

## "ALIGNING UNIVERSITY OUTCOMES WITH LABOR MARKET NEEDS"

### **Paper Summary**

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Higher education is facing at the beginning of the third millennium a number of challenges posed by a set of transformations and global changes. The first type of challenges is related to the globalization-driven pressure on nations to compete for markets and in various fields, which require the development of higher education and its institutions. This is particularly true for the developing Arab World. The second type of challenges pertains to the youth bulge and rapidly expanding demand for higher education, which is adding the huge stock of unemployed especially, among university graduates.

The expanding role of the private sector and reduction of the role of the government as a major employer in the Arab region, amid weak links between the educational outcomes and labor market needs, did not lead to improvement of the situation as private universities continued to produce the same type of graduates with low skills, knowledge and productivity. This state of affairs has even led to the marginalization of private universities.

The weak connection between the outputs of higher education and the needs of the labor market is an endemic problem strongly related to the traditional teaching methods and poorly designed curricula that do not develop the analytical skills and problem-solving capacity of students. The mismatch between education outcomes and job market needs is also due to the slow response of higher education institutions to the forces of change and to the evolving requirements in terms of new education branches and skills that are paramount to keep up with the spectacular development of science and technology and all other fields of knowledge.

Refining human skills and providing them with the adequate scientific and technological knowledge, requires the design of both short-term and long strategies. These strategies need to be clear and follow a scientific approach relying on the interaction between the different sectors, whether public or private, including universities. This process should ensure that the overall development goals of the country are taken into account, and the labor markets needs, at the national and international levels, are considered. This is especially true for Arab labor markets where educated labor force is abundant.

This paper aims at shedding light on the problems and constraints of the current higher education systems in the Arab Countries in general. It will also showcase a vision of public policies required to improve the quality of education systems and outcomes particularly with regard to its impact on the social, economic and political systems of the society and its relationship with agents of global change. Other issues pertaining to the diversity of higher education and vocational and technical education, reform of the curriculum in line with labor market needs, evaluation and follow-up mechanisms, and the development of human resources in this important sector, are also addressed.