Arab Knowledge Report 2014
Youth and Localisation of Knowledge
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Foreword

Chairman of the Board
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation

Arab World’s Transition to Knowledge Society

Knowledge is considered as one of the key pillars of a nation’s development and advancement, and critical to the society’s progress and prosperity. It is an incentive for intellectual and social mobilisation as well. The current era is called the “knowledge era”. If every era had its own wealth, this era’s wealth would be knowledge. The knowledge society is the society of the digital revolution, which has contributed to the change of relationships in the developed societies and perceptions about of the outside world. Information and knowledge have contributed to enhanced standards of living, defined artistic tastes and values, and helped speed up development and industrial progress. Knowledge accumulation also plays a major role in sustaining economic growth.

By projecting the mobilisation of global knowledge on Arab realities, we find a big gap in the level of education and curricula and the volume of investments in education and research. Distinctions are evident in terms of the number of patents, and the volume of community participation, as well as in youth enrolment in the transfer of knowledge and the shift from consumer societies to productive societies. Together, these issues form an integrated system for building knowledge-based societies.

From this perspective, we find it necessary to empower youth by reviewing the school and university curricula, promoting research through well-equipped schools and universities, and supporting researchers in specialised centres. We need a comprehensive vision based on a series of factors such as: freedom of thought, promotion of creativity in arts and sciences, equal opportunities for all citizens, transfer of knowledge through translations into Arabic, experiments, methodical research, exchange of expertise, continuing education, review of records and documentations, seminars, workshops and trainings, as well as other channels.

The Arab Knowledge Report comes as an indicator of the status of knowledge in the Arab countries. It presents a diagnosis of the situation to help those in charge to evaluate performance and implement development policies for building knowledge societies capable of facing challenges, and contributing to comprehensive and sustainable development. The third Report focuses on the importance of integrating youth in the transfer and localisation of knowledge processes in terms of its definition as well as economic and social benefits and priorities. The elements of localisation of knowledge are limited to two major integrated elements; the first being the production of knowledge and the second the employment of knowledge in human development in its cultural, scientific, social, political and environmental dimensions.

We present before you the “Third Arab Knowledge Report: Youth and the Localisation of Knowledge” that includes a special report of the status of knowledge in UAE. We hope that both the reports will present a clear and comprehensive picture
of our local and regional knowledge status, highlight the strengths and the ways to exploit them, and identify the areas that need further development. We believe that the reports will act as a road map for decision makers, providing them an overview of the means and methods in the transfer and localisation of knowledge in our Arab world.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
Chairman of the Board
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation
This third publication of the Arab Knowledge Report series establishes a new and steady step on the path of the strategic partnership and the shared vision that brings together the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation with the Regional Bureau for Arab States at the UNDP for the support of the Arab and international efforts towards building a knowledge society and economy, as a main gateway to reform and development in the Arab region.

After previous reports addressed the knowledge performance and status in the Arab region, the shortcomings and the available opportunities and possibilities, the current Report moves on to one of the most important and urgent issues in the Arab development journey; that of the “active integration of the Arab youth in the processes of knowledge transfer and localisation”, which the authors of the report have rightly deemed a vital issue for the present and the future.

In addition to presenting a regional comprehensive view of the status, capabilities, cognitive, cultural, economic and societal effectiveness and available enabling environments, and in line with the field approach that the series of Arab Knowledge Reports have tailored for themselves, the current report includes studies and surveys conducted in a number of Arab countries to address the status of the Arab youth. The studies aimed to measure their ability to interact in a productive manner in the processes of establishing a knowledge society, and to garner their opinions about the most important and relevant topics, including values, practices and conceptions of the enabling environment that surrounds them. While these studies presented a real, unique and distinguished field illustration of the statuses, opinions and aspirations of the Arab youth in the countries where the surveys were performed, they also showed the necessity for immediate action to address a great number of issues that relate to the transitional phase the Arab region is currently in, which is facing various developmental challenges, in particular with regard to knowledge. This phase also presents an opportunity for investing in change for the better. We can have, if we want, a historical opportunity to build the knowledge society, fuelled by the momentum of the rising youth and their energies and desires to change for the better to achieve sustainable human development and ensure the welfare of the Arab people.

As the report shows, the Arab communities are no longer capable of sustaining traditional development approaches. They need to adopt innovative approaches to development that would enable them to effectively address the growing challenges on various social and economic levels, as well as on local, regional and international levels. Given the association of knowledge with power and progress, building the knowledge society and economy in the Arab region has become a necessity for prosperity and competitiveness in the current age of globalisation. We must speed up the establishment of the knowledge society, make more efforts to form the youth and provide them with the skills and competences required for active integration in the transfer and localisation of knowledge, in addition to the necessity...
of expanding the provision of the required enabling environments based on social justice and the values and principles of enlightened citizenship.

What we have before us is a distinguished work on development and knowledge that will support both the decision-maker and planner in development, as well as the Arab citizen in general. I can only present my most sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone who participated in this great endeavour, including experts, researchers, writers, core team members and editors, as well as the UNDP and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation teams.

Finally, I express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum for his essential and continuous role in supporting the initiatives of progress, development and knowledge in the Arab region and the world. We at the UNDP once again express our honour to have this partnership with the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, along with our dedication to its sustainability and development in order to support the Arab region in its process towards establishing the knowledge society and achieving the highest levels of sustainable human development in the Arab countries and the world as a whole.

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### CONTENTS

#### CHAPTER 1: Preamble

Introduction  
The Necessity and Challenges  
Continuous Steps for Building the Knowledge Society in the Arab World  
The Inherent Relation between Knowledge and Development  
The Arab Context for Development, Knowledge and Youth Integration  
- A Multi-Faceted Knowledge Gap  
- The Evolving Knowledge Gap as Reflected in the Knowledge Indices  
- The Evolving Gap as Reflected in International and Arab Competitiveness Indices  
- The Evolving Gap as Reflected in the Global Innovation Index  
- The Youth Bulge in the Arab Region  
- The Challenges Facing the Integration of the Youth in Knowledge and Development  
General Methodology  
Structure of the Report  

#### CHAPTER 2: The Conceptual Framework of Integrating the Youth in the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge

Introduction  
The Tetrad of Knowledge, Globalisation, Youth and Development: A Complex Relation  
Knowledge: Intellectual Contexts and the Concepts of Transfer and Localisation  
The Concept of Knowledge and Its Classifications  
The Knowledge Society  
The Knowledge Economy and Its Characteristics  
- Main Features of Knowledge Economies  
- The Increasingly Intensive Use of IT  
- A Knowledge-Intensive Economy: Productivity and Availability  
- Commodification of Knowledge  
- Increase of the Proportion of Knowledge Workers  
- The Growth of Knowledge Management Techniques  
- Systems of Creativity and Innovation  
The Transfer of Knowledge  
- What Does the Transfer of Knowledge Mean?  
- Mechanisms of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation  
Globalisation: Problems, Opportunities and Risks  
The Globalising of Skills  
Development  
The Necessity of Social Justice in Knowledge-Based Development  
The Definition of Youth  
The Role of the Youth in Times of Change  
Youth and Cognitive Development  
Youth and Enabling Environments  
Concepts of Culture, Values and Citizenship  
Culture  
- Culture and Science among the Public  
Values  
Citizenship  
From Concepts to an Analytical Model for the Situation of the Youth in the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge
CHAPTER 3: Effectiveness of the Arab Youth in the Localisation of Knowledge: Building the Human Capital

Introduction 61

Cognitive Effectiveness of the Arab Youth: Skills and Qualifications 61

Knowledge Acquisition, Training and Formation of the Knowledge Capital 62

Access to Basic Knowledge and Continuous Training 62

- Literacy Efforts 62
- Opportunities to Acquire Knowledge in the Pre-University Stage 63
- Opportunities for the Youth to Acquire Knowledge 64

The Achievement of Quality Levels of Advanced of Knowledge and Skills 65

- Youth and Scientific Specialisations 67
- The Skills of a Large Number of Graduates Are below the Required Level 68

Personal Capacities of the Youth in Information and Communications Technology 69

Effective Youth Participation in the Activities of Scientific Research and Innovation 69

Cultural Effectiveness of the Arab Youth 70

General Frameworks of the Youth Culture in the Arab Region 70

Essential Features of Contemporary Values and Culture of the Arab Youth 71

- Traditional Upbringing Methods Are Still Prevalent 71
- Traditional Knowledge Values Are Still Prevalent 72
- Cultural Gap between Generations and Cultural Hybridity among the Youth 73

Youth and the Values of the Knowledge Society 75

Economic Effectiveness of the Youth 76

Youth Unemployment 76

- Unemployment Rate Is Highest among the Youth 77

Social Effectiveness: Participation, Voluntary Work and Belonging 80

Citizenship among the Arab Youth 80

Participation in Public Life and Voluntary Work 80

Women Between Marginalisation and Empowerment 82

Openness and Intercommunication 85

Virtual Communication with Others 85

Travelling Abroad 85

Students’ Regional and International Mobility 86

Conclusion 87

CHAPTER 4: The Enabling Environments and Their Effectiveness in the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge

Introduction 93

Higher Education in the Arab Region 93

The Emergence of Universities and the Spread of Higher Education in the Arab Region 94

Higher Education Characteristics in the Arab Region 94

Problems of Higher Education in the Arab Region 97

Higher Education and Unemployment of University Graduates in the Arab Region 98

- The General Features of the Labour Market and Unemployment in the Arab Region 98
- Job Opportunities in the Arab Region 99
- Obstacles that have Led to the Youth Unemployment Crisis 100

The Weak Quality of Higher Education in the Arab Countries 100

A Gap Between Higher Education Outputs and the Requirements of the Labour Market 100

Poor Skills and their Relation to the Weak Connection Between Universities and for Public and Private Sectors 100

The Weakness of the Vocational and Technical Formation and Training Systems in Higher Education Institutions 101
Higher Education and Brain Drain in the Arab Region 101
R&D System in the Arab Region 103
Scientific Research Institutions 103
Spending on Research and Development Activities 106
Human Resources in Research and Development 106
Scientific Production and Dissemination 107
- Weak Arab Collaboration in Scientific Research 110
- Distribution of Research Shares per Specialisation 111
- Use of Scientific Research Output 112
- Patents 112
Development in the Arab Region and Its Economic and Political Directions 114
The Status and Challenges of Arab Economic Growth: Disparity in Performance between Countries in the Region and the World 114
The Problematic of Wealth and Development: Poverty Gap and Inequality 116
The GDP per Capita Gap in Arab Countries and Its Consequences 117
- Poverty 117
- Inequality 120
The Structure of the Economy Remains That of the Rentier Model 120
- Arab Countries’ Poor Export of Advanced Manufacturing Products 121
- Weak Labour Market, Foreign Direct Investment and Investment Environment 123
Governance and Institutional Quality 124
Regulatory Structure and Rule of Law 128
Information Technology Infrastructure: Readiness and Implementation 129
Use of Mobile Phones in the Arab Region 130
Use of ICT by the Government and the Public Sector 131
Use of ICT in Public Services 131
Problems and Challenges of the Arabic Language and Translation 131
- The Challenges of Translation 133
Arabic Digital Content 134
Conclusion 137

CHAPTER 5: Results of the Field Survey: Realities of the Arab Youth Integration in the Localisation of Knowledge
Introduction 143
Methodological Clarifications 143
- Clarifications on the Conceptual Basis 143
- Clarifications on the Design of the Tools 144
- The Student Questionnaire 144
- The Skills Test 144
- Testing and Adjusting the Tool 145
The Target Group and Sample Selection 146
Data Processing and Statistical Analysis 147
Results: The Knowledge Capital 148
- Overall Results on Cognitive Skills 148
Detailed Results on Cognitive Skills 149
- Problem-Solving Skills 149
- Written Communication Skill in Arabic 150
- Skill of Searching for and Processing Information 151
- Skill of Using Technology 152
- Skill of Using Foreign Language (English/French) 153
- Analysing the Differences between the Cognitive Skills 155
Values 156
Effectiveness of the Youth
Citizenship and Belonging
Openness and International Intercommunication
Analysis of the Results According to the Gender and Specialisation Variables
Youth's Opinions on the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge and Necessary Enabling Environments
Students' Opinions on Academic Research
Students' Opinions on Partnerships and Agreements Between Universities and Other Institutions
Students' Opinions on the Effectiveness of the Currently Prevailing Higher Education System with Regard to Their Contribution in the Qualification of Students to Transfer and Localise Knowledge
- Students' Opinions on the Current Higher Education System
- Students' Opinions on Academic Research System
- Students' Opinions on Teaching Methods in Universities
- Students' Opinions on the Evaluation Methods in Universities
- Students' Opinions on the Books and References Available for Students
- Students' Opinions on the Educational Equipment and Tools
- Students' Opinions on the Educational and Pedagogical Level of University Professors
- Students' Opinions on the System of Financial and Moral Incentives Offered to Students
- Students' Opinions on the Practical Training Systems During Studies
- Students' Opinions on the Compatibility of the Knowledge Provided by the University with the Requirements of the Labour Market
- Students' Opinions on the Current System of University Admission
- Students' Opinions on the Activities Organised by Their Faculty or University
- Students' Opinions on the Internet Availability
- Students' Opinions on the Interactive Electronic Means That Allow Remote Educational Communication Between Students and Teachers
- Students' Opinions on Financial Resources to Support University Research Projects Carried out by Students
Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Certain Enabling Environments in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation
Sense of Trust in the Ability of Organisations to Contribute to the Youth's Integration into the Processes of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation
- Students' Opinions on the Status of Freedoms and Rights
- Students' Opinions on Role and Contribution of the Private Sector, Institutions and Economic and Governmental Patterns
- Students' Opinions on the Topics of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation
- Motivating and Impeding Factors in the Integration of Youth in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation
Summary of Research and Findings

CHAPTER 6: Moving Towards Integrating the Youth in the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge and Building the Knowledge Society in the Arab Region
Introduction
Human Development and Building the Knowledge Society in the Arab Region
Variables and Problematics in Youth Integration and Knowledge in the Arab Region
Discrepancies in the Performance of Arab Countries in Integrating the Youth in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation
Results of Field Studies Strongly Suggest the Need to Act
Future Action: Towards Effective Enabling of the Arab Youth in the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge

Axes and Mechanisms of Action
- Building National Institutions for the Integration of the Youth
- Reforming University
- Restructuring and Activating the Research System
- Encouraging and Supporting Foreign Investment
- Encouraging and Supporting the Private Sector
- Supporting Training Programmes and Capacity Building
- Building Arab Qualification Frameworks
- Transition to Knowledge-Based Development
- Social Justice, Citizenship and Preserving Social Cohesion
- Administration and Good Governance of Institutions
- Supporting Arabic Language Reform Programmes and Advancing it towards the Knowledge Society
- Learning Foreign Languages as a Gateway for the Constructive Interaction with the World
- Cultural Development
- Achieving Economic Integration in the Arab Region

A Metaphorical Model to Move for Future Action
Conclusion

References and Background Papers

Annexes

Annex 1: Methodologies for Measuring Knowledge
Figure A 1-1: The World Bank Knowledge Assessment Methodology
Figure A 1-2: The General Structure of the Arab Competitiveness Index
Figure A 1-3: The General Structure of the Global Competitiveness Index

Annex 2: Development of the Situation of Knowledge in the Arab Region and Selected Regions
Figure A 2-1: Development of the KI and KEI Sub-Indices in the Arab Region and the Regions of the World between the Years 2000-2012
Figure A 2-2: Development of the KI and KEI Sub-Indices in the Arab Region by Types of Economic Systems for the Years 2000-2012
Figure A 2-3: Development of the KI and KEI Sub-Indices in Selected Arab States for the Years 2000-2012

Annex 3: Field Study Annex
Table A 3-1: The Views of Students in Terms of Their Level of Confidence in the Ability of the Following Bodies to Contribute to Integrating the Youth in the Processes of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation (%)
Table A 3-2: The Views of Students over the Role and Contributions of the Private Sectors and Institutions and the Economic and Governmental Patterns (%)
Table A 3-3: The Views of Students on Topics of the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge (%)
Table A 3-4: The Views of Students on the Factors That Some of Them Regard as Stimulating While the Others Regard as Impeding to the Integration of the Youth in the Processes of Transfer and Localisation (%)
Annex 4: Statistical Annex
Table A 4-1: Population, Growth and Percentage of Youth in the Arab Region
Table A 4-2: Human Development Indicators
Table A 4-3: Labour Market and Employment Indicators
Table A 4-4A: KEI and KI Indices and World Ranking of the Arab States, Comparison Countries and Other Regions of the World
Table A 4-4B: KI, KEI and World Ranking of Regions
Table A 4-5: Literacy Indicators in the Arab Region
Table A 4-6: School-Life Expectancy in Selected Arab States, Comparison Countries and Regions of the World
Table A 4-7: Gross Enrolment Ratios in Education in Selected Arab States and Other Regions (2010-2013)
Table A 4-8: Public Spending on Education in Selected Arab States
Table A 4-9: Primary Education Indicators (2007-2013)
Table A 4-10: Enrolment in Vocational Education in Selected Arab States and the World
Table A 4-11: Technology Indicators in the Arab States
Table A 4-12: Networked Readiness Index for a Number of Arab States
Table A 4-13: ICT Development Index (IDI) (2011-2012)
Table A 4-14: Innovative Capacity and the Localisation of Technology as per the Arab World Competitiveness Report 2012
Table A 4-15: Global Innovation Index (GII) 2013
Table A 4-16: Global Competitiveness Indicators
Table A 4-17: Arab Competitiveness Index 2012
Table A 4-18: Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

List of Boxes

Box 2.1: Knowledge Classification 27
Box 2.2: The United Kingdom, an Example of the Increasing Number of Knowledge Workers 34
Box 2.3: The Problematic and Contradiction in the Structure of the Knowledge Economy 35
Box 2.4: The Context of Cognitive Skills: The Perspective of Britain (Excerpt from a Speech by Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown) 37
Box 2.5: Conditions for the Knowledge Society and the Knowledge Economy 38
Box 2.6: The Transfer of Knowledge 39
Box 2.7: The Role of Knowledge Patterns in Catalysing the Relationship between the Transfer of Technology and Economic Development 42
Box 3.1: Religion as a Source of Ethics, Science and Knowledge 75
Box 3.2: The Delayed Start of Independent Life for Young People 79
Box 3.3: Street Youths in the Arab Region 79
Box 3.4: The Importance of Youth Participation 81
Box 4.1: The Internationalisation of Universities and Higher Education in the Arab Region 96
Box 4.2: Arab Science and Technology Foundation (ASTF) in the UAE: Achievements in Knowledge Transfer, Employment and Production 104
Box 4.3: From the Global Research Report by Thomson Reuters 105
Box 4.4: Smart and Academic Villages in the Arab World 105
Box 4.5: Scarcity of Scientists in the Arab Region 107
Box 4.6: Initiatives to Digitise Iraqi Publications and Documents 108
Box 4.7: Steps to Support Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Egypt
Box 4.8: Arab Initiatives Supporting Knowledge and Innovation
Box 4.9: World Happiness Report
Box 4.10: Common Characteristics among the Arab Countries Based on the Attributes of the Rentier Economy
Box 4.11: Attracting FDI in Arab Countries
Box 4.12: The Turkish Experience in Youth Empowerment in Terms of Production of Knowledge
Box 4.13: Misconception of the Liberalisation of the Economy in Arab Countries
Box 4.14: Social Media and the Knowledge Society
Box 4.15: The Arab Youth Observatory
Box 4.16: Globalisation and the Arab Cultural Identity
Box 4.17: Youth Immigration: From ‘Brain Drain’ to ‘Brain Gain’
Box 4.18: Bright Sports in Scientific Research
Box 4.19: A New Education for Building New Cadres
Box 4.20: India’s Experience in Building Democratic Institutions and Organisations for Enabling the Youth
Box 4.21: The Institutional Accreditation for Higher Education Institutions as a Mechanism
Box 4.22: Technology Parks and Business Incubators: Towards Establishing Supportive Environments and Technology for the Localisation of Knowledge
Box 4.23: The Experience of Singapore
Box 4.24: Efforts by the League of Arab States to Develop the Arabic Language
Box 4.25: Promoting and Developing the Language
Box 4.26: Cultural Development is a Condition for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: The Evolution of the KI and the KEI for the Arab Region and Other Regions of the World between 2000 and 2012
Figure 1.2: The Evolution of the KI and the KEI for the Arab Region According to the Type of Economy between 2000 and 2012
Figure 1.3: The Evolution of the KI and the KEI for Selected Arab Countries between 2000 and 2012
Figure 1.4: The Arab Competitive Performance and That of Comparison Countries
Figure 1.5: The Evolution of the Global Innovation Index (GII) for Arab Countries (2012-2014)
Figure 2.1: The Tetrad of Knowledge, Globalisation, Youth and Development
Figure 2.2: Knowledge Economy, Knowledge Society and Globalisation
Figure 2.3: Investing in the Development of Skills and Enhancing Economic Growth: The Korean Experience
Figure 2.4: The Cycle of Knowledge through the Management of Knowledge from Transfer to Localisation
Figure 2.5: The Knowledge Localisation Model
Figure 2.6: The Integration and Enabling of Youth in the Localisation of Knowledge
Figure 2.7: The Conceptual Framework for the System of Knowledge Localisation and that of Enabling the Youth
Figure 3.1: Gross Enrolment Rates in Primary, Secondary and Higher Education for the Year 2010
Figure 3.2: Gross Enrolment Rates in Higher Education: Comparison of the Arab Region to Other Regions and International Groups (%)  

Figure 3.3: Proportion of Those Who Received Higher Education to That of the Population in Selected Arab and Comparison Countries  

Figure 3.4: The Percentage of Companies That Consider the Skills as a Major Obstacle  

Figure 3.5: Unemployment of Graduates in Various Regions of the World (%)  

Figure 3.6: Youth Unemployment to General Unemployment (%)  

Figure 3.7: The Basic Pillars of Active Citizenship and Effective Participation  

Figure 3.8: Male and Female Participation in the Labour Force in a Number of Arab Countries and the Rates for the MENA 15-64 Years (%)  

Figure 3.9: Proportion of Women in Legislative Councils (%)  

Figure 3.10: Number of Arab Students Studying abroad (2012)  

Figure 3.11: Top Ten Countries of Destination for Arab Students (2010)  

Figure 4.1: Classification of Higher Education Institutions in the Arab States  

Figure 4.2: Combined Share of Arab Countries from Global Expenditure on Research and Development Compared to Selected Countries and Regions (2009)  

Figure 4.3: Arab Countries' Share of Researchers Compared to Selected Regions and Countries of the World (2009)  

Figure 4.4: Annual Research Publication Output of the Three Most Producing Countries in the Arab Region and Comparison Countries (Turkey and Iran)  

Figure 4.5: The Publication Output of Selected Arab Countries and Comparison Countries (Turkey and Iran) (2005-2009)  

Figure 4.6: Ranking of Arab Universities per Number of Published Research Papers in First Half of 2013  

Figure 4.7: Human Development Index in the Arab Region and the World (1980-2013)  

Figure 4.8: GDP Growth Rate at Constant Prices for Arab Countries  

Figure 4.9: Poverty Levels in Arab Countries and Developing Regions According to Various Poverty Lines 2000-2009 in (in PPP 2005)  

Figure 4.10: Poverty Levels in Arab Countries as per the International Poverty Line USD 1.25/Day per Person  

Figure 4.11: Prevalence of Extreme Poverty as per the International Poverty of USD 1.25/Day per Person  

Figure 4.12: World and MENA Export Composition  

Figure 4.13: Distribution of Foreign Investment per Sector  

Figure 4.14: Control of Corruption  

Figure 4.15: Governance Index  

Figure 4.16: Corruption Perception Index  

Figure 4.17: Regulatory Quality Indicators in the Arab Region (2013)  

Figure 4.18: Rule of Law Indicators in the Arab Region (2013)  

Figure 4.19: Proportion of Books Translated from Arabic in EU Countries  

Figure 4.20: Languages into Which Arabic Is Being translated (%)  

Figure 4.21: Language Choices in Means of Communication and Media in the Arab Region  

Figure 4.22: Broadband Penetration in the Arab Countries  

Figure 4.23: Number of Internet Users in the Top Ten Arab States in Terms of Using the Arabic Language  

Figure 4.24: Use of Social Media (%)  

Figure 5.1: Countries' Results in Cognitive Skills Combined  

Figure 5.2: Students’ Results for Cognitive Skills  

Figure 5.3: Skills Pyramid  

Figure 5.4: Results for Values by Country  

Figure 5.5: Comparison between the Various Components of Youth Effectiveness
Figure 5.6: Level of Students’ Trust in the Ability of Bodies and Organisations to Contribute to the Youth’s Integration into the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge Processes

Figure 5.7: Students’ Perceptions of the Role and Contribution of the Private Sector, Institution, and Economic and Governmental Patterns

Figure 5.8: Students’ Perceptions of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation Topics (a)

Figure 5.9: Students’ Perceptions of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation Topics (b)

Figure 5.10: Students’ Perceptions of Motivating and Impeding Factors in Youth Integration in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation (a)

Figure 5.11: Students’ Perceptions of Motivating and Impeding Factors in Youth Integration in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation (b)

Figure 6.1: Moving towards the Active Youth Integration in the Process of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Statistics and Proportion Estimates for the Population under the Age of 24 in Selected Arab States (\%)

Table 3.1: Distribution of Specialisation of Higher Education Graduates for 2011 or the Closest Year (\%)

Table 3.2: Evolution of Unemployment Rates in Selected Arab Countries (\%)

Table 4.1: Higher Education Statistics in the Arab Region (2011)

Table 4.2: Capacity of a Country to Retain Talent (2013-2014)

Table 4.3: Research and Development Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP (2010-2011)

Table 4.4: Research and Development Expenditure

Table 4.5: Global Share of Research Output for Three Arab Countries and Two Comparison Countries

Table 4.6: Patent Production of Arab Countries and Selected Countries According to the US Patent and Trademark Office

Table 4.7: GDP per Capita in Arab Countries in 2012

Table 4.8: Percentage of Population Living under National Poverty Lines

Table 4.9: Indicators of Trade in Technological Goods

Table 4.10: Ranking of Arab Countries on the Ease of Doing Business Index

Table 4.11: Percentage of Households with Computer

Table 4.12: Use of ICT in Public Services

Table 4.13: ICT Indicators in the Arab World

Table 4.14: Ranking of Languages from and into Which Publications Are Translated

Table 4.15: Status of the Arabic Language among the Top Languages on the Internet 2013

Table 5.1: Distribution of the Experimental Sample

Table 5.2: The Structure of the Final Version of the Field Study Tool

Table 5.3: Distribution of Cognitive Skills and Their Reliability

Table 5.4: Distribution of the Sample According to Gender

Table 5.5: Distribution of the Sample According to Specialisation

Table 5.6: Distribution of the Sample According to Age

Table 5.7: Overall Result of Students on Combined Cognitive Skills

Table 5.8: Total Result for the Students in Problem-Solving Skills

Table 5.9: Total Result of the Students in the Written Communication Skill in Arabic

Table 5.10: Total Results of Students in the Skill of Searching for and Processing Information
Table 5.11: Total Results for the Skill of Using Technology
Table 5.12: Total Result for the Skill of Using Foreign Language
Table 5.13: Total Results for Students in Terms of Values
Table 5.14: Effectiveness Levels among Students
Table 5.15: Scores of Students in Citizenship and Belonging
Table 5.16: Scores of Students in Openness and International Intercommunication
Table 5.17: Students’ Familiarity with Translated Book That Are Relevant to Their Major
Table 5.18: Students’ Opinions on the Usefulness of Translated Books for Them (%)
Table 5.19: Preparing Research or Presentations since Starting University Studies (%)
Table 5.20: Students’ Opinions on the Type of Difficulties They Encountered in Research (%)
Table 5.21: Students’ Awareness of Partnerships and Agreements between Their University and Other Institutions (%)
Table 5.22: Students’ Awareness of Institutions That Have Partnerships and Agreements with the University (%)
Table 5.23: Students’ Awareness of the Existence of Youth Institutions Concerned with the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge (%)
Table 5.24: Students’ Awareness of Types of Services Provided by Youth
Table 5.25A: Students’ Opinions on the Current Higher Education System
Table 5.25B: Students’ Opinions on the Academic Research System
Table 5.25C: Students’ Opinions on the Teaching methods in Universities
Table 5.25D: Students’ Opinions on the Evaluation Methods in Universities
Table 5.25E: Students’ Opinions on the Books and References Available for Students
Table 5.25F: Students’ Opinions on the Educational Equipment and Tools
Table 5.25G: Students’ Opinions on the Educational and Pedagogical Level of University Professors
Table 5.25H: Students’ Opinions on the System of Financial and the Moral Incentives Offered to Students
Table 5.25I: Students’ Opinions on the Practical Training System during Studies
Table 5.25J: Students’ Opinions on the Compatibility of the Knowledge Provided by the University with the Requirements of the Labour Market
Table 5.25K: Students’ Opinions on the Current System of University Admission
Table 5.25L: Students’ Opinions on the Activities Organised by Their Faculty or University
Table 5.25M: Students’ Opinions on Internet Availability
Table 5.25N: Students’ Opinions on the Interactive Electronic Means That Allow Remote Educational Communication between Students and Teachers
Table 5.25O: Students’ Opinions on the Financial Resources to Support University Research Projects Carried out by Students