



QS 5th QS-MAPLE

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The 5th QS-MAPLE conference and exhibition

Co-hosted by the Qatar University in Qatar.



Date: Tuesday—Wednesday, **May 5–7, 2015**

Venue: Grand Hyatt Doha, Qatar

Theme: International Innovation and Co-operation in Higher Education

Topic: Opportunities & Challenges of internationalizing Higher education in KSA

Abstract:

The majority of higher education institutions give a high importance to internationalization worldwide. The aim is to improve student preparedness; enhance the international profile of the institution; strengthen research and knowledge production; and fostering international cooperation and solidarity. However, internationalizing higher education has also some challenges because it has served to reinforce and reproduce unequal divisions in the political economy of global education. It has caused intense pressures for institutional competition and collaboration, hierarchization and homogenization, and raises serious questions about quality control within and across national higher education systems. In

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Opportunities & Challenges

Of

Internationalizing Higher education in KSA

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Opportunities & Challenges of internationalizing Higher education in KSA:

Because of the increase of globalization in business, it follows that, quite naturally, the majority of higher education institutions give high importance to issues of internationalization, with the aim of improving student preparedness, not only to prepare for careers in our increasingly globalized world; but also to enhance the international profile of the institution itself. Of course, this is done by forming links with comparable institutions across the world.

However, true strengthening of the reputation of an institute of higher education is a long-term process. It is achieved through the development of research and knowledge, whilst fostering international cooperation and solidarity with peer bodies gradually and consistently. This means that the internationalization process for an institution of higher education must recognize the need to ensure that they avoid aiming for short-term gain by reproducing unequal divisions, through intensifying pressures for institutional competition and collaboration, and the creation of hierarchies and homogenous groups which could risk giving more weight to considerations of status and recognition of the institution, than to the core

purpose of providing consistent top quality education for their own students.

These, more or less natural tendencies of seeking success for the institution may lead to potentially serious issues of conflicting interests. So, it is the clear responsibility of leaders in education to ensure that all faculty members recognize that it is the achievements, and consistent success of an entire student body and faculty, over a period of years, which contributes most to the true high status of an institution.

So, with this in mind, in this session, I will concentrate firstly, on outlining the changing dynamics behind the growth of internationalization in higher education, and then move on to issues related to Saudi Arabia.

One must never lose sight of the fact that Internationalization in higher education has long been a historic tradition for great thinkers to communicate and cooperate. What has changed in our time is the pace, depth, manner and priorities of internationalization. The prime higher aim has been to respond to change in society and the ready communication of new ideas, not only in science and technology, including medicine - but also in sociology, and methodologies of planning and organization. Above all, however, in today's world, the prime need is for a positive and successful response to the increasingly rapid pace of change in society as a whole. This is not at all easy, because change in society -especially in technology and its application - moves

faster than the capacity for changes in an educational system, and the time needed for students to learn and understand adequately.

The benefits of internationalization have long been a natural motive for well-established institutes of higher learning to welcome cross border, and cross cultural communication and cooperation, and these developments have been greatly encouraged over the years by benefactors - such as Rhodes and Fulbright - who supported the great principle of generous scholarships to encourage and promote the cross-fertilization of ideas. These same principles have been followed in Saudi Arabia, initially by the King Faisal Foundation, and

continue now with the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, together with numerous private and lesser known benefactors, sponsoring participation in study and research internationally.

As might be expected, the regional development of international cooperation in education has been linked to economic factors. Fortunately, human intellect and capability is often spurred by obstacles which have to be overcome and so, increasingly, with practical support from wealthier countries and institutions - both public and private – such as the Gates foundation - greater numbers of talented people from poorer regions are

increasingly able to participate in higher education and advanced research for the greater benefit of all.

It is a welcome fact that, throughout history, the world owes much too many highly gifted individuals who have made significant advances in human knowledge. However, steady extension of the borders of human knowledge is best based on research by highly qualified experts working together, ensuring that new theories and propositions can be rigorously tested. Consequently, in our shrinking world, achieving success in advanced study provides the strongest motivation for international cooperation. This has been demonstrated by significant achievements in medical research, Information and communications technology, and more spectacularly in

space technology, as shown again, recently by the multinational team-work of the European Space Agency in the Rosetta project, bringing valuable information to earth after the successful landing of a space vehicle following a journey which took ten years.

A key consequence of the expansion of internationalization is that research planning and coordination has, in itself, become a key field of expertise - not least in order to avoid duplication of costly effort. First of all, this means ensuring a wide agreement on procedures for evaluating and prioritizing needs. For example; ensuring that communities are able to feed themselves is an obvious high priority but, in every single

case, in order to satisfy this fundamental need, the first task is to solve the puzzle of where to begin. The 'What?', 'How?' and 'Who?' Equation. Even for the most simple aid project - such as providing a clean water supply - there are many factors to consider. Such a simple and beneficial action means much more than just locating a viable water source, drilling a bore-hole, and letting water flow. In any and every instance, an overview of the entire socio-economic context is essential, centered on issues of infrastructure, both physical (for example; roads, power, sanitation) and organizational (for example; availability of suitable people, education , health) In simple terms, putting a water pump by a well, means not only ensuring a

necessary source of power, but also that there is someone available with the knowledge to maintain it for the long term, and for users to be educated about efficient water usage.

It is universally recognized that education, and its development - both intellectually and practically - is the essential core factor in human progress and social stability. The inter-relationship of education and social stability in contemporary society is recognized as a fundamentally important factor - and becomes increasingly urgent as the population of the world grows rapidly, and areas of conflict grow.

Ignorance, and the consequent negative distortion of the high principles and benevolence of religious faith, can only be countered through education, and the internationalization of the highest possible standards at all levels. In this critically essential task, institutes of higher education have a critically significant role to play. Therefore, the need for constant and effective coordination is paramount.

A potentially useful field for future cooperation between institutes of higher education-regionally and internationally - is in relation to the success or failure of aid projects in developing economies. No doubt, considerable analysis has already been done involving

many thousands of projects in widely different sectors of development aid, but there is still considerable scope for concentration on specific issues relating to reasons for failure, analysis of the causes, and - above all - the development and implementation of well-considered practical and achievable proposals for their rectification.

Moving on, I would like to share a few thoughts on how the internationalization of higher education in Saudi Arabia provides a critical, if under-appreciated, example for the promotion of developing knowledge economies.

The history of educational development in Saudi Arabia dates back only to the early nineteen thirties. Less than a

century as compared to much older states, and yet, its progressive development has been truly remarkable, due to the consistent determination of successive Saudi rulers and governments to put education at the forefront in seeking to develop the nation for the greatest common good. The Basic Law of Governance in education (1992) states that “The State shall patronize sciences, letters and culture. It shall encourage scientific research, protect the Islamic and Arab heritage, and contribute towards Arab, Islamic and human civilization - provide public education and commit itself to the eradication of illiteracy”.

Furthermore, as one of the co-founders of UNESCO in 1946, Saudi Arabia made a clear demonstration of commitment to internationalization in education, and endorsed this commitment further in 2012 by making a twenty million dollar donation to support the UNESCO emergency fund.

A key element of the successful philosophy of educational development has been to recognize from the beginning the fundamental importance of ensuring that the best minds - female as well as male - had opportunities for study within other cultures and societies, and also that top level thinkers from other societies were encouraged to play a role in wide-reaching development in Saudi Arabia.

In Saudi Arabia, a core concept of educational policy is that internationalization of Higher education is a two-way street of mutual benefit to each participant. This is seen as a highly effective way to promote understanding between nations, peoples and cultures, and also to advance knowledge for mutual benefit, through promoting practical experience of the benefits of close cooperation between individuals, as well as between institutions.

In this respect - several initiatives have been taken by different ministries of the Saudi government in recent years to promote this concept. For example, a special student visa has been established which has increased

more opportunities for Saudi students all over the world. Additionally, The Ministry of Culture and tourism established the tourist visa for foreigners to make their own broader learning experience more attractive.

Above all, the Ministry of Higher Education established the Annual International Higher Exhibition and Forum, with the core aim of promoting the benefits of internationalization.

The high practical value of this initiative has been that - since the first conference in 2007 - 152 cultural exchange agreements have been signed between Saudi and international universities world-wide, in: the USA,

Canada, leading European countries, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia, and some others for PhD and medical fellowships.

In total these agreements have benefitted to date 151,000 Saudi students - 30% of them female. So, as can be seen we have not only initiated ambitious plans, we have succeeded in implementing them with very good effect.

The specializations covered by these agreements have included; medicine and medical science, engineering, maritime transportation, Computing, Nano technology,

fundamental sciences, administrative sciences,
geology, mining and digital media.

Research has long been a key element of higher education in Saudi Arabia, and consequently an important avenue of close cooperation with institutes of higher education internationally. A fundamentally important consequence is the considerable mutual benefit to both institutes and individuals of culturally diverse research teams, and, not least, to the lasting credit and reputation of the higher educational institutions which have participated

When we look at the world around us it is clear that we are living in increasingly troubled times, and that we have much cause for concern about the future, and for future generations. I believe that it is also clear - abundantly clear - that the role of education in society - especially higher education - can play a much more positive role in finding solutions to achieve the universal state of peace and progress that everyone hopes for. Consequently, I would like to offer some specific suggestions for new initiatives, based on my own experience.

First: Regard the student body in higher education as a whole. I believe firmly that if a country's national policy

is focused to offer scholarships with the aim of having international students comprise at least fifty percent of all student bodies in higher education, that this would rapidly encourage - and even guarantee, I suggest - broader respect and tolerance for others and be a significant step in advancing the cause of peace and stability in the world.

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Secondly, with regard to research opportunities, I feel that faculties and research planners should be strongly encouraged to frame their research programs with maximum international collaboration. The aim being to ensure the greatest possible cross-fertilization of ideas in order to meet the increasingly rapid pace of change we are seeing in the world today.

And finally, with regard to the issue of community service overall - in every country - I am absolutely convinced that the collective knowledge, experience and ideas of citizens of different countries and cultures should be brought together -not least among the lesser educated whose hard experience has much to offer. Such a coordinated process would be a very positive and practical approach in efforts to resolve common issues for the benefit of all. In this respect, I believe that business leaders internationally should partner with top educational institutions world-wide, identifying major issues and setting out to create specific programmes to cross-fertilise the cooperative participation of student bodies, faculties, researchers - and entire communities -

to produce achievable solutions to resolve major issues common to all mankind.

Education - in its broadest form - is infinitely preferable to armed conflict.

Inshallah, I have offered you a clear outline of the true higher purpose of internationalization, of the benefits which can thus be achieved, and above all, of the wealth of experience which we in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have to offer. I look forward to taking your questions, and participating in wider discussion.

Thank you.

President of Effat University

Dr. Haifa Jamal ALLail