students who have much difficulty learning in new situations. In fact, the social context of the Israeli/Palestinian life today is such that many children without learning difficulties have trouble learning in the current environment.

According to Rowell Huesmann, the lead researcher in a study conducted by the University of Michigan in 2010 about children and Middle East violence, nearly 50% of Palestinian children aged 11 to 14 have seen other Palestinians crying over the war-related death of a loved one, and another 50% had seen an injured or dead Palestinian directly. Among Israeli children in the same age group, around 25% reported seeing people grieving, while 10% had seen casualties. The sight of violence and people grieving can have a grave impact on child development and behavior.

In another program, one village encouraged Jews and Muslims to live in an integrated community rather than the segregated ones created after 1947. They conducted schools and religious buildings where individuals of different faiths were educated by two teachers, one Jewish and one Muslim. The house of worship taught about other religions as the leaders discussed tolerance and understanding of others. This effort within Israel was replicated outside the country with the American program called Seeds of Peace teaching Palestinian and Israeli youth how to live together. Youth leaders were brought to the United States for camps and then returned to their homes where they were charged with leading peace efforts in their schools, faith communities, and colleges. This program was expanded to include adult educators who had initially come to the US as advisors for the youth.

A third international partnership, Mind of Peace, takes Palestinian-Americans and Israeli-Americans and shows them how to negotiate a peace treaty to be signed by both groups. This experience has taken place in St. Louis, Missouri and Detroit, Michigan in the United States and in the West Bank in the Palestinian Territories. The partnership instruction is led by Dr. Sapir Handleman, an Israeli citizen who has written about and made videos of these negotiations to teach for peaceful solutions to conflict.

CONCLUSION

In Israel, education, politics, and religion are integrated. Thus, its four diverse educational systems can be sources of internal conflict.

In Israel, education, politics, and religion are integrated. Thus, its four diverse educational systems can be sources of internal conflict. However, political, religious, and educational partnerships as solutions to Israeli's internal conflicts have not been attempted on any national scale. The internal problems are internationally known; conflicts over land ownership in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Jewish settlements, access to religious sites and control of Israeli/Palestinian borders and security for all citizens. The threat of the increase of Arab Israeli citizens and the interest in settling Israeli immigrants in Palestinian Territories compete with the internal problems. What is less well known is that Israeli schools are as conflicted as the internal problems that consume the country.

The youth of Israel are not integrated with each other through a unified curriculum. Orthodox Jewish schools hire their own teachers, develop their own curriculum, and are not subject to national educational requirements. As a result, collaboration with different ethnic groups is not frequently experienced or learned in schools. Israeli children are segregated from each other by language, religion, ethnicity, and educational administration. Because of these factors, children learn the beliefs of their parents within their religious educational community. They learn their perspective is the right one. Skills of negotiation and compromise are not easily learned by the young when students are directly and indirectly taught one perspective as the correct one. In order to demonstrate that peace can be negotiated among different groups, Dr. Sapir Handelman has brought Palestinian and Israeli sympathizers together in order to negotiate peace agreements. The success of this partnership effort is based upon the fact that the negotiators are adults who are American Jewish and American Palestinian citizens. Could such success be reached among students who live in Israel?

The answer is that Israel's educational system argues against such partnerships. It encourages social and religious conflict through diverse educational structures and the diversity of what is taught. With a population of just over seven million, there are opportunities within Israel's school systems for teaching cooperation and acceptance of others' beliefs. There could also be opportunities for instruction to teach how to compromise on the religious and political conflicts within the country. Examination of the curriculum and textbooks does not indicate that such teaching is taking place. Hopefully, teachers are providing some of this instruction on their own. Currently, Israeli education focuses upon nationalism while isolating religious groups and building conflicts through favoritism within the Jewish community. While such favoritism is true in many other countries, the severity of the conflicts surrounding Israel make learning to negotiate, compromise, and build external and internal partnerships critical for the safety of the youth of Israel.

A New Paradigm of Educational Borrowing in the Gulf States: The Qatari Example

Anh-Hao Thi Phan

More than in any other world region, the Arab Gulf states are experiencing a “higher education boom” in terms of the quantity and quality of institutions and programs now available. Over the past two decades, the Gulf states have imported a Western, largely American, model of higher education to address inefficiencies in labor markets and invest in their economic futures, to meet national reform agendas, and in some cases, to function as profit-making ventures. At last count, nearly 60 colleges or universities have been founded in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Oman by provincial governments, nation-states, private organizations and individuals.¹ Certainly, this boom has been financed by the region’s oil and gas wealth, but what is often overlooked in the attention placed upon the multi-billion dollar international deals and investments are the foresight, agency, and political will on the part of individual national leaders to plan for a knowledge-based future by investing in tertiary education today.

During the Islamic Golden Age of the mid-8th to mid-13th centuries, the establishment of the *Bait al-Hikma* [House of Wisdom] in Baghdad exemplified the ‘Abbasid leaders’ vision to base their civilization on the collective wisdom of world knowledge. Arab scholars of the time collected, synthesized, and translated into Arabic shared knowledge from diverse world cultures, including Chinese, Indian, Iranian, Egyptian, North African, Greek, Spanish, Sicilian, and Byzantine sources. Eminent scholars from around the globe were brought to this research and educational institute to share information, ideas, and culture.² Arguably, the modern legacy of the historic House of Wisdom was exemplified in the Arab world with the establishment of the Lebanese American University (1835), the American University of Beirut (1866), and the American University of Cairo (1919), albeit by American missionaries. So, there have been numerous examples of borrowing and lending between institutions and educational transfer across national boundaries throughout Arab world history.³



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1. John Willoughby, “Let a Thousand Models Bloom: Forging Alliances with Western Universities and the Making of the New Higher Educational System in the Gulf,” Working Paper Series, No. 2008-01 (Washington, DC: American University, Department of Economics, 2008).

2. Vartan Gregorian, *Islam: A Mosaic Not a Monolith* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 2001 Annual Report).

3. “Educational transfer” is here defined as the movement of educational ideas, institutions, or practices across international borders. Typically, there is a borrower and a lender.

Across the Arabian peninsula today, American educational practices, curricula, and structures are prevalent enough as to seem uniform, but the borrowed model of higher education has taken various site-specific forms to meet the needs of the host society and environment: the American-style institution (e.g., American University of Kuwait), the turnkey institution (e.g., American University of Sharjah), the branch campus (e.g., Carnegie Mellon University, Qatar), or a full-fledged replica liberal arts campus (e.g., New York University, Abu Dhabi).⁴ This institutional diversity is significant, because while it may seem obvious or instructive to compare the contemporaneous development of higher education institutions (HEIs) and characterize them in regional or global terms, I argue in this essay that education reform and change among the Arab Gulf states is a local affair based on local realities, not the least of which are individual leadership and the particular socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts in which the educational transfer occurs.

Most literature on educational borrowing/lending has focused on primary and secondary education in developing countries, usually in a grantor-grantee relationship between a developed country, or institution thereof, and a developing one. As such, a dependency or neo-institutionalist paradigm has prevailed whereby the developed country, in the role of a governmental agency, foundation, or as part of an international organization, has been seen to impose its institutional structures and practices upon a less developed one, signaling an unequal, North-South power relationship.⁵ However, in contemporary educational transfer projects in the Arab Gulf states today, that historical power dynamic has been turned on its head, and the relationship between borrower and lender can be characterized instead as one of patron and client. Today, the borrowing Arab host country (or organization or individual) wields preponderant economic and political power as the local sponsor of educational products, services, and/or expertise. Thus, power dynamics are inverted due to the financial, legal, and political sponsorship of the borrowing nation, as well as by the agency and active engagement of its educational leaders.

... education reform and change among the Arab Gulf states is a local affair based on local realities, not the least of which are individual leadership and the particular socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts in which the educational transfer occurs.

This power shift allows the host country to control the financial terms and conditions of the partnership, if not always the quality and administration, of the provision of educational products and services. As such, the present importation by Arab Gulf states of Western higher education represents a paradigm-shifting phenomenon that accompanies the contemporary view of education as a service or commodity that is not only produced and consumed domestically but also traded internationally.⁶ The traditional view of “granting” a Western education is not really applicable in a part of

4. Cynthia Miller-Idriss and Elizabeth Hanauer, “Transnational Higher Education: Offshore Campuses in the Middle East,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the 53rd Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, Charleston South Carolina, March 22, 2009.

5. Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York and London: Longman, 1974); Philip Altbach and G Kelly, *Education and Colonialism* (New York: Longman, 1978).

6. IAU definitions, www.unesco.org/iau/. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is a set of multilateral, legally enforceable rules governing international trade in services that was negotiated under the aegis of the World Trade Organization and came into force in 1995. Education is among the 12 sectors of services covered by GATS.

the world that is economically able to choose, buy, and import educational products and services. Far from being passive recipients of an ideal, global model of education or “world culture” that is universally applicable and relevant, the higher education initiatives in the Arab Gulf states are characterized by strategic research and planning, active engagement and partnership, and adaptive and results-oriented entrepreneurship. Indeed, in practice, the processes of educational transfer and the implementation of the foreign higher education model within the local context are more problematic, unpredictable and challenging than can be fully anticipated in the conceptual or planning stages. On the ground, there is a process of resistance, modification, and indigenization that occurs in the partnership between the borrower and lender. This “mutual adaptation” is indicative of the educational change that is effected through adaptations and decisions made by the parties to the transfer as they work with new policies, programs, and structures.

In the case of Qatar and its unprecedented investment in higher education at Education City, the country-specific factors of leadership and local context are significant. The Emir Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani founded the non-profit Qatar Foundation (QF) in 1995 and designated his consort, Her Highness Shaykha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Misnad, as its Chairperson. The Foundation’s stated mission is “to build durable human capacity [in order] to transform Qatar into a knowledge-based economy” by investing in the three pillars of education, science and research, and community development.⁷ QF’s flagship project, Education City, is a 2500-acre campus that houses a network of learning institutions and centers of research which QF hopes will collaborate and cross-fertilize to become an engine of growth and change for the nation. Specifically, the primary goal is to make Qatar less dependent on foreign professionals by educating and training its citizens to assume positions of leadership and enterprise in a knowledge-based economy.

The Emir founded the Foundation the same year that he assumed political power, suggesting that the Emir and Her Highness possessed a clear personal vision of Qatar’s future from the beginning and acted early on to put in place the appropriate people and structures to realize that vision. Virginia Commonwealth University, the first American HEI to join Education City in 1997, began offering its arts and design classes to female students only. Now co-ed, VCU was joined by five other top-rated American universities over the past decade, each offering programs considered vital to Qatar’s economic development: Weill Cornell in 2001 (Medicine), Texas A&M in 2003 (Engineering), Carnegie Mellon in 2004 (Business and Computer Science), Georgetown in 2005 (International Affairs), and Northwestern in 2008 (Journalism and Communication). In 2010, QF also signed agreements with HEC Paris (Executive MBA, Executive Education and Management) and the University College of London (Museum Studies, Conservation and Archaeology) to offer their respective programs of study; and there is discussion of bringing a law school to Education City as well.

... the primary goal is to make Qatar less dependent on foreign professionals by educating and training its citizens to assume positions of leadership and enterprise in a knowledge-based economy.

The fact that these particular American universities are resident at Education City was not a foregone conclusion or

7. Qatar Foundation website, www.qf.org.qa.

outcome; none of them lobbied to be there and, understandably, each institution had its own initial questions and concerns about the enterprise. It is known that QF originally tried to bring just one, multi-disciplinary research university to Qatar, but when it was unable to find a partner institution, it then went about inviting top-tier institutions with degree programs that met the nation's most vital education and training needs. Each HEI was specifically targeted and sought out by QF for the reputation, knowledge, and expertise of their respective academic programs. In its choices of institutional partners and programs, QF was strategic with regard to Qatar's national interests and considerate of long-term objectives, signing a multi-year contract with each institution.⁸ While QF funds all operating costs, infrastructure, housing, and salaries at Education City, each institution negotiates its own budget and turns over all tuition money to QF. A key element of QF's agreements with the universities, negotiated from the beginning and included in their respective Memoranda of Understanding, is that the branch campus follow the same curricula as at the home campus, charge the same tuition fees, and employ the same admissions standards.

Contrary to QF's ambitious goals at the start of the enterprise, local realities have revealed some limiting factors, such as the poor quality of the public K-12 education and the dearth of Qatari males in higher education,⁹ requiring QF leaders to rethink and adjust their expectations. While admissions at Education City are open to students of any nationalities, QF initially set targets that the majority of students, about 75%, would be Qatari nationals. Education City was initially expected to have tens of thousands of students, and as many as 15 universities. In the 2009–10 academic year, Education City had a total student population of about 1,500 students, of which about 45% were Qataris. As enrollments at Education City have risen, the percentage of Qatari students has declined. QF now says it will be home to no more than 5,000 students and 10 universities.

In the face of these local realities, QF has responded with strategic thinking and decision-making. One recent example: in June 2010, QF announced that it had formed a new umbrella institution, Education City University (ECU), which would supersede and encompass the six existing American branch campuses at Education City.¹⁰ By most accounts, this was a surprise development that appeared to suggest a new direction in the evolution of Education City, one that will play out in the years to come. The new University administration, headed by Dr. Shaykh 'Abdulla bin 'Ali al-Thani, currently Vice President of Education at QF, would bring under one entity the six different American HEIs brought to Education City by QF over the past decade. Heretofore, the American HEIs have operated as largely separate institutions on a shared campus, each with its own identity and academic mission. By bringing the six university branch campuses under one institutional umbrella, QF would conceivably consolidate their programs, resources, and activities. First, by creating an overarching institution that would now house all current and future foreign branch campuses, QF would gain greater oversight of the universities' administration, programs, and activities. This development would also seem to alter the recruitment and admissions processes for the resident universities, who heretofore have competed

8. Contracts with the HEIs at Education City are for a period of seven to ten years.

9. Shaykha Abdulla Al-Misnad, "The Dearth of Qatari Men in Higher Education: Reasons and Implications," *Higher Education and the Middle East: Empowering Under-served and Vulnerable Populations*, MEI Viewpoints (October 2010), <http://www.mei.edu/LinkClick.asp?fileticket=vBOcNODJbGg%3d&tabid=541>.

10. K.T. Chacko, "QF Higher Education under One Umbrella," *Gulf Times*, June 28, 2010.

against one another for top students from a limited pool of qualified high school candidates in the region. Second, the newly “integrated, multi-disciplinary institution”¹¹ would also come closer to QF’s original idea to have a single, multi-disciplinary research university at Education City. Thus, Qatari educational leaders are adapting, modifying, and indigenizing the borrowed higher education model to make their national investment work for them. Whether or not Education City will become a latter-day House of Wisdom, it is still too early to tell. What is clear is that Qatar’s national and educational leaders have a clear vision and know what they want; and they’re taking strategic, decisive action.

11.Chacko, “QF Higher Education under One Umbrella,”

Creating a Legacy of Understanding: The Istanbul Center of Atlanta's Art and Essay Contest

Sandra Bird



Figure 1: First place winning work, for the High School category of the 2009/10 Istanbul Center Art Contest, produced by Danny Kim (9th grade) from Alpharetta High School. The theme of this contest was “Who is my neighbor?”



Sandra Bird, Associate Professor of Art Education at Kennesaw State University, is actively engaged with Muslim community organizations in the Atlanta area. Her areas of specialization include cross-cultural aesthetics (with emphasis on the Middle East and Africa), Islamic art history, and intercultural curriculum for university service learning projects within public schools.

It is a lofty ambition to try to create a legacy of understanding and closer relations between cultures, but indeed it is at the heart of everything The Istanbul Center of Atlanta strives to accomplish for the southeastern United States and beyond. “We seek above all to proactively contribute to solving educational, cultural, environmental, social and humanitarian issues. The Center does this by creating opportunities for children and adults to engage in dialogue through education, culture and humanitarian works.”¹ The Center provides learning opportunities for all ages in several disciplines, including the Turkish language, working with local, regional, national, and international organizations.² The annual regional art and essay contest — the subject of this essay — exemplifies this work.

In 2008, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Secretariat in New York became one of the sponsors for the art and essay contest. The speech written by President Jorge Sampaio and delivered by Dr. Thomas Uthup of the UN Alliance at the 2009–2010 awards ceremony conveys eloquently the alignment of cross-cultural goals:

1. The Istanbul Center of Atlanta is a 501(c) 3 non-profit, non-governmental, and non-partisan organization that was established in 2002. This quote is from the Istanbul Center website, available at www.istanbulcenter.org/.

2. A description of the Istanbul Center Art and Essay Contest for 2009–2010, including a full list of winners for the art and essay contest, www.istanbulcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=371:education-4th-annual-art-a-essay-contest&catid=62:annual-art-a-essay-contest&Itemid=61.

Bird...

Ladies and gentlemen, globalization and migration brings together different cultural communities who may previously not have had much interaction with each other. Interaction of different groups can be a source of friction and often of conflict. But cultural diversity can also result in cross-fertilization and success stories of people interacting in mutual respect and harmony. Cultural diversity can spark innovation, stimulate creativity, and boost the economy. Indeed Atlanta, Georgia, and the United States have seen this first-hand.

The Istanbul Center's efforts to promote better understanding and closer relations between the Turkish, American, and other communities of Atlanta and the southeastern United States are inspiring in this regard.

In my mind, the value of the Istanbul Center's annual Art and Essay Contest is in stimulating young people to think positively and creatively about cultural diversity and the bridging of cultures.³

As an educator fully invested in promoting cross-cultural harmony, I welcomed these words. From the moment I walked in the doors of The Istanbul Center of Atlanta, I determined that this was a very unique organization. Along with 30 other Georgia professors who had attended faculty workshops on the Middle East in the fall of 2004,⁴ I was invited at the end of the workshop to a Ramadan *Iftar* at The Istanbul Center's Norcross location. We were all treated with the most gracious attention, and I soon found myself supporting some of their Turkish students on the Kennesaw State University campus through the self-styled, "Intercultural Dialogue and Empathy Association" (IDEA) student group. Eventually, I was invited to serve as a judge for an art and essay contest that The Istanbul Center hoped to launch in 2007. The first run of the contest was fairly awkward — too little experience with such things resulted in few rules by which to operate and few entries to judge. Since then, however, the program has grown by leaps and bounds, much through guidance from art educators such as Jeanette Wachtman, Debi West, and myself, as well as the competent and dedicated staff of The Istanbul Center.

Through the years I have increased my activity with The Istanbul Center, including a position on their advisory board, and have continued my role of "head" art judge for what has grown into a regional secondary school contest. Among the many prizes awarded to the winners are trips to Turkey through The Istanbul Center's travel program.⁵

Over the past year, I began involving my own art education students⁶ in the adjudication process of the Istanbul Cen-

In my mind, the value of the Istanbul Center's annual Art and Essay Contest is in stimulating young people to think positively and creatively about cultural diversity and the bridging of cultures.

3. For the complete text of the speech, see www.unaoc.org/content/view/468/200/lang.english/.

4. This workshop series, *Teaching the Middle East*, is offered annually through the Georgia State University Middle East Institute, and information is available through their website at www.cas.gsu.edu/dept/mec/.

5. For information regarding the Istanbul Center's "Dialogue" trips to Turkey, see www.istanbulcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=81&Itemid=94.

6. The Kennesaw State University students that participated in the first round of judging for the 2009–2010 art contest were enrolled in my Art Education course, ARED 3304 Teaching Art History, Criticism, and Aesthetics. At the time of the judging, we were looking at

ter's art contest. My students served as preliminary judges, using a rubric created for this purpose.⁷ At this point in their training, these students were still learning about secondary school graphic development, as well as how to properly gauge success in artworks using a formal grading system. Using a rubric at this preliminary stage of judging was helpful to the students as they reviewed and then ranked artworks. There was a practical purpose for the initial "hierarchical" rating, as it helped to cull many of the over 1,000 works submitted to the 2009–2010 art contest. Nevertheless, using rubrics for art contests is somewhat heretical in art adjudication circles. There is a tendency to use subjective, but more reliable methods of triangulation — combining several reviewers' informed critical opinions when determining value in artworks. The students' quantified rankings were met with suspicion by the faculty judges, who in truth were the "real" decision makers for our final slate of winners.



Figure 2: Bird's students evaluating artworks submitted for the 2009–2010 art contest.

I asked an art education colleague and program evaluator, Dr. April Munson, to examine the art judging process this year. This, the fourth year of the contest, seemed an appropriate window for assessing how effectively the art adjudication proceeded. While I regret that the faculty judges found this process unnerving, I do see clear benefits to my art education students regarding several factors. First of all, they were able to provide a constructive service to an active community organization that craves young partners who are willing to work toward a common good, in this case helping to identify ideas that provide "out-of-the-box" solutions/opinions on this world that we all share. For many of my art education students, it was their first contact with people from Turkey, or even Muslims in general. Just being at The Istanbul Center for two sessions of classes gave the students an idea of Turkish gentility and enthusiasm for building international relationships. They also had an opportunity to see how artworks can be evaluated according to formal directives. As more and more "objective" evaluation criteria are used in our schools to assess artworks (sadly, to validate the importance of the arts in our schools), I can be certain that my students can administer rigorous assessment according to well defined parameters when needed. how artworks are valued and how good evaluation is determined by a set of criteria that is shared with artist participants before works are created, and then is used again to steer "objective" assessments. This type of art assessment is more helpful in a classroom for art teachers than for judging art contests.

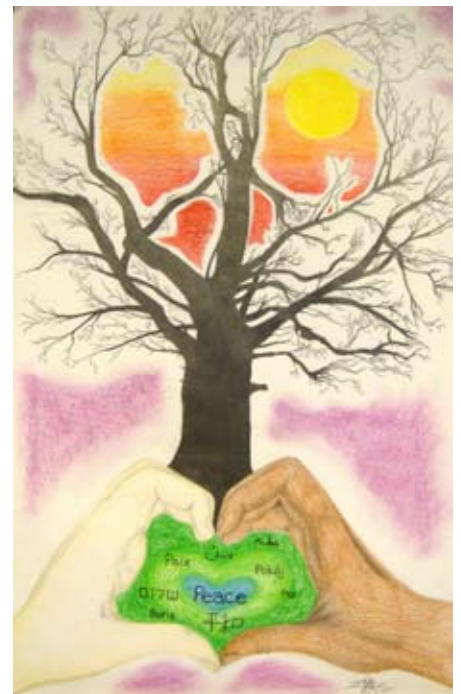
7. The art standards and rubric for last year's theme, "Who is my Neighbor?" are essentially the same for this year's theme of "Empathy: Walking in Another's Shoes." See www.artandessaycontest.com/ArtC.aspx.

Ultimately, Dr. Munson recognized that the end product, effective judging, was achieved: “The final judging process occurred with little discrepancy among judges. The top ten pieces were ranked after conversation and adequate assessment time.” Their findings for the top group were consistent with the student-led assessment. For me, this speaks to the internal validity of our adjudication findings. The winning selections will be on display at the United Nations Building in the fall of 2010, and are currently linked to the Alliance of Civilizations’ website through an article on The Istanbul Center’s annual contest.⁸



Figure 3: Students who won first, second, and third place at the middle school and high school levels of the Istanbul Center Art & Essay Contest in 2009-2010 participated in a two-week cultural trip to Turkey. Here they are exploring the Topkapi Saray in Istanbul with their teachers, guided by staff from The Istanbul Center of Atlanta. They were also able to meet with Turkish dignitaries and have meals or tea in the homes of Turkish families.

Figure 4: First place winning work, for the Middle School category of the 2009–2010 Istanbul Center Art Contest, produced by Erika Bevers (7th grade) from Chamblee Middle School.



Several of the people involved in the contest are in the process of preparing a monograph about the 2009–2010 experience. One of them is Cassandra Whitehead, the Assistant to the Istanbul Center Director, Tarik Celik, and Coordinator of the student/teacher/superintendent trips to Turkey. Among the many valuable things that Cassandra contributes to the monograph are the results of a series of evaluations conducted with the contest's travelers following their trek through the country. While they are all very rich comments, I have selected an excerpt from the text of one of the students, Jenni Paek, which encapsulates the experiences of these young people as a result of their initial encounter with this part of the world:

Later, throughout the trip, is when I discovered the trip's sentimental and cultural impact onto my life and it gave me the sudden realization that I had won something more than just a trip. We were embarking on a life-changing journey ... to change our perspectives of people different than ourselves and to learn of a culture by stepping right into the middle of its country. I believe that I had only an idea in which throughout the years, the news and media had constructed in my mind, of what I was to expect going into a Middle Eastern country. I was dumbfounded each and every day of our trip of how much my perspectives were severely misguided.⁸

At many of the award ceremonies for this contest, I frequently share my opinion that we need this kind of problem-solving and youthful optimism in order to foster mutual understanding between people of different cultures. The Istanbul Center's contest models successful critical thinking in the arts — an excellent vehicle for transforming attitudes and exploring solutions to our contemporary problems.

8. This passage was written by Jenni Paek, the 2009 2nd Place Winner of the Istanbul Center's art contest for the High School Division. Jenni was a student from North Gwinnett High School in Suwannee, Georgia.

Travelogue of a Nigerian Codesria Laureate in Lebanon (January–July 2006, July–November 2008)

Peter F. Adebayo

On December 18th 2004, I discovered the Lebanese Emigration Research Centre (LERC), Notre Dame University, Zouk over the internet while searching for a post-doctoral research fellowship program on Lebanese studies in either Australia or New Zealand. I contacted the Director, Guita Hourani, who was instrumental in my winning the Codesria post-doctoral fellowship award. Elated, I departed for Beirut, Lebanon on February 21, 2006.



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Department of History and International Studies, University of
Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria*

We arrived in Beirut at exactly 2:30 p.m. I was fascinated by the beauty of the airport and, as I was whisked by taxi first to the Research Centre and later to my living quarters, by the architecture of the city.

REDIRECTING MY RESEARCH PROJECT

The next day, Guita began by redirecting my project, counselling me to focus on Lebanese-Nigerian return migrants in the two villages of Miziara and Jwaya and their impact on development activities there. Guita assured me that she would provide all the written materials that I would need to conduct this study. She encouraged me to take a new approach to my research that emphasizes the networking of migrants. Guita followed through on her offer, furnishing me with a trove of inspirational books and articles that laid the foundation for my research. While pouring through this literature, I began to learn French and Arabic, the latter through friendly interactions with children in my neighborhood, family friends, and later a university professor.

SUMMER PLANS AND SKILL ACQUISITION

In order to improve my knowledge of migration studies, Guita decided to send me to Italy for training at the Florence School on Euro-Mediterranean Migration and Development in Florence, Italy. However, the plan fell through when the Italian Embassy denied my application for a visa because I had no resident visa for Lebanon. Undaunted, however, Guita urged me to write at least four articles for possible publication, and helped frame the topics for them.

Guita also helped me to improve my internet research skills, registering me with H-

Net Africa and H-Migration, which are both interdisciplinary organizations of scholars dedicated to developing the enormous educational potential of the internet. Thus having become connected to the international scholarly community, I was afforded new opportunities, including contributing a paper on forced migration from Lebanon as a result of the July 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah. Similarly, the computer training I received enabled me to develop more effective presentations, such as the one on “Transnational Lebanese Migration, Using Traditional Methodologies,” delivered on April 25, 2006, to mark the third anniversary of the establishment of the Lebanese Emigration Research Centre, under the chairmanship of then-Nigerian Ambassador (late) Abdul Kudiir Assayouti, who also provided me with financial support.

FIELDWORK

My preliminary fieldwork research began with a visit to Miziara, one of the migrant-exporting Christian villages located in the northern part of Lebanon. With particular reference to Nigeria, Miziara is noted for exporting Lebanese migrants to Lagos, Calabar, Kano, Ibadan, etc. Upon arriving in Miziara — carrying 50 questionnaires and accompanied by Ms. Marie Jose Tayah, my research assistant — we headed straight for the office of the municipal council chairman, Mr. Joseph Salim Chidac. I was really astonished by the magnificent buildings lining Nigeria Avenue, including the pyramid-shaped house and the plane house, which is similar to one that exists in Abuja.

Mr. Chidac received us warmly. Thereafter, we met a Catholic Maronite priest, himself a returnee from Nigeria, whose cooperation in our research we solicited.

It was in the midst of the process of adjusting my questionnaire and analyzing the data that, on July 12, war broke out between Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Lebanon’s Hizbullah. The war temporarily terminated the fieldwork research and studies at LERC. At the height of the war, I was forced to travel to Damascus and then back to Lagos.

Yet, my brief time in Lebanon had heightened my enthusiasm, sharpened my skills, and set me on a path to additional opportunities in the field. Shortly after returning to Nigeria, I received invitations to participate in conferences in Boston and at Aarhus University in Denmark.

With particular reference to Nigeria, Miziara is noted for exporting Lebanese migrants to Lagos, Calabar, Kano, Ibadan, etc.

A SECOND RESEARCH TRIP TO LEBANON

With Lebanon having recovered from the devastating war, I returned for a second research trip in July 2008. As part of the Nigeria Trade Delegation that was to take part in the Nigeria Week in Lebanon program, I took up residence at the beautiful seaside Radisson SAS Martinez Hotel.

Nigeria Week in Lebanon aimed to create awareness of Nigeria among various segments of the Lebanese population, including students, sportsmen, business executives, and public servants. The program, which featured the first ever visit of the Nigerian Trade Delegation to Lebanon, was organized by the dynamic and charismatic Nigerian Ambassador to Lebanon, His Excellency Hammed Opeyero, and the Lebanese Nigerian Friendship Association (LENFRA). The Directorate of Emigrants and the LERC helped organize the event.

The program greatly enriched my research. Ambassador Opeyero made me part of the Nigerian delegation so that I could interact with the various Lebanese entrepreneurs and discuss my Codesria/LERC research on “Return Migration, Family Networking and Village Development: The Case of Lebanese-Nigerians.”

The delegation visited laboratories owned by the South Business Innovation Center (SBIC), Saleh Establishments, and the biblical site of Cana Galilee Grotto, to name but a few places. The nearness of the Grotto to a mosque and the harmonious relationship between the Muslims and the Christians in the village baffled some members of the Nigerian delegation.

The delegation later met with members of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists — a meeting that culminated in the signing of a cooperation agreement between the latter and the Manufacturers’ Association of Nigeria. Following the delegation’s departure, I resumed my field research in earnest in Miziara and Jwaya.

LEBANESE LESSONS

My experience as a Codesria laureate in Lebanon was an incalculably rewarding intellectual and personal enterprise — for me, a miracle. The guidance and support provided by Guita Hourani and the LERC were invaluable.

The LERC is an institution from which many other promising Nigerian scholars and researchers on emigration studies could benefit. My involvement with LERC, coupled with the training I received from the program, encouraged the current Nigerian Ambassador to Lebanon, H.E. Assayouti to explore how to establish an academic exchange program with Lebanon.

The Nigerian federal government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) would do well to support young scholars’ efforts to gain such experience as I was afforded. The intellectual development of our lecturers, especially in their fields of specialization, through academic exchange programs with overseas institutions is both necessary and possible.



Middle East Institute