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AL MAKTUUM FOUNDATION

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

Preamble

Regional Director Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme

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.

Sima Bahous
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Preamble

Introduction	3
The Necessity and Challenges	4
Continuous Steps for Building the Knowledge Society in the Arab World	4
The Inherent Relation between Knowledge and Development	5
The Arab Context for Development, Knowledge and Youth Integration	6
- A Multi-Faceted Knowledge Gap	6
- The Evolving Knowledge Gap as Reflected in the Knowledge Indices	8
- The Evolving Gap as Reflected in International and Arab Competitiveness Indices	9
- The Evolving Gap as Reflected in the Global Innovation Index	12
- The Youth Bulge in the Arab Region	13
- The Challenges Facing the Integration of the Youth in Knowledge and Development	15
General Methodology	17
Structure of the Report	18

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

Introduction	25
The Tetrad of Knowledge, Globalisation, Youth and Development: A Complex Relation	25
Knowledge: Intellectual Contexts and the Concepts of Transfer and Localisation	27
The Concept of Knowledge and Its Classifications	27
The Knowledge Society	29
The Knowledge Economy and Its Characteristics	30
- Main Features of Knowledge Economies	31
- The Increasingly Intensive Use of IT	31
- A Knowledge-Intensive Economy: Productivity and Availability	31
- Commodification of Knowledge	33
- Increase of the Proportion of Knowledge Workers	34
- The Growth of Knowledge Management Techniques	36
- Systems of Creativity and Innovation	37
The Transfer of Knowledge	38
- What Does the Transfer of Knowledge Mean?	39
- Mechanisms of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation	40
Globalisation: Problems, Opportunities and Risks	43
The Globalising of Skills	45
Development	46
The Necessity of Social Justice in Knowledge-Based Development	46
The Definition of Youth	49
The Role of the Youth in Times of Change	50
Youth and Cognitive Development	50
Youth and Enabling Environments	51
Concepts of Culture, Values and Citizenship	51
Culture	51
- Culture and Science among the Public	52
Values	53
Citizenship	53
From Concepts to an Analytical Model for the Situation of the Youth in the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge	54

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	157
Citizenship and Belonging	159
Openness and International Intercommunication	160
Analysis of the Results According to the Gender and Specialisation Variables	161
Youth's Opinions on the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge and Necessary Enabling Environments	162
Students' Opinions on Academic Research	163
Students' Opinions on Partnerships and Agreements Between Universities and Other Institutions	165
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	167
- Students' Opinions on the Current Higher Education System	167
- Students' Opinions on Academic Research System	168
- Students' Opinions on Teaching Methods in Universities	168
- Students' Opinions on the Evaluation Methods in Universities	169
- Students' Opinions on the Books and References Available for Students	170
- Students' Opinions on the Educational Equipment and Tools	171
- Students' Opinions on the Educational and Pedagogical Level of University Professors	171
- Students' Opinions on the System of Financial and Moral Incentives Offered to Students	172
- Students' Opinions on the Practical Training Systems During Studies	173
- Students' Opinions on the Compatibility of the Knowledge Provided by the University with the Requirements of the Labour Market	173
- Students' Opinions on the Current System of University Admission	174
- Students' Opinions on the Activities Organised by Their Faculty or University	174
- Students' Opinions on the Internet Availability	175
- Students' Opinions on the Interactive Electronic Means That Allow Remote Educational Communication Between Students and Teachers	175
- Students' Opinions on Financial Resources to Support University Research Projects Carried out by Students	176
Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Certain Enabling Environments in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation	177
Sense of Trust in the Ability of Organisations to Contribute to the Youth's Integration into the Processes of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation	177
- Students' Opinions on the Status of Freedoms and Rights	177
- Students' Opinions on Role and Contribution of the Private Sector, Institutions and Economic and Governmental Patterns	178
- Students' Opinions on the Topics of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation	178
- Motivating and Impeding Factors in the Integration of Youth in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation	180
Summary of Research and Findings	181
CHAPTER 6: Moving Towards Integrating the Youth in the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge and Building the Knowledge Society in the Arab Region	
Introduction	189
Human Development and Building the Knowledge Society in the Arab Region	189
Variables and Problematics in Youth Integration and Knowledge in the Arab Region	191
Discrepancies in the Performance of Arab Countries in Integrating the Youth in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation	192

Results of Field Studies Strongly Suggest the Need to Act	196
Future Action: Towards Effective Enabling of the Arab Youth in the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge	197
Axes and Mechanisms of Action	198
- Building National Institutions for the Integration of the Youth	198
- Reforming University	199
- Restructuring and Activating the Research System	200
- Encouraging and Supporting Foreign Investment	201
- Encouraging and Supporting the Private Sector	202
- Supporting Training Programmes and Capacity Building	202
- Building Arab Qualification Frameworks	203
- Transition to Knowledge-Based Development	204
- Social Justice, Citizenship and Preserving Social Cohesion	205
- Administration and Good Governance of Institutions	205
- Supporting Arabic Language Reform Programmes and Advancing it towards the Knowledge Society	206
- Learning Foreign Languages as a Gateway for the Constructive Interaction with the World	206
- Cultural Development	207
- Achieving Economic Integration in the Arab Region	208
A Metaphorical Model to Move for Future Action	209
Conclusion	210

References and Background Papers 215

Annexes

Annex 1:	Methodologies for Measuring Knowledge	227
Figure A 1-1:	The World Bank Knowledge Assessment Methodology	227
Figure A 1-2:	The General Structure of the Arab Competitiveness Index	228
Figure A 1-3:	The General Structure of the Global Competitiveness Index	229
Annex 2:	Development of the Situation of Knowledge in the Arab Region and Selected Regions	230
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	230
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	232
Figure A 2-3:	Development of the KI and KEI Sub-Indices in Selected Arab States for the Years 2000-2012	233
Annex 3:	Field Study Annex	234
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 (%)	234
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 (%)	234
Table A 3-3:	The Views of Students on Topics of the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge (%)	235
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 (%)	236

Annex 4:	Statistical Annex	237
Table A 4-1:	Population, Growth and Percentage of Youth in the Arab Region	237
Table A 4-2:	Human Development Indicators	238
Table A 4-3:	Labour Market and Employment Indicators	239
Table A 4-4A:	KEI and KI Indices and World Ranking of the Arab States, Comparison Countries and Other Regions of the World	240
Table A 4-4B:	KI, KEI and World Ranking of Regions	242
Table A 4-5:	Literacy Indicators in the Arab Region	244
Table A 4-6:	School-Life Expectancy in Selected Arab States, Comparison Countries and Regions of the World	246
Table A 4-7:	Gross Enrolment Ratios in Education in Selected Arab States and Other Regions (2010-2013)	247
Table A 4-8:	Public Spending on Education in Selected Arab States	248
Table A 4-9:	Primary Education Indicators (2007-2013)	249
Table A 4-10:	Enrolment in Vocational Education in Selected Arab States and the World	250
Table A 4-11:	Technology Indicators in the Arab States	251
Table A 4-12:	Networked Readiness Index for a Number of Arab States	252
Table A 4-13:	ICT Development Index (IDI) (2011-2012)	252
Table A 4-14:	Innovative Capacity and the Localisation of Technology as per the Arab World Competitiveness Report 2012	253
Table A 4-15:	Global Innovation Index (GII) 2013	254
Table A 4-16:	Global Competitiveness Indicators	256
Table A 4-17:	Arab Competitiveness Index 2012	257
Table A 4-18:	Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)	258

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	113
Box 4.8:	Arab Initiatives Supporting Knowledge and Innovation	113
Box 4.9:	World Happiness Report	116
Box 4.10:	Common Characteristics among the Arab Countries Based on the Attributes of the Rentier Economy	121
Box 4.11:	Attracting FDI in Arab Countries	124
Box 4.12:	The Turkish Experience in Youth Empowerment in Terms of Production of Knowledge	125
Box 4.13:	Misconception of the Liberalisation of the Economy in Arab Countries	125
Box 5.1:	Social Media and the Knowledge Society	160
Box 5.2:	The Arab Youth Observatory	167
Box 6.1:	Globalisation and the Arab Cultural Identity	194
Box 6.2:	Youth Immigration: From 'Brain Drain' to 'Brain Gain'	195
Box 6.3:	Bright Sports in Scientific Research	197
Box 6.4:	A New Education for Building New Cadres	198
Box 6.5:	India's Experience in Building Democratic Institutions and Organisations for Enabling the Youth	199
Box 6.6:	The Institutional Accreditation for Higher Education Institutions as a Mechanism	200
Box 6.7:	Technology Parks and Business Incubators: Towards Establishing Supportive Environments and Technology for the Localisation of Knowledge	201
Box 6.8:	The Experience of Singapore	204
Box 6.9:	Efforts by the League of Arab States to Develop the Arabic Language	206
Box 6.10:	Promoting and Developing the Language	206
Box 6.11:	Cultural Development is a Condition for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region	208

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	8
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	9
Figure 1.3:	The Evolution of the KI and the KEI for Selected Arab Countries between 2000 and 2012	10
Figure 1.4:	The Arab Competitive Performance and That of Comparison Countries	11
Figure 1.5:	The Evolution of the Global Innovation Index (GII) for Arab Countries (2012-2014)	12
Figure 2.1:	The Tetrad of Knowledge, Globalisation, Youth and Development	26
Figure 2.2:	Knowledge Economy, Knowledge Society and Globalisation	30
Figure 2.3:	Investing in the Development of Skills and Enhancing Economic Growth: The Korean Experience	32
Figure 2.4:	The Cycle of Knowledge through the Management of Knowledge from Transfer to Localisation	36
Figure 2.5:	The Knowledge Localisation Model	40
Figure 2.6:	The Integration and Enabling of Youth in the Localisation of Knowledge	47
Figure 2.7:	The Conceptual Framework for the System of Knowledge Localisation and that of Enabling the Youth	55
Figure 3.1:	Gross Enrolment Rates in Primary, Secondary and Higher Education for the Year 2010	63

Figure 3.2:	Gross Enrolment Rates in Higher Education: Comparison of the Arab Region to Other Regions and International Groups (%)	64
Figure 3.3:	Proportion of Those Who Received Higher Education to That of the Population in Selected Arab and Comparison Countries	65
Figure 3.4:	The Percentage of Companies That Consider the Skills as a Major Obstacle	69
Figure 3.5:	Unemployment of Graduates in Various Regions of the World (%)	78
Figure 3.6:	Youth Unemployment to General Unemployment (%)	78
Figure 3.7:	The Basic Pillars of Active Citizenship and Effective Participation	82
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 (%)	83
Figure 3.9:	Proportion of Women in Legislative Councils (%)	84
Figure 3.10:	Number of Arab Students Studying abroad (2012)	86
Figure 3.11:	Top Ten Countries of Destination for Arab Students (2010)	86
Figure 4.1:	Classification of Higher Education Institutions in the Arab States	97
Figure 4.2:	Combined Share of Arab Countries from Global Expenditure on Research and Development Compared to Selected Countries and Regions (2009)	106
Figure 4.3:	Arab Countries' Share of Researchers Compared to Selected Regions and Countries of the World (2009)	108
Figure 4.4:	Annual Research Publication Output of the Three Most Producing Countries in the Arab Region and Comparison Countries (Turkey and Iran)	109
Figure 4.5:	The Publication Output of Selected Arab Countries and Comparison Countries (Turkey and Iran) (2005-2009)	110
Figure 4.6:	Ranking of Arab Universities per Number of Published Research Papers in First Half of 2013	111
Figure 4.7:	Human Development Index in the Arab Region and the World (1980-2013)	115
Figure 4.8:	GDP Growth Rate at Constant Prices for Arab Countries	116
Figure 4.9:	Poverty Levels in Arab Countries and Developing Regions According to Various Poverty Lines 2000-2009 in (in PPP 2005)	118
Figure 4.10:	Poverty Levels in Arab Countries as per the International Poverty Line USD 1.25/Day per Person	118
Figure 4.11:	Prevalence of Extreme Poverty as per the International Poverty of USD 1.25/Day per Person	119
Figure 4.12:	World and MENA Export Composition	122
Figure 4.13:	Distribution of Foreign Investment per Sector	124
Figure 4.14:	Control of Corruption	126
Figure 4.15:	Governance Index	127
Figure 4.16:	Corruption Perception Index	127
Figure 4.17:	Regulatory Quality Indicators in the Arab Region (2013)	128
Figure 4.18:	Rule of Law Indicators in the Arab Region (2013)	129
Figure 4.19:	Proportion of Books Translated from Arabic in EU Countries	133
Figure 4.20:	Languages into Which Arabic Is Being translated (%)	134
Figure 4.21:	Language Choices in Means of Communication and Media in the Arab Region	134
Figure 4.22:	Broadband Penetration in the Arab Countries	135
Figure 4.23:	Number of Internet Users in the Top Ten Arab States in Terms of Using the Arabic Language	136
Figure 4.24:	Use of Social Media (%)	136
Figure 5.1:	Countries' Results in Cognitive Skills Combined	149
Figure 5.2:	Students' Results for Cognitive Skills	155
Figure 5.3:	Skills Pyramid	155
Figure 5.4:	Results for Values by Country	156
Figure 5.5:	Comparison between the Various Components of Youth Effectiveness	161

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	177
Figure 5.7:	Students' Perceptions of the Role and Contribution of the Private Sector, Institution, and Economic and Governmental Patterns	178
Figure 5.8:	Students' Perceptions of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation Topics (a)	179
Figure 5.9:	Students' Perceptions of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation Topics (b)	179
Figure 5.10:	Students' Perceptions of Motivating and Impeding Factors in Youth Integration in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation (a)	180
Figure 5.11:	Students' Perceptions of Motivating and Impeding Factors in Youth Integration in Knowledge Transfer and Localisation (b)	180
Figure 6.1:	Moving towards the Active Youth Integration in the Process of Knowledge Transfer and Localisation	209

List of Tables

Table 1.1:	Statistics and Proportion Estimates for the Population under the Age of 24 in Selected Arab States (%)	14
Table 3.1:	Distribution of Specialisation of Higher Education Graduates for 2011 or the Closest Year (%)	68
Table 3.2:	Evolution of Unemployment Rates in Selected Arab Countries (%)	77
Table 4.1:	Higher Education Statistics in the Arab Region (2011)	95
Table 4.2:	Capacity of a Country to Retain Talent (2013-2014)	102
Table 4.3:	Research and Development Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP (2010-2011)	106
Table 4.4:	Research and Development Expenditure	107
Table 4.5:	Global Share of Research Output for Three Arab Countries and Two Comparison Countries	111
Table 4.6:	Patent Production of Arab Countries and Selected Countries According to the US Patent and Trademark Office	112
Table 4.7:	GDP per Capita in Arab Countries in 2012	117
Table 4.8:	Percentage of Population Living under National Poverty Lines	119
Table 4.9:	Indicators of Trade in Technological Goods	122
Table 4.10:	Ranking of Arab Countries on the Ease of Doing Business Index	123
Table 4.11:	Percentage of Households with Computer	129
Table 4.12:	Use of ICT in Public Services	130
Table 4.13:	ICT Indicators in the Arab World	130
Table 4.14:	Ranking of Languages from and into Which Publications Are Translated	132
Table 4.15:	Status of the Arabic Language among the Top Languages on the Internet 2013	135
Table 5.1:	Distribution of the Experimental Sample	146
Table 5.2:	The Structure of the Final Version of the Field Study Tool	146
Table 5.3:	Distribution of Cognitive Skills and Their Reliability	146
Table 5.4:	Distribution of the Sample According to Gender	147
Table 5.5:	Distribution of the Sample According to Specialisation	147
Table 5.6:	Distribution of the Sample According to Age	147
Table 5.7:	Overall Result of Students on Combined Cognitive Skills	148
Table 5.8:	Total Result for the Students in Problem-Solving Skills	150
Table 5.9:	Total Result of the Students in the Written Communication Skill in Arabic	151
Table 5.10:	Total Results of Students in the Skill of Searching for and Processing Information	151

Table 5.11:	Total Results for the Skill of Using Technology	152
Table 5.12:	Total Result for the Skill of Using Foreign Language	154
Table 5.13:	Total Results for Students in Terms of Values	157
Table 5.14:	Effectiveness Levels among Students	158
Table 5.15:	Scores of Students in Citizenship and Belonging	159
Table 5.16:	Scores of Students in Openness and International Intercommunication	160
Table 5.17:	Students' Familiarity with Translated Book That Are Relevant to Their Major	162
Table 5.18:	Students' Opinions on the Usefulness of Translated Books for Them (%)	163
Table 5.19:	Preparing Research or Presentations since Starting University Studies (%)	164
Table 5.20:	Students' Opinions on the Type of Difficulties They Encountered in Research (%)	164
Table 5.21:	Students' Awareness of Partnerships and Agreements between Their University and Other Institutions (%)	165
Table 5.22:	Students' Awareness of Institutions That Have Partnerships and Agreements with the University (%)	166
Table 5.23:	Students' Awareness of the Existence of Youth Institutions Concerned with the Transfer and Localisation of Knowledge (%)	166
Table 5.24:	Students' Awareness of Types of Services Provided by Youth	167
Table 5.25A:	Students' Opinions on the Current Higher Education System	167
Table 5.25B:	Students' Opinions on the Academic Research System	168
Table 5.25C:	Students' Opinions on the Teaching methods in Universities	168
Table 5.25D:	Students' Opinions on the Evaluation Methods in Universities	169
Table 5.25E:	Students' Opinions on the Books and References Available for Students	170
Table 5.25F:	Students' Opinions on the Educational Equipment and Tools	171
Table 5.25G:	Students' Opinions on the Educational and Pedagogical Level of University Professors	171
Table 5.25H:	Students' Opinions on the System of Financial and the Moral Incentives Offered to Students	172
Table 5.25I:	Student's Opinions on the Practical Training System during Studies	173
Table 5.25J:	Students' Opinions on the Compatibility of the Knowledge Provided by the University with the Requirements of the Labour Market	173
Table 5.25K:	Student's Opinions on the Current System of University Admission	174
Table 5.25L:	Students' Opinions on the Activities Organised by Their Faculty or University	174
Table 5.25M:	Students' Opinions on Internet Availability	175
Table 5.25N:	Student's Opinions on the Interactive Electronic Means That Allow Remote Educational Communication between Students and Teachers	175
Table 5.25O:	Students' Opinions on the Financial Resources to Support University Research Projects Carried out by Students	176