

Challenges to higher education in Qatar

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The best way to start understanding the direction of higher education in Qatar is to relate it to 20-30 vision of the country.

The vision has four main pillars.

A-Human development

B-Social development

C-Economic development

D- Environmental development

Human development pillar has two main components I.e. Health and Education. All the pillars are related to a broader concept of Knowledge- Based Society.

Human Resources are one the main challenges in a country which has a unique demographic composition. Here the Nationals are less than 20 per cent of the population. Within this context the challenges presented to Higher Education is equally different from the challenges presented to other countries.

Here are some of the most prominent challenges:

1- The Availability of Higher Education Opportunity to High School Graduates.

High percentage of school leavers do not get a chance to pursue to follow their post secondary education in Qatar. The main problem for this is they do not meet the admission requirements at QU and universities in the Education City. This is a serious problem and presents a real challenge for Education Authority in Qatar. Higher education is important in the development of the country as the demand for some sort of post-secondary education becomes a must in knowledge based society that Qatar tries to be.

2- The Gender Issue.

The number of females finishing their school education and college education is much higher than the male students in any year or level.

This is not to deprive female from their right in pursuing higher education. But as it is the case female professional life cycle is much shorter compared to the male. Therefore one of the challenges is to encourage male to pursue their post-secondary education with a similar enthusiasm as females. The other challenge is maximize on female role in the society by providing right encouragement and support and context where they stay economically active for longer periods. The country needs booths groups if it to meet the demands on human resources in the coming decades.

3- Sustaining Human Resources at Higher Education Level:

As the country is expanding and providing great job opportunities in the industry and other areas, less people are interested in joining research domain or even profession at the higher education institutions. This will create a real problem in the near future as the people in charge of such vital domain will be primarily non- natives and as it is well-known many problems require local and native knowledge in order to be appropriately comprehend and solved.

4- Research

Higher education in Qatar started in 1973 as a source of providing the market with skilled and professional manpower and thus there was less emphasis on research. However, in the last few years there is a real shift is research direction. More money is allocated to research (QRNF), the government believes more in research (2.8 GDP). But as we know it takes some times to change things once they start in a particular way. To build the culture of research in the community will take some time. Fortunately the process has already started and if anything it is taking some pace every year. But we have to be patient.

5- Programs at the Universities

They are normally reactive to the market rather than being proactive. In other words, most of the programs are initiated at the university level long after the demand has come around in the industry. Perhaps with closer contacts between the industry and higher education institutions better programs that meet the demands of the market can be provided and in a more timely manner.

6- Higher education (MA and PhD)

In order for research to flourish and prosper it is important that universities and higher education institutions offer research opportunities through post-graduate programs I.e. MA and PhD. Looking around the globe it is obvious that institutions with strong research history and heritage are those equally renown post-graduate programs.