

**THIRD MINISTERIAL MEETING ON EDUCATION OF THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA (BMENA) COUNTRIES AND THE GROUP OF EIGHT (G8)
BONN/PETERSBERG 20-22 NOVEMBER 2007**

OUTCOME OF SENIOR OFFICIALS' DISCUSSIONS

School Education

1. Whilst the relevance of the curriculum to employment is important for secondary education, basic education should focus on achievement of the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals as a first priority
2. Governments should adopt a comprehensive approach to improving the quality and relevance of school education including. This should be based on a regional competences and standards framework (noting the EU and PISA models);
3. Schools should be given more autonomy, with school principals in leadership role, backed by the development and improvement of quality assurance systems;
4. National planning should be based on effective evaluation systems and research evidence
5. Encourage public-private partnerships to improve relevance of education to employment

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

1. There should be a joined up approach adopted by governments to reflect the number of different ministries with a vested interest in vocational education and training.
2. There should be economic analysis to identify the main sectors and employers must be involved at national, regional and local levels to ensure that VET is demand led. Some examples of how this could be effected were sector skills councils and community colleges.
3. Employers should be invited to any future meetings of G8/BMENA on vocational education and training. Employers should be involved in developing occupational standards; in developing quality assurance systems and assessment of skills against those standards; developing curriculum (at both school level and beyond on VET) to include both cognitive/thinking and problem solving skills as well as entrepreneurial skills;
4. There should be a continuum of opportunity available such as a national qualifications framework, including qualifications relating to the training and continuous development of trainers and teachers;
5. Effective careers guidance systems with trained counsellors with understanding of the labour market were needed at all levels of education.
6. Encourage increased participation by the BMENA countries in WorldSkills 2011. WorldSkills 2007 were currently being held in Japan (14-21 Nov). This could be used to promote the status and respect for vocational learning by developing skills competitions to raise standards, improve and recognise the achievement of individuals, organisations, regions and sectors.

Literacy

1. The region needs to focus on non-traditional sources of funding for literacy programmes, particularly philanthropy. We recommend promoting corporate social responsibility and the development of links between BMENA based foundations and between G8 and BMENA funding agencies and foundations.
2. Combating illiteracy will benefit from vastly increased social marketing including the use of celebrities and religious leaders in mass media and providing special recognition to NGOs and communities for innovations in literacy, particularly as affects the status of women.
3. Community-based solutions are most effective in combating illiteracy. Governments should pledge to promote decentralisation as this will lead to stronger links to decent work, and to combat school drop-outs.

Tertiary Education

1. All tertiary institutions have a role to play not only in teaching but also in research (basic and applied), scholarship and knowledge transfer. This would contribute to the quality and currency of staff and engage them in meaningful external activities. Countries should establish funding mechanisms to support these activities. International exchange is an extremely useful mechanism to develop staff through joint research programmes and the achievement of postgraduate degrees.
2. Universities should have effective relationships with other tertiary institutions including effective progression routes.
3. Recognising high unemployment of humanities graduates in many countries, encouragement should be given to enhance participation in science and technology provision. Universities should recognise that for many areas self-employment and own businesses are the natural career route for graduates in particular sectors, notably the creative arts and innovative technologies.
4. In order to respond to global trends, tertiary education institutions need the freedom to be enterprising and autonomous, within national quality assurance (internationally recognised) and accountability systems. Universities seeking such autonomy and accountability need to recognise and be prepared to demonstrate the ability to manage the process of change towards quality, relevance, responsible governance and leadership themselves.
5. To encourage recognition and partnership between G8 and BMENA countries, comparable quality assurance systems are essential. These systems need to be uniformly applied to both public and private tertiary institutions.

General issues

1. Mechanisms are needed for better communication between G8 and BMENA and transmitting G8 experience to support initiatives. Both the literacy and technical/vocational working groups have been effective and should continue. Before creating a new working group on tertiary education, a series of workshops on central topics for both regions should be held over the next year.

2. The Forum for the Future should assist education ministers in getting greater support from governments as a whole, and greater involvement of commerce and industry in education, notably through systems for social accountability.
3. The overall coherence of education and training systems very much depends on adequate national answers to the four-fold requirement to:
 - Meet the needs of growing numbers of students;
 - Challenge the most gifted students;
 - Promote the disadvantaged;
 - Ensure equity.