

## Schools and the World of Work

1. ***Countries need education to improve economic and social development. For this, education must be of high quality and go beyond the traditional acquisition of knowledge to teach relevant skills and competencies required by employers.***

The 1990 Jomtien Framework for Action on Education for All<sup>1</sup> called not just for universal access to basic education but also “an improvement in learning achievement”. The 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>2</sup> stated that programme effectiveness in education and training should be “assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity”. The Islamic Development Bank’s 1440H Vision<sup>3</sup> notes that the target for education “should not be just quantity. It must also be quality. The education that the young ...imbibe should prepare them for the workplace, so that they will be employable on completion of secondary and tertiary education. Special attention needs to be paid to developing the skills and capacity essential for the development of knowledge-based economies. They include critical thinking skills, a strong grounding in the sciences as well as the humanities, and the inculcation of a passion for learning throughout life that is so central to the Islamic notion of human development as well as progress and competitiveness in the modern global economy.”

2. ***Unemployment rates show that schools in BMENA are not providing the skills and competencies required by employers.***

The MENA Region “is already facing unemployment rates that are the highest in the world. MENA has the greatest challenge of any region in the need to create employment opportunities for new entrants. The average growth rate of the labour force between 2000 and 2010 is expected to be three to four per cent a year, twice as high as in all other regions. This amounts to about 40 million new entrants (4 million a year).”<sup>4</sup> The Arab Labour Organisation (ALO) estimated the number of unemployed in the Arab Region in 2000 at 12 million<sup>5</sup>. Youth unemployment rates are much higher than adult unemployment rates, averaging 25.6 % in 2003. Female unemployment is much higher than male unemployment, averaging 16.5% and 10.6% respectively across the Arab Region in 2003. Unemployment for young women in Arab countries ranges from around 13% in Bahrain and Pakistan to about 39% in Algeria.<sup>6</sup>

Unemployment in the MENA region [i.e. those actively seeking work] fell from 14.3% to 10.7% between 2000 and 2005. However, the region’s employment rate – the share of the working age population actually employed – is only 47%, the lowest in the world. “The region’s labour markets are at the extremes of developing countries. The region

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<sup>1</sup> Jomtien Framework for Action, (World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990)

<sup>2</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), *Article 28 – Education*

<sup>3</sup> Vision 1440H: A vision for Human Dignity, Islamic Development Bank, Safar 1427 / March 2006

<sup>4</sup> World Bank MENAD Regional Strategy

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Nagwa Megahed in her paper “Secondary Education Reforms in Arab States: Rectifying Inequality of Educational and Employment Opportunities”, USAID, see [www.jeunessearabe.info/article.php?id\\_article=131-19k](http://www.jeunessearabe.info/article.php?id_article=131-19k)

<sup>6</sup> Haq (2005)

has the highest levels of labour force growth, the lowest levels of female participation and, except for sub-Saharan Africa, the youngest labour force.”<sup>7</sup>

Education systems are clearly not doing enough to tackle this problem. In many cases, the higher the level of education, the higher the rate of unemployment. The table below shows unemployment figures in three BMENA countries for those with various levels of education<sup>8</sup>.

Country	Level of Education	Rate of Unemployment		
		Male	Female	Total
Algeria	Less than secondary	24.3	12.4	22.3
	Secondary and Intermediate	18.4	22.8	19.3
	Higher	14.5	27.5	19.3
Egypt	Less than secondary	1.5	1.1	1.4
	Secondary and Intermediate	6.5	23.8	13.5
	Higher	8.5	24.6	13.7
Jordan	Less than secondary	14.2	19.2	14.2
	Secondary and Intermediate	9.5	22.9	12.1
	Higher	12.0	29.5	17.7

Annex 1 shows some further education and employment districts for some countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

The *Youth Employment Summit 2002* for Western Asia noted that the public sector of Gulf countries used to absorb graduates but this avenue is now saturated. This is an issue across the region. The Summit saw the only alternative as the private sector which has the greatest scope for expansion. In some countries, 90% of the employees of the private sector are non-nationals, partly reflecting skills shortage in the native population. The Summit analysed employment rates in different Arab countries on the basis of the economic situation and quality of education in each country. The report concludes that the high unemployment rate in Arab countries is partly attributed to limited relevance of education and skills development to the requirements of the labour market and the absence of private and public employment agencies. The World Education Forum Arab World Competitiveness Roundtable, held in Doha in April 2007, called for political commitment to rectify this. “Many challenges remain to be addressed, the most important one being an overhaul of educational systems .... Political will is ... crucial in educational reform, which is critical if the region is to sustain growth. Education systems must meet the demands of business to stem the rise of unemployment.”

Employers need people with skills, in addition to fundamental knowledge. This includes cognitive skills – the ability to think and to learn. Employers also want people who are enthusiastic, able to work as a team member, and able to take on leadership roles. Employers also want people who demonstrate the ability to respectfully ask thoughtful questions, particularly with respect to solving problems. Finally, employers seek people who are practical or ready to “get their hands dirty” if the team needs them to, while being able to work in an orderly and managed way to produce with due attention to detail. At present, the most capable students concentrate only on passing examinations for a job in the public sector – in which there are a decreasing number of jobs. The result is a high level of graduate unemployment, together with a shortage of the skilled employees and entrepreneurs needed by the growing private sector. This problem needs tackling early on, throughout schooling, by raising the status of skills and performance competencies and increasing their prominence in school assessments.

<sup>7</sup> “Economic Developments and Prospects: Job Creation in an Era of High Growth, World Bank, 2007,

<sup>8</sup> “Economic Developments and Prospects: Job Creation in an Era of High Growth, World Bank, 2007,

Larger budgets need to be directed towards actions to improve the quality and relevance of education rather than just expanding the education system. As noted by the Economic Research Forum for the Arab countries, Iran and Turkey, efforts to raise the quality of education also require better, more consistent management of educational finances and an emphasis on proper educational planning. The report also noted that in many countries students have not received proper guidance and career counselling.

3. ***BMENA Ministers have committed to raising the quality of education to meet the needs of the labour market.***

The Dead Sea (2005) and Sharm El-Sheikh (2006) G8-BMENA Education Ministerial Meetings noted the need to improve the quality of education to make it relevant to economy needs. A number of BMENA countries have made enormous strides towards increasing the relevance of education through a variety of in-school interventions and programs aimed at increasing employability and facilitating school to work provisions. This is a critical arena for Ministerial engagement and a lot to be learned from shared best practice. In Egypt, at Sharm el Sheikh, Education Ministers of G8 and BMENA countries committed themselves “to encourage an independent, open-minded approach, leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, language and practical problem solving skills through student-centred learning environments supported by improved curricula and better trained and motivated teachers”. They acknowledged “that providing cost-effective education geared to the needs of the economy, society and the individual, and able to adapt to the changing local and global context is essential”. The Ministerial also emphasised:

- result-oriented education systems that involve the school and its local community;
- the increasing importance of information and communications technology (ICT) in schools

4. ***The issue now is: how can the BMENA/G8 Partnership help to put this into commitment into practice?***

Raising the quality and relevance of schooling requires reforms in a number of areas:

- Curriculum and learning resources
- Student assessment and quality assurance;
- Pedagogy and individualised learning;
- Teacher training and support;
- Systems to involve business and the local community.

The attached annex 2 highlights the key issues in each of these areas.

### **Questions:**

1. Does formal schooling equip children with the right skills and competences in BMENA countries? Is basic education in BMENA countries relevant to post basic education? Is there the right balance between social and economic goals in education? If not, what needs to change?
2. How can links between the schools, industry and the community be developed and supported?
3. What examples of good practice are available, and how can they be disseminated within a regional context of assessment, adaptation, adoption, and application.

## ANNEX 1: EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN SOME MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA COUNTRIES<sup>9</sup>

Country	Primary Education net enrolment 2005		Secondary Education net enrolment 2005		Changes in gross enrolment rates for secondary education				Labour force growth rate	Income per capita growth rate	Unemployment		Workforce participation		
	Total	Gender Parity	Total	Gender Parity	Lower secondary		Upper secondary				%	%		%	Trend
	NER	GPI	NER	GPI	1999	2005	1999	2005							
Algeria	0.97	0.91	0.66	0.95		1.08		0.58	1.7	4	15.3	Up	44.9		
Bahrain	0.97	0.99	0.66	1.01	1.06	1.01	0.82	0.96	1.4	5	1.9		63.8		
Djibouti	0.33	0.82	0.23	0.67	0.19	0.29	0.08	0.17	2.4	1	43.5		67.6		
Egypt	0.94	0.94	0.79	0.92	0.94	0.96	0.67	0.75	1.8	3	8.3	Up	44.9		
Iraq	0.88	0.83	0.38	0.64	0.43	0.57	0.23	0.31	3.3	2	26.8		49.0		
Jordan	0.89	1.01	0.81	1.01	0.93	0.93	0.77	0.76	3.1	5	14.8	Down	52.8		
Kuwait	0.87	0.98		0.97	1.02	0.93	0.95	0.98	1.9	5	1.7		68.0		
Lebanon	0.92	0.97	0.66	1.09	0.93	0.99	0.62	0.78	1.8	0	8.5		46.8		
Morocco	0.86	0.89	0.35	0.83	0.49	0.65	0.25	0.35	1.6	1	11.0	Down	57.6		
Oman	0.76	1.00	0.75	0.92	0.87	0.95	0.62	0.79	3.1	2			37.6		
Palestinian T's	0.80	0.99	0.95	1.05	0.86	1.06	0.56	0.76	3.0	3	23.5	Up	38.1		
Qatar	0.96	0.96	0.90	0.96	0.93	1.02	0.86	0.98	1.0	1	2.1	Up	72.9		
Saudi Arabia	0.78	0.86	0.66	0.99	?	0.87	?	0.88	2.9	4	6.9		53.6		
Syria	0.95	0.92	0.62	0.88	0.57	0.90	0.21	0.32	3.0	3	11.7		53.3		
Tunisia	0.97	0.95		1.01	0.96	1.05	0.54	0.69	1.6	3	14.2	Down	48.6		
UAE	0.71	0.97	0.57	1.01	0.88	0.70	0.75	0.56	2.3	3	3.0		75.2		
Yemen	0.75	0.56		0.39	0.48	0.53	0.32	0.40	4.2	-1	10.2				

<sup>9</sup> Taken from various World Bank, UIS and ILO sources. Where not otherwise indicated, the figures refer to the last year for which data was available.

## **ANNEX 2: RAISING THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLING AND MAKING IT MORE RELEVANT TO THE WORLD OF WORK: ISSUES AND EXAMPLES**

### **Curriculum Reform**

A curriculum should provide all pupils with a broad, balanced, rich and exciting learning experience to enable them to fulfill their potential. It is a tool for raising achievement in language, numeracy and scientific understanding. Equally, all pupils need access to creativity offered in the arts and music, religious and cultural education, and sport to become rounded individuals. The curriculum should help pupils to understand the contemporary issues which will shape the international context for the next generation. Issues such as environmental change and understanding racial, religious and cultural differences are important areas of understanding for young people in the 21st Century. The curriculum can be enriched with such pre-vocational subjects as craft skills, technology, business skills, ICT, enterprise education. A curriculum needs to balance detailed subject knowledge with the key concepts and essential skills of a subject.

Any curriculum reform process must be long-term to become successful and must involve all relevant stakeholders. These stakeholders include commerce and industry, the teaching profession and civil society.

### **Assessment and Quality Assurance**

Assessment determines the real curriculum as opposed to the intended curriculum. If assessments and examinations do not test skills and attitudes, they will not be taught. Furthermore, assessments need to be done with regularity to improve teaching and learning processes, not just to determine which school a student can attend based on a single grade. Teachers also benefit from understanding how to do self-assessments to improve their skills.

### **Pedagogy and Personalised Learning**

To embed changes in the curriculum, teachers must be persuaded of their value and importance. They need to be trained to be able to move from rote learning to using active-learning and student-centered pedagogy to effectively impart functional skills (literacy and numeracy), practical skills (crafts) and business skills. Above all, teachers need to be skilled in teaching critical thinking skills, including : logical reasoning, problem solving, research and analysis, communication and creativity across the curriculum.

Student-centred classrooms led by teachers that provide an opportunity for applying knowledge are the foundation for lifelong learning, which is required in today's fast-paced and changing world. Learners need to be taught to use ICT as a tool to find, use and share information in all aspects of the curriculum. These kinds of learning experiences impart the skills needed to become an initiator or entrepreneur. Enterprise should be taught and delivered through the existing curriculum. Enterprise is a way of doing things (being innovative, managing risk) and can be applied widely across a number of subjects. Enterprise education requires business people to work alongside head teachers to encourage and mentor teachers and pupils and help schools plan and implement.

Taking a personalised approach to learning relies on children (1) developing an awareness of their learning needs, (2) taking ownership of their learning and what they need to do to improve, (3) learning through paired and group work, and (4)

discussing their learning needs with peers and teachers. These kinds of activities provide an excellent preparation for the soft skills that students will need once they enter the workplace.

A programme of activity to support personalised learning can also be used to help groups at risk of underachieving. Specific kinds of programs include:

- Accelerated learning interventions and other catch-up activities for children who have fallen behind in English and math;
- Support for gifted and talented learners; and
- Support for learners from marginalized backgrounds that encourage their continued access to school and year-round activities.

### **Teacher training and support**

Curriculum and education reform supporting more relevant learning experiences for the marketplace requires the full support and leadership of school principals, other administrators and of teachers themselves. These stakeholders will require professional development given that these kinds of changes require a massive reorientation of school teaching skills. Continuous professional development (CPD) and redesigning training programs will be necessary.

### **Systems to involve business and the local community**

Employers and members of the local community can help improve the relevance of education across the entire education system. The schools and education system can support this effort by:

- Working with employers and members of the community to help them to better understand the education system and the benefits of getting involved; and
- Involving employers and members of the local community in the development and delivery of education policies.

Encouraging business and the local community to understand more about the roles they can play in the education system also allows schools to tap into their experience and resources. For example, employers can offer young people experiences of the world of work, helping to instil in them a spirit of enterprise, self-reliance, responsibility and motivation which will help to prepare them for success in their working lives.

Employers and other members of the local community can also help to raise standards in schools. Their support can bring much-valued resources and expertise into the school environment. They can also help strengthen school leadership and can encourage flexibility and innovation, thereby helping to create an environment in which pupils have access to a wider range of opportunities.

In return for supporting young people and schools, employers can expect to see them leaving education better equipped for the world of work, both in terms of their qualification and their knowledge and understanding of the business environment.

To be most effective, school industry links should extend to the provision of work experience: pupils spending part of their schooling within a work setting. Work

experience, properly planned and with commitment from all involved, develops employability skills and enterprise capability, promotes students' personal and social development, enhances their maturity and helps them develop an understanding of work.