

## Higher Education in the Arab World: Hopes and Challenges

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At its various levels, education exists as one of the most outstanding factors contributing to the comprehensive development process of the youth and their ability to solve problems. The pursuit of education exists among the foundations of positive social, economic and political transformations in any society. In the rapidly changing modern world, societies aspire to provide rising generations with the knowledge necessary to deal with present and future challenges, ingraining a national responsibility to achieve such in the minds of the public. With its crucial impact, education can be considered society's most critical investment in human resources.

Higher education and scholarly research hold a key role in promoting comprehensive development and rapid transformation necessary for all nations facing the power of globalization. There is a dire need in the Arab world for a complete re-examination of higher education, research policy and planning in order to work towards improving its quality to meet modern society's needs.

Energies must be focused and resources mobilized in order to deal with the challenges presented by international nongovernmental organizations' and banks interference in Arab affairs. The unavoidable influence of external events and entities require Arab societies to face what is happening in the world and prepare themselves and their institutions properly. It should be noted that international organizations consistently release mostly negative and sometimes deeply pessimistic reports about the state of higher education and research in the Arab world. Clearly for the Arab

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world, the levels of interest in education and research, and the means by which they are conducted, have a long way to go before catching up with much of the rest of the world.

It is apparent then that the role of higher education institutions needs to be modified in order to suit current international devel-

opments, with its various political, economic and social dimensions. This paper aims to discuss the following topics: (a) the state of higher education in the Arab world and its challenges, and (b) recommendations on improving the quality of higher education in the Arab world.

Many countries must launch radical reform processes in order to combat the numerous challenges facing their internal situations as presented by globalization. These need to come in stages, with the first focusing on the fields most related to preparing the state and society for upcoming changes. States must reform the administrative and government apparatuses, which represent the state's nerve center, to abide by a new vision that can make the unwieldy state better able to adjust to new variables. Fixing education and training policies represent other essential steps in the process, as the main means of developing human resources and creating a skilled workforce.<sup>1</sup>

As a cornerstone of development, improving educational standards represent a fundamental step in the reform and change process, and thus must hold a priority position in states' agendas. We must focus on diagnosing the state of higher education in the Arab world in the following ways:

**Firstly: Challenges of Higher Education in the Arab World**

One cannot deny higher education's role in helping build the modern Arab state and preparing qualified personnel in various fields. Education helped deepen values of national loyalty and belonging, while broadening Arab citizens' horizons and sense of problems facing their nations.

Despite these accomplishments, higher education faces many problems that hamper its ability to catch up with modernity's demands and overcome the Arab world's current weakness. Among these challenges:

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1 Hussein Tawfiq Ibrahim, *Al-'Awlamah – Al-ab'ad wa al-in'ikayat al-siyasiya, ru'ya awaliya min manzur 'ilm al-siyasa* ("Globalization – Political Dimensions and Repercussions, An Initial Vision from a Political Science Perspective") in *'alim al-fikr*, no. 2 (October/December 1999): 216.

### **(A) Soaring Demand**

Due to a rapidly growing youth population, the number of higher education students in the Arab world doubled between 1980 and 1990. Helping to further along this rise was the social value ascribed to higher education by many people, regardless of its actual utility.

As a result of this explosion of students, most universities were unable to absorb the growing numbers, either in terms of space or faculty.

Although the increase in student enrollment in Arab countries hardly stands out from the trend in most developing countries, most Arab universities have resorted to putting specific admissions conditions on universities to reduce the number of students wishing to enter. Many do so without providing an academic setting that can properly accommodate these numbers, while excluding certain groups from joining the universities. All of these factors have had a negative impact on the level of education in Arab universities. Additionally, the centralization of most Arab universities in national capitals and primary cities limits access for peripheral regions. As a result, citizens are offered unequal opportunities and development in the countryside and educational progress is severely hampered.<sup>2</sup>

### **(B) Insufficient Funding**

The governments in most Arab countries serve as the primary or sole source of funding for higher education, but the budgets allocated for education remain limited and insufficient to meet the growing needs of higher educational institutions. Some countries have reduced education expenditures, forcing universities to increase tuition and fees in order to balance their budgets. Creating additional problems for the Arab educational system is the exportation of Arab wealth to foreign universities. While the money spent on educating students in the West continues to rise, the amount spent within the students' home countries has dropped.<sup>3</sup> The enormous wealth possessed by some Arabs has gone toward educating a fortunate few abroad, with some attending expensive imported "cookie-cutter" universities, rather than financing the desperately underfunded universities attended by the rest of the population.

The reduction of government expenditure on higher education creates undesirable deficiencies in the level of education and development achieved. The undercutting of

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2 Mohammed Qasim Abdullah, *Azmat al-ta'lim al-'ali fi al-watan al-'arabi wal-tahaddiyat al-mu'asira – waqi' wa-bada'il* ("Higher Education Crisis in the Arab Nation and Contemporary Challenges – Reality and Alternatives"), *Shu'un Arabiya*, no. 113 (Spring 2003): 129.

3 Ahmad Boumalham, *Azmat al-ta'lim al-'ali – wajhat nazar tatajawiz hadud al-aqtar*, ("Higher Education Crises – A Point of View Going Beyond National Borders") *Majallat al-fikr al-'arabi*, no. 98 (Beirut 1999).

living standards of university faculty and staff<sup>4</sup> creates negative repercussions for their performance and limits their incentive to develop and promote innovative methodologies.

### (C) Ivory Towers on Sand

Many universities in the Arab world operate in seclusion from their surroundings, unable to open up and interact with society. Consequently, they are not empowered to research and tackle the problems affecting individuals and society, nor contribute feasible solutions. This keeps academia removed from reality and out of touch with the actual dimensions of society's problems,<sup>5</sup> which leads to a gap between the university's interests and society's concerns. Such a reclusive nature reinforces a total separation between the intellectual and the realistic.<sup>6</sup>

It appears that part of the educational system's predicament lies in its removal from its social and developmental surroundings.

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sophical, creating a tendency to lack harmony between their content and objectives, as well as between the students' learned skills and the needs and problems of society.<sup>7</sup> The universities could increase their weight and prestige through reinforcing a constant presence and concern with the changes that society witnesses by following up on them with research.

### (D) Little or No Academic Freedom

Academic freedoms, such as thought, opinion and expression, exist as important components of public freedoms and human rights.<sup>8</sup> Open dialogue must be allowed and

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4 Ahmad Mukhtar al-Jamal, *Al-ta'lim al-jami'i fi al-watan al-'arabi bayna al-wajaha al-ijtima'iya wal-baith al-'ilmi*, ("University Education in the Arab Nation between Social Standing and Scholarly Research") *Shu'un Arabiya*, no. 127 (Fall 2006): 163.

5 Mansouri Abdul-Haqq, *Azmat al-ta'lim al-jami'i fi al-ahdaf wal-ghayat am fi al-wasa'il wal-ahdaf?* ("The University Education Crisis: In the Goals and Objectives or in the Means and Ends?") *Majallat al-Tarbiya*, no. 141 (Qatar: June 2002): 170.

6 Ahmad Ibrahim al-Yusuf, *'ilaaqat al-tarbiya bil-mujtama' wa-tahdid malamihha al-naw'iya*, ("Education's Relationship with Society and Determining its Quantitative Features") *'Alim al-Fikr*, no. 1 (July-September 2000): 18-23.

7 Hassan Musari' al-Rawi, *Dirasat hawl al-tarbiya fi al-bilad al-'arabiya*, (Studies on Education in the Arab Countries) (Sidon: Al-maktaba al-misriya, 1987).

8 Mohamed Nabil Nufil, *ta'ammulat fi falsafat al-ta'lim al-jami'i al-'arabi* (Reflections on Arab University Education Philosophy) *Majallat al-Tarbiya al-Jadida* 151, (December 1990), 17.

promoted without censorship, restriction or fear of implicit or explicit consequences. The university, as a scholarly institution and a pulpit for free thought, must guarantee the academic freedom for its students and faculty to express and defend their views in the framework of a democratic system, public taste and social norms.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that universities in most Arab countries are government institutions and depend on state financial and administrative support is at the heart of the crisis. Governments impose their rigid regimes without analyzing the reality of these scholarly institutions, inevitably creating unsound practices, even so distorted as to make the universities lose much of their academic status.<sup>10</sup> These governmentally superimposed restrictions on the university directly lower the ceiling of academic freedom and prevent faculty from participating in decision-making, voicing their opinions and publishing freely. Taken together, such limitations restrict scholarly innovation.

Scholarly innovation cannot thrive in an unstable, tense environment lacking freedom and personal security, since such creativity requires environments that stimulate intellectual freedom rather than stifle it.<sup>11</sup> Nader Farjani argues that the type of government control present in Arab countries is one of the primary reasons for the decline of higher education and its lack of involvement in economic development, even if only because of the absence of educational autonomy. The continuation of insufficient funding set aside for higher education furthers an inherently uncreative environment.

According to the existing power structure, government provides public goods and services, including education. For the Arab world, this system results in a coercive structure that fails to express the interests of all the people and does not place the pursuit of science and knowledge above all. It is hardly surprising, then, that the quality of higher education has been on the decline, especially in the fields of thought and research, despite education's relatively fast spread.<sup>12</sup>

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9 Hassan Sa'id, ed., *Hurriyat al-fikr* ("Freedom of Thought") *Al-Mawsu'a al-Thaqafiya* (The Cultural Encyclopedia) (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1972), 397.

10 Abdullah Boubatana, *Al-jami'at wa-tahaddiyat al-mustaqbal ma' al-tarkiz 'ala al-mintaqa al-'arabiya* (Universities and Future Challenges, Focusing on the Arab Region), *'Alim al-Fikr* 12, September 1988, 12-14.

11 Sultan Bilghayth, *Daur al-jami'at al-arabiya fi da'm thaqafat al-bahth al-'ilmi al-'ibda'i*, no. 127, (Fall 2006), 124.

12 Nader Farjani, *Al-ta'lim al-'ali wal-tanmiya fi al-watan al-'arabi* (Higher Education and Development in the Arab Nation), *Al-Mustaqbal Al-'Arabi*, no. 237, (November 1998), 98.

### **(E) Low-quality Research with Unclear Goals**

Scholarly research is essentially the bringing of facts to light through hypotheses and reaching results and conclusions.<sup>13</sup> Often, such research serves as a means through which natural treasures, whether economic, social or cultural, can be discovered and utilized. Research plays a prominent role in raising society to a higher level by contributing to forging a problem-solving mentality and opening previously closed doors. Researchers must not limit their work to the purely theoretical, but need to also find practical applications when possible.

Progress in science and technology begins at the university level with its foundations and think tanks, which are scholarly spaces generating the fundamental knowledge utilized to solve the major problems plaguing society. However, the situation in Arab universities is quite different, as research and critical studies are only of minor interest to professors who have little incentive to carry out research. Nor is there sufficient competition between faculty members to earn high positions through research and studies. Contrasting with international education norms, a dedicated scholar might earn only the contempt of his peers.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of the sparse interest in scholarly research, the few remaining innovative researchers in Arab universities usually work in difficult circumstances with a gaping social vacuum and facing continual threats of censorship. Conspicuously absent from institutions' priorities are critical thinking and coordinating research between different specializations to allow the exchange of ideas.<sup>15</sup>

Also aggravating the situation for scholarly research is the lack of sufficient backing. The budgets set by the governments for scientific research is less than one-half percent of public income, whereas in advanced countries governments spend more than two percent of their budgets on research.<sup>16</sup>

Scientific research faces another problem, namely that the research policy in universities and academic institutions has no clear objective serving the goals of the university or society, and the studies that are carried out are done so without purpose. The entire research process, where present, is not based on a clearly defined, integrated policy, due to the lack of objective oversight ensuring coordinated, purposeful

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13 Taysir al-Nashif, *Al-sulta wal-hurriya al-fikriya wal-mujtama'* (Power, Intellectual Freedom and Society) (Beirut: The Arab Institution for Studies and Publishing, 2001), 100.

14 Ibid, 20.

15 Sultan Bilghayth, *ibid*, 129.

16 Farouq al-Baz, *Al-'arab wa-azmat al-baht al-'ilmi* (Arabs and the Scientific Research Crisis), *Al-Arabi*, (June 2004), 19.

research efforts.<sup>17</sup>

### **(F) Other Problems Facing Arab Higher Education**

The Arab world suffers from a set of problems that comprise a full-blown crisis in higher education:<sup>18</sup>

1. Arab universities lack a social philosophy on which to build a realistic, coherent educational philosophy, which in turn leads to the lack of a clear strategy for higher education.
2. There exists a participation crisis in managing higher education institutions. Since the universities are run by people appointed by government officials who generally seek to serve those officials, a university's work as a scientific, educational pulpit is negatively impacted.
3. Arab universities maintain a low-impact stature on their surroundings, due not only to the nature of the universities but also to the surrounding environment itself.
4. The weak relations between different universities within a single country and near-total lack of cooperation between universities in different Arab countries prevent meaningful inter-Arab discussions on mutual problems. Instead, most Arab universities prefer collaboration with foreign universities over other Arab schools.
5. Most of the Arab universities adopt traditional education based on rote memorization of material without enabling students to be innovative and mix scientific knowledge with practical application. Students are not encouraged to take a critical, analytical approach towards numerous problems in society, creating a spirit of student submissiveness and fear to voice their opinion.
6. Poor integration across the university programs, since the university curricula do not comprise any sort of homogeneous unit.
7. Universities regularly face shortcomings in the general technical, legal and institutional framework, and resort to using "Band-Aid" solutions instead of pursuing comprehensive reform.

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17 Mansuri Abdul-Haqq, *ibid*, 171.

18 See the following:

Mohammed Qasim Abdullah, *ibid*, 131-133.

Salman Rashid Salman, *Ishkaliyat al-jami'at al-'arabiya* (Problem of the Arab Universities), *Shu'un Arabiya*, no. 80, (December 1994), 163.

Al-Ghali Ahrashaw, *Al-siyasa al-talimiya wa-khutat al-tanmiya al-'arabiya – hasila wa-afaq* (Educational Policy and Arab Development Plans – Results and Prospects), *Shu'un Arabiya*, no. 107, (Fall 2007), 141.

Mansouri Abdul-Haqq, *ibid*, 164.

8. The absence of a link between pre-university and university education creates a variety of issues for both universities and students. Since the university curriculum does not take into consideration what the students have already learned over the years, most of the scientific and epistemological components are new to students and are difficult to connect to what they have already learned.
9. Most educational institutions rely on traditional methods in managing affairs. Doing so ignores the concept of comprehensive quality management, which would be far more efficient than any of the traditional management methods.

This review of the problem-ridden state of higher education in the Arab world does not seek to cast blame or to diminish some of the realized accomplishments, but rather is an attempt to diagnose the system's illnesses and demonstrate how important it is to re-evaluate the situation. The UN Arab Human Development Reports and many studies by Arab researchers have found that the dominant education and scientific research structure in the Arab world has become obsolete and is a failure. A rebuilding of the system appears necessary in order to fulfill Arab personal and societal aspirations, while also measuring up to international education standards to provide a viable developmental outcome.

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from backwardness to modernity. The Arab world faces major obstacles in the way of accomplishing this goal. Containing 4.6 percent of the world's overall population, the Arab countries are in last place in development indicators such as spending on scientific research and number of patents issued. Even if explanations differ, a near-total consensus exists that educational policy's components are far from

the international standards, which should link words to action, crown planning with implementation and translate principles and goals into facts and accomplishments. Many promises and grandiose slogans have been uttered in the name of this policy to reform the educational structure to complement economic development, but they have usually remained only words, showing the continued failure and decline of education.

There has not been serious, focused work done to find solutions to this problem in

the Arab world. Education's institutions, policy, management, and decision-making all fail to meet good management standards. Higher education institutions have to deal with vague objectives, preventing them from meeting the needs of the age of globalization. All of this makes us assert that the need for reviewing education policy and planning has become dire. As the world has entered the 21st century and confronted all of the astonishingly rapid developments within it, we must escape from the silence, if not coma, that we have remained in without being shaken by the daily trials and tribulations befalling us so as to face what the age dictates to us.

### **Secondly: Recommendations and Proposals for Means to Develop Higher Education**

It should be self-evident that the majority of the states in the Arab world still suffer from shortcomings in applying the principles of good governance. This applies for all fields,

whether political, social, economic or intellectual, and is reflected in the state of higher education and its institutions. If the Arab world is stumbling and unable to raise itself up enough to develop society and achieve sustainable development, then it becomes incumbent on the states to dramatically overhaul their system of governance. Higher education and the possibilities it presents does not work in a void, but rather is influenced by and influences the situation of society at large. Failures of governance directly impact the state of higher education in nations, often leading it and its institutions to fail as well.

True discussion of higher education reform and setting its policies and planning straight cannot be accomplished in isolation from the prevalent political, social and economic situations in the Arab world. We cannot pretend to acknowledge a separation between sound management for higher education and other governance issues. For the reform process to be comprehensive and far-reaching it must deal with the affairs of society and state at large. In discussing reform in the field of higher education, we must assert that it does not mean abandoning cultural identity. Rather, reform must be based on a careful balance between natural strengths in society that can help guide the educational process and contribute to the information and communication revolutions.

In order for any vision of reform in higher education to be properly and successfully achieved it must be provided with political support and social willpower. Thus, mass action promoting such values would allow for the tools of implementation to

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spring forth.

A number of suggestions can be made on how to properly reform higher education in the Arab world:

### **1 – Democratizing Education**

Democratizing education means subjecting the educational process across its different levels and institutions to democratic standards. By guaranteeing the principles of freedom, equal rights, accountability, transparency, freedom of expression, self-criticism, competence for public offices, freedom of informational access and distribution, the rule of law and equality before the law, respect for the values of tolerance, pragmatism and cooperation and, finally, the role of civil society, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and mass participation in decision-making, societies would be more greatly enabled to promote high educational standards.

The application of principles such as these in the field of higher education requires the following:

Strip governments' hegemonic grip over higher education in order to ensure the spread of academic freedoms and the values of scholarly innovation. By placing education into the hands of the people, institutions would be guaranteed balanced, mass participation to put their policies and decision-making processes into place.

Represent the interests of professors and students through electoral mechanisms and the founding of unions and associations. Also, provide the legal environment for freedom of the flow of information, scholarly research and cultural and intellectual activity in the universities.

Create a framework of balanced, democratic oversight in which diverse groups, including the state, the private sector, civil society institutions and academic organizations and personnel, takes part. Such participation in managing and supervising university affairs paves the way for close cooperation between all of these groups. This is also related to the necessity of forming boards of managers to run the universities, made up of independent figures not loyal to certain forces in society.

Lay out a legislative framework to run the universities on an institutionalized – not personalized – basis, while respecting transparency and legal accountability. Institutions should also provide professors and academic researchers a leading role, along with more worth and work to affirm freedom of thought.

Completely equalize admission opportunities for higher education, regardless of gender, on the basis of merit as specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Develop educational curricula and teaching methods to consolidate the values

of creative, democratic dialogue and openness instead of rote learning, overbearing authority and closed-mindedness.

Build up teachers' abilities and confidence, to ensure they hold the necessary knowledge to impart onto students. Their research should be encouraged and they should not be forced to adhere to strict, predetermined curricula that limit their flexibility.<sup>19</sup>

## **2 – Greater University Autonomy**

Autonomy for universities and research institutes cannot be complete unless funding comes from society and various diverse sources, in order to ensure that it is difficult for any one party to exert pressure or hegemony of any type. This also allows the institutions to continue their work with no restrictions. Several parties could help fund universities:

Governments: University autonomy does not mean in any way that the state must relinquish its responsibility to back education. Quite the contrary, governments need to increase their budget allocations to higher education and also search for additional sources of funding towards these ends.

Foundations, corporations and business enterprises; even individuals and capitalists. It is in the private sector's interest to have skilled graduates in various specializations take part in developing their industries, businesses and all other activities. The state should encourage this through specific incentives and exemptions, or impose fees on private corporations to support education and research.

Additionally, the establishment of private universities, not aiming for profit alone, should be encouraged, as well as expanding open universities and distance learning.

## **3 – Linking Higher Education with Sustainable Development**

Development in comprehensive understanding aims to fulfill the needs of the present without damaging the ability of future generations to fulfill their own needs. Additionally, it raises living standards, while narrowing the gaps between different groups of citizens in order to realize social justice and develop national resources and human capital in an effective, balanced way. Such accomplishments are achieved through increasing individual income, creating jobs, improving the quality of education, health care and social insurance, and broadening individuals' intellectual scopes. The required development does not aspire for human progress for a limited number of

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19 Nabil Ali, *Iqaamat mujtama' al-ma'rifa lil-nahda* (Founding a Knowledge Society for the Renaissance), *Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi*, no. 342, (August 2007), 100.

years, but rather for all of humanity throughout the future.<sup>20</sup>

Development is related not only to economic resources, but also to human development, for which the foundation is education and gaining knowledge. Linking higher education to development requires the following:

Granting educational opportunities for all and providing the flexibility and capability to confront new needs; fulfill society's demands and the constantly changing needs of labor.

Utilizing the universities, and the future knowledge within them, to contribute to solving society's problems and regulating a modern society. Universities should maintain close ties to fighting poverty, unemployment and environmental degradation, while supporting public health and a civil society culture.

Linking the expansion of education with the labor market's demands, in order to provide training opportunities and supply business with experience, advice, research and services.

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Upgrading human possibilities in science and technology to serve comprehensive development. Universities could therefore help solve a range of challenges facing society through the three principal functions of the university, namely education, scientific research and community service.<sup>21</sup>

Opening up the universities to society and to the regional and international environment to develop dialogue skills, collective work, inclusivity and understanding society's problems in order to solve them. Universities would thus be more capable to offer social services in all fields, through backing applied scientific research and focusing it on the industrial, commercial and social sector.

#### **4 – Applying Comprehensive Quality Standards in Higher Education**

The concept of comprehensive quality means putting a management strategy in place that concentrates on a set of values, while drawing its vital energy from the information through which workers' talents can be creatively employed at different levels of the organization to promote its continual improvement

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<sup>20</sup> Mohammed Qasim Abdullah, *ibid*, 135.

<sup>21</sup> Nuzad Abdul-Rahman Al-Haiti, *Al-tanmiya al-mustadama fi al-mintaqa al-'arabiya – al-hala al-rahina wal-tahaddiyat al-mustaqbaliya* (Sustainable Development in the Arab Region – the Current Situation and Future Challenges), *Shu'un 'Arabiya*, no. 125, Spring 2006, 103.

In education, comprehensive quality is used to mean adherence to a set of special characteristics that precisely express the essence of the educational process in all of its dimensions. This is especially successful with regards to inputs, processes, outputs and feedback, and includes all of the interactions that lead to realizing the necessary objectives for society.

It is only natural that good educational administration requires comprehensive quality management, which ensures competency, improved results and good output from scholars and graduates. A quality system would be of benefit because it lowers costs and increases productivity, which is just what the higher educational institutions need most as their costs rise and their output remains modest.

A comprehensive quality system in the higher education institutions would require the following:

Professional, scholarly and ethical training for faculty members, so that they are able to deliver their messages competently. This training needs to be comprehensive and fully integrated with teaching methods, means of evaluation and guidelines for student interaction.

Programs that develop academic, technical and administrative employees quantitatively and qualitatively to modernize their skills during on-the-job training sessions or by sending them abroad on training and educational fellowships.

Develop students' creative and critical thinking skills, including innovation in their academic specialization. Stimulating critical thinking also makes the student able to test the veracity of facts and opinions using a set of logical principles.

Provide academic and technical resources and prepare means of observing the institution's needs for all types of resources, so that it can continue in a regular and effective way.

Develop curricula to ensure institutions keep up with scientific and technological developments.

Provide the infrastructure and equipment that can allow the educational institutions to meet academic needs, including buildings, classrooms, labs, libraries, public services and other necessities.

Place standards on all public and private higher education institutions, using strict, comprehensive systems, to ensure quality in these institutions. Applying global rules on the higher education institutions allows them to be compared with their counterparts elsewhere in the world.

Transition from just educating to learning, the latter being a much broader concept that incorporates the many methods of acquiring knowledge, skills and experience over a lifetime. Learning is one of the most important means of change in society,

and it is learning that brings about economic and social progress. If knowledge is the means by which to reach ideals such as freedom, justice and human dignity, then progress is its fuel.

### 5 – Arab and Global Cooperation

Enhancing cooperation in the field of higher education and scientific research is a pillar of educational development in the age of globalization. Effective Arab cooperation has become a pressing necessity to bring about an educational renaissance in the Arab countries, especially in graduate studies, scientific research and publication.

Higher education institutions in the Arab world can participate in guiding each other with their experiences. If they stand together, their cooperation could create positive results for higher education. Undoubtedly, the issue requires reactivating Arab institutions for joint action.

The world has now become a global village. Complex reciprocal influence in the political, cultural, economic and intellectual spheres imposes a type of exchange that enables higher education institutions to benefit positively from extraordinary progress in science and technology.

We conclude by saying that the topic of higher education in the Arab world has be-

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come a vital issue in our current age. Reform has gained urgency and cannot be delayed. Since higher education faces numerous challenges, its current, predominant situation is not promising. The Arab world holds vast capabilities and material and human wealth that present it incredible opportunity. The native humanitarian and cultural values of

the Arab world must start this reform and respond to what globalization has imposed upon it. As the Quran says, “And say: Work; so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Messenger and the believers.” (9:105) ■