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**Internationalization of Higher Education in MENA:
Policy Issues Associated with Skills Formation and Mobility**

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1. Introduction

1. This policy issues note is focused on internationalization of higher education and the linkages and implications that internationalization has for skills mobility. Internationalization is one of the most important developments that globalization has brought to higher education worldwide. In the MENA region, it has turned into quite a complex undertaking. The Arab Spring has made it clear that young people in MENA are asking for more and better opportunities: to study and work; to move about the world; and to learn and to create new knowledge and enterprises. Higher education, migration, and labor mobility are key policy areas as MENA nations address the need for a strong skills base to underpin the economic and social development of the region's disparate economies. All three policy areas share an interest in the development, recognition, and application of educational qualifications, in the quality of education and training, and in the ability of people to acquire, provide, and use education for their own well-being and for their nation's benefit. This note is intended to be the base document for a policy dialogue integrating the three issues associated with the development of human capital: higher education, migration, and labor mobility.

2. The MENA economies, while at different points of development, share an interest in the supply of and demand for higher education. Some MENA countries are investing heavily in higher education infrastructure, some are encouraging private investment, some are encouraging study abroad, and some are focusing on attracting international students. Others are looking for new strategic directions as secondary school participation is increasing and demand for further opportunities to learn is growing. All are faced with the challenge of meeting the high expectations of their young populations, and are therefore confronted with difficult financial and policy decisions about human capital development.

3. The number of emigrants from MENA into OECD countries is greater than the number of international students coming to universities in MENA, understandable given the differences in the base populations. However, the size of the active skilled MENA workforce engaged outside the region underscores the importance of looking at the policy framework for student and skilled labor migration in a coherent and systematic way. The EC-funded World Bank Program of International Migration in MENA conducted research on migration-related topics and their impact on development and poverty alleviation, including the implications and impact on labor markets (World Bank, 2010a). One of the conclusions is that the insertion in labor markets for migrants from Egypt and Morocco is low.

4. This note seeks to introduce a systematic policy discussion about the internationalization of higher education to help MENA countries improve the quality and relevance of their higher education systems, open opportunities for better skills development, and improve high-skilled labor migration. There are important interactions among the formation of skills and competencies, the acquisition of credentials and qualifications, and where and how those skills are applied. These include the quality of education, the ease with which credentials are recognized in different countries, the role of international partners, and the incentives to study and work in the region and elsewhere. The note incorporates ideas and lessons from global good practices and points to experiences in the region that can be shared between countries with different levels of economic and socio-political development.

5. Cross-border higher education can have both positive and negative impacts on the quality and relevance of national higher education. To maximize the benefits from any type of transnational education, countries need good quality assurance (QA) mechanisms, including certification and accreditation procedures for cross-border education. Developing stronger accreditation systems will link MENA institutions more closely with international standards as regional QA systems tend to adopt common standards. In the case of MENA nations with significant numbers of skilled and educated

citizens living and working abroad, accreditation may increase the likelihood of their credentials being recognized in the host nation. This will benefit individuals by increasing opportunities and reducing “underemployment.” It will benefit the host nation by easing skill shortages, and will benefit the home nation by lifting higher education standards as local programs are calibrated with global qualifications requirements.

6. This note will explore how a regional approach to accreditation and recognition of qualifications could bring benefits and understanding of the complex interactions among student mobility, domestic higher education, and the economic and social development priorities of MENA countries. It will also provide evidence on the importance of setting goals for intra-regional student mobility and for student and faculty flows into the region through accreditation, student and faculty exchange, hiring incentives, and research infrastructure including competitive research grants. Finally, the note will demonstrate the need for a clear policy on the “export of educational services.”

2. Context: Higher Education in MENA

7. There were over six million higher education students in the region in 2010, reflecting a 66 percent increase in the last ten years. And while the overall rate of growth is slowing, there are a few nations like Syria and Morocco that have yet to face a “student surge” in demand, and some, like Algeria, are in the middle of a move to broader access to higher education. Some countries in the region, such as Palestine and Libya, have moved to universal higher education with participation rates of 50 percent or more. There are others, such as Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Jordan, which have made enormous efforts to increase enrollment and which are facing high demand from increasing numbers of secondary education graduates. The growth in participation effectively democratizes higher education as it serves a broader cross-section of society.

8. Part of the growth has come from government policies that promote rapid expansion and in some Gulf countries, from modernization and a renewed emphasis on skill development to underpin economic development and the creation of post-colonial states. Other key drivers of increased demand are demographic growth, a youth bulge in the population pyramid, expanded secondary school completion, and increased participation of women in higher education in all countries, but particularly in the GCC countries, where 62 percent of enrolled students are female. There are more details on the coverage and scale of higher education in MENA in a forthcoming companion paper on higher education financing in the region (see World Bank/AFD, 2011 forthcoming). While the economies of the region are evolving, demand for university graduates is not growing in most countries. Higher education supply is concentrated in undergraduate programs, with few graduate programs. Social Sciences and Humanities make up nearly half the available undergraduate enrolments, while fewer than 25 percent are in Science and Engineering and Construction. To meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy and to respond to national objectives for economic development, more graduate programs and more diversity in fields of study are needed.

9. Some tertiary education systems in the region are responding through diversification via provision of new university programs, technical and professional degrees granted by polytechnic institutes, community colleges, and open university programs. There is a wide interest in e-learning and distance education tertiary programs, and many countries have a goal of expanding private tertiary education provision. Financing expansion and differentiation of provision also brings some challenges and opportunities and these are dealt with in the companion paper noted above (World Bank, 2011 forthcoming). But the expansion and diversification of higher education has not been accompanied by the development of QA mechanisms that will maximize the benefit of greater investment and participation.

This is a global problem as well as a regional issue because of the lack of integration of the region's economies with the rest of the world and because of the significant movement of people within and out of the region to other labor and capital markets.

10. Two aspects of the higher education systems in the region that warrant specific note are student mobility and cross-national provision. Both are products of and contributors to the wave of globalization that has been underway since the 1980s. Globalization is essentially the easier and faster movement of capital in all its forms, human, social, financial, and intellectual across national, economic, and cultural borders. In recent years, it has fostered the growth of global industry in the trade of educational services and increased the importance of migration and the movement of skilled individuals between economies. Cross-border tertiary education can take several forms, such as students (and teachers) travelling to study (teach) in foreign countries; educational institutions partnering with foreign institutions to offer joint educational programs or degrees; educational institutions operating campuses abroad; and educational courses being supplied across-borders through e-learning or distance learning.

11. For certain countries whose higher education systems do not have the capacity to meet the demand to develop their national economies, international higher education can bring positive effects. In general, cross-border higher education can bring benefits simply by mutual exchange of students, teachers and programs, and it is increasingly being used worldwide for developing joint research and development programs. However, to benefit from any type of transnational education, as mentioned earlier, it is essential to have good QA mechanisms, including certification and accreditation procedures for cross-border education.

12. University partnerships (exclusively based on the principle of non-profit collaboration) are the traditional and probably most common form of international mobility of higher education. This type of partnership often goes hand in hand with the mobility of students and academics. However, cross-border education of a commercial nature plays an essential part in the Asia Pacific and is developing now in the MENA region, where it mostly takes the form of franchising. There are forty branch campuses in MENA (representing 35 percent of all branch campuses worldwide) that vary in ownership, size, governance, financing, selectivity, and academic offering.

2.1 Student Mobility

13. Student mobility has grown in the last twenty years worldwide. Currently, over three million higher education students from around the world study outside their own country. In 2008, over 220,000 (7.3 percent) students were from MENA countries, which themselves hosted over 134,400 international students.

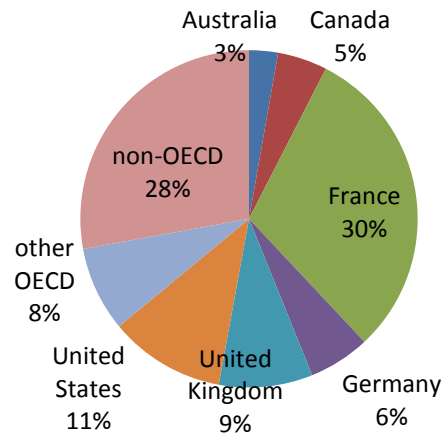
2.2 Outbound Mobility

14. The decision regarding where to study is shaped by language, immigration policy, history, culture, and perceived economic return. The main destination of MENA students is France, which hosts 30 percent of them, followed by the U.S. (11 percent) and the U.K. (9 percent).

15. There are clear differences in the destinations of students from Middle East and North African countries. France hosts over two-thirds of North African international students, but is only the fifth largest destination for students from the Middle East. North African students are also concentrated in Canada and Germany (80 percent each), while students from the Middle East are more dispersed, studying in the U.S. (16.5 percent), Jordan (14 percent), the U.K. (13 percent), Saudi Arabia (11 percent), and France (8 percent).

16. Notably, 25 percent of the students from the Middle East study in other nations within the region. This creates a significant regional education market that seems to be growing in size and importance as the region's economies diversify and as countries in the region develop internationalization strategies.

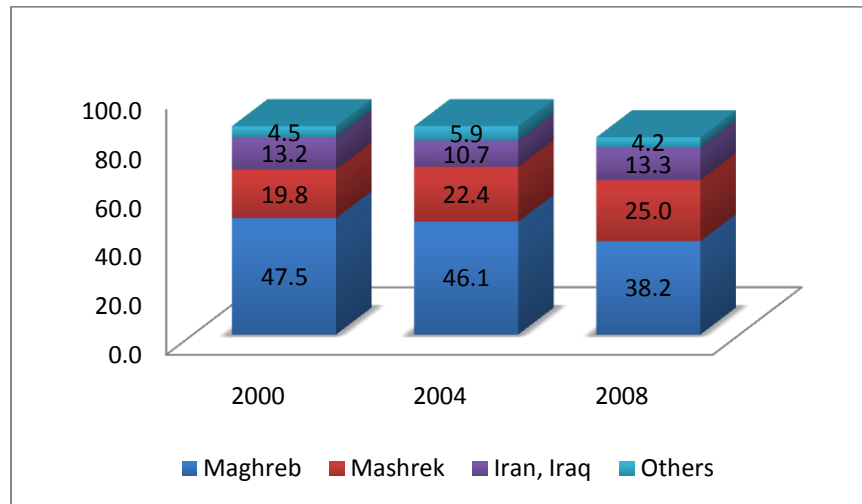
Figure 1: Distribution of MENA students studying abroad in 2008 by major destination countries and regions (%)



Source: Author's calculation using UNESCO data

17. Recruiting agents say the primary areas of study by MENA students are business, engineering, and English as a Second Language, but this may be skewed by data on those students attending U.S. and Australian higher education institutions (IDP, 2010). The biggest cohorts of MENA students come from Morocco, Iran, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia, who together constitute over 40 percent of all MENA student mobility. Egypt sends a relatively small number (8,700 students, or 0.4 percent) of its higher education students out of the country, significantly less than Tunisia (17,900 students/5 percent of its higher education enrolments).

Figure 2: Changes in sources of MENA students studying abroad (%)



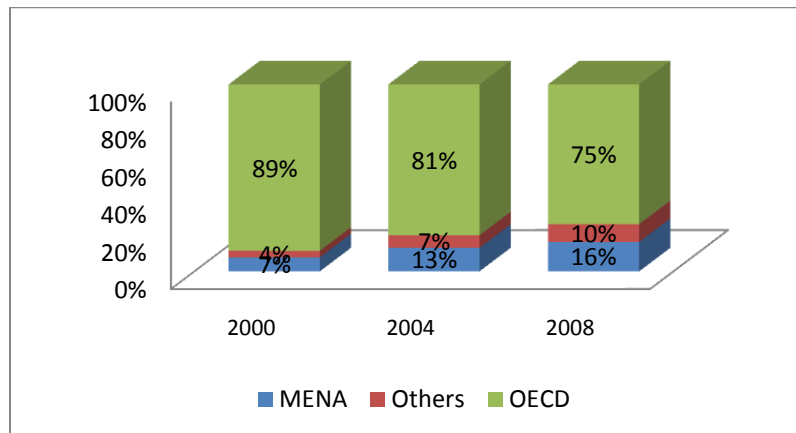
Source: Author's calculation using UNESCO data

18. Although the Maghreb countries accounted for more than one-third of all MENA students abroad in 2008 (38.2 percent), this proportion has changed over the last ten years; despite growth in the absolute number of mobile students, the proportion of students from the Maghreb fell by 10 percent over the same period. The change in composition is due to the increased numbers of students from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and especially Saudi Arabia. In comparison, Qatar has 13 percent of its higher education students abroad, followed by Morocco (10 percent), and UAE and Oman (7 percent each). For a detailed breakdown of international students by country, see Annex 1.

2.3 Inbound and Interregional Mobility

19. MENA is also a host region for international students: Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon are among the thirty top host countries in the world. Most MENA international students' movement is intra-regional, i.e., between MENA countries, attributable to cost, culture, and language competence. Movement of MENA students within the region increased between 1999 and 2007 at the expense of student mobility to North America and Western Europe. Overall, MENA countries host few students from OECD nations. However, as less students from MENA are going into OECD countries, they are opting for staying within the region (Figure 3). In other words the intraregional mobility is increasing, and the number of students going to OECD countries is decreasing.

Figure 3: Regional destinations of students from MENA



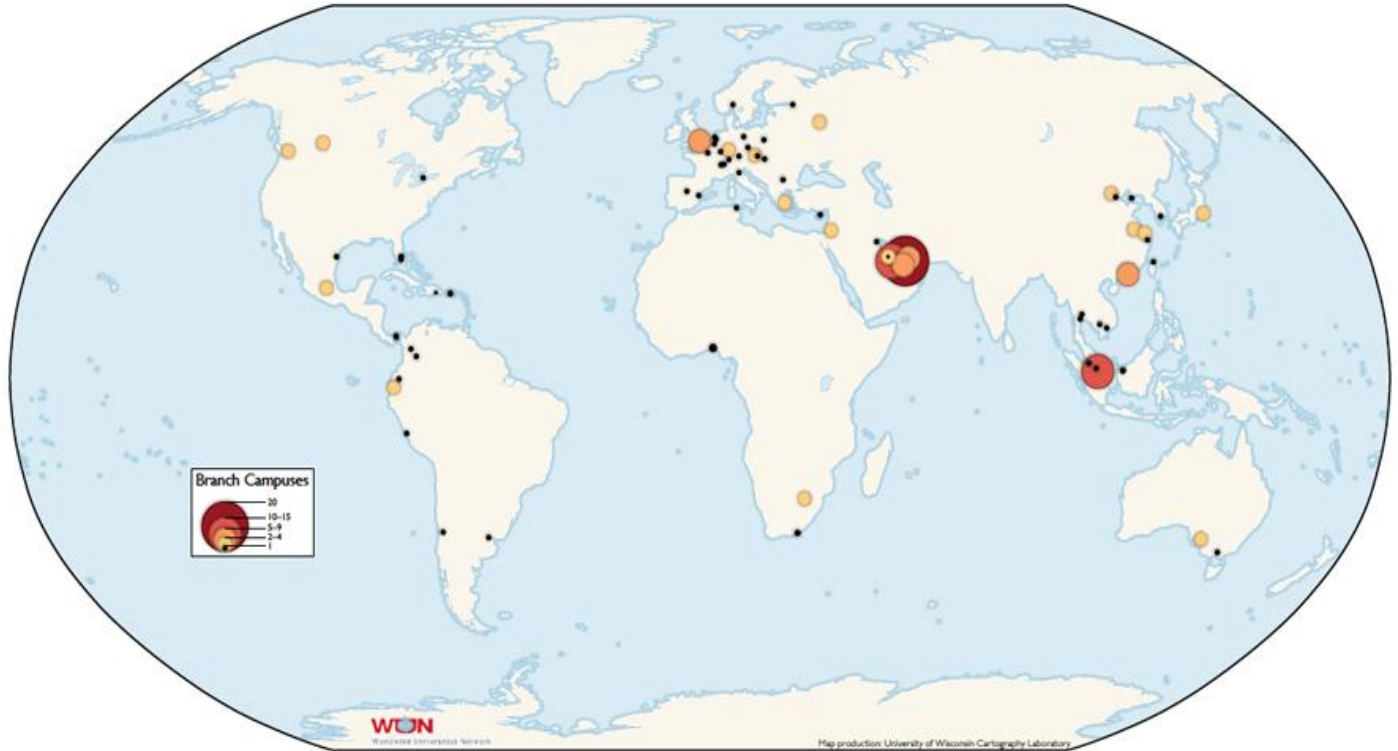
Source: UIS data; authors' calculations.

2.4 Cross-national Education: Mobility of Programs and Institutions

20. One of the most distinctive features of higher education in the region is the large presence of foreign providers. The Middle East hosted 34 percent of all international branch campuses in 2009, according to the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, and more have opened in the past two years. (OBHE, 2011)

21. There were approximately 160 foreign higher education campuses worldwide in 2009 (Becker, 2009). Most opened in the past 15 years and many after 2000. Most are branches of U.S. colleges but there are ten in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from India. Australia, the U.K., Germany, Canada, France, Singapore, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan also have foreign campuses in the region. Figure 4 shows the current distribution of branch campuses.

Figure 4: Location of branch campuses worldwide



Source: Olds and Robertson, 2011, at: <http://globalhighered.wordpress.com/>

22. The UAE has the most branch campuses of all countries in the region, with a quarter of all foreign branch campuses, followed by Qatar (nine campuses). There are also branch campuses in Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, and Tunisia. Institutions operated in partnership with foreign institutions exist in some other MENA countries. For example, there are German universities in Egypt (German University of Cairo, opened in 2003 and is operated by the universities of Ulm and Stuttgart), Jordan, and Oman. The French University of Cairo operates following a similar partnership model with the University of Paris-IX Dauphine, and there is a recent partnership of Paris-IX Dauphine in Tunis. There is also a French business school offering MBAs in Lebanon (ESA in Beirut) and Saint Joseph University of Beirut has a branch campus, the Law School in Abu Dhabi. In Saudi Arabia, the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology has adopted another model: it has engaged world class universities to help design the curriculum of its programs and has created a “Global Research Partnership” allowing its faculty and students access to top researchers and research facilities from four world-class research universities.

3. Movement of Labor, Skills, and People

23. In addition to the movement of students, there have been significant flows of people within, in, and out of the region to seek employment, to enjoy personal and religious freedoms, and to avoid violence, famine, and persecution. One of the drivers of mobility has been the “pull” of growing economic opportunities in aging societies, particularly in Europe.

24. This mobility is the continuation of previous waves of economic migration. In the 1960s, European countries were actively recruiting Maghreb workers, and in the 1970s, the oil economies in the

Gulf countries absorbed (and until recently, continued to absorb) large numbers of skilled and low-skilled workers. For the region, this has had both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, remittances account for between 5 to 20 percent of GNP in some countries, and jobs abroad represent 6 percent of total domestic (MENA) employment. But some people from MENA countries have ended up socially marginalized in poor living conditions, experiencing long periods of unemployment and underemployment, and substantial health and income risks.

25. One assumption of managed migration has been the potential for better employment opportunities. In terms of the impact that migration can have on labor markets in MENA, a recent report (World Bank 2010a) based on data from Egypt and Morocco indicates that the outcomes are modest at best. To analyze this impact, it is important to look not only at the outflow of workers and whether they succeed in finding jobs, but also at the labor market decisions taken by those left behind, and in particular by households who receive remittances. In the case of Egypt, there has been a positive impact, seen mainly through the increase of females moving away from unpaid family labor. In both Morocco and Egypt, remittances increase the probability of self-employment, predominantly low skilled, suggesting that remittances might be used as capital to develop informal activities, providing employment flexibility.

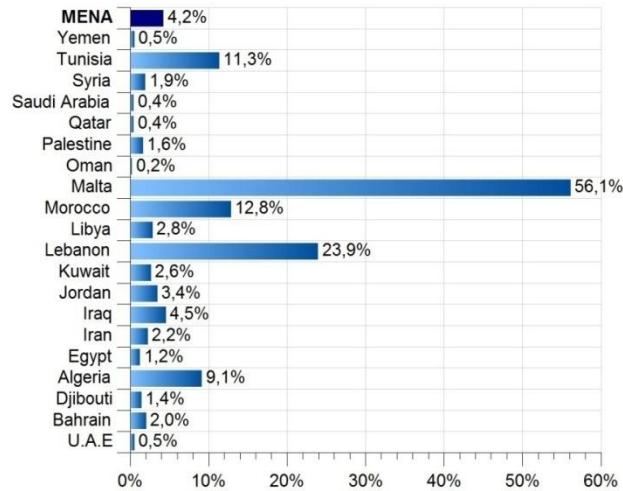
3.1 Sources, Destinations, Characteristics, and Economic Activity of MENA Migrants

26. There are 5.3 million MENA youths and adults who are “migrants” in OECD countries. Most are from Morocco and Algeria (1.5 and 1.3 million people, respectively). The other large source nations are Iran, (600,000), Tunisia, (400,000), and Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt (300,000 each).

27. Overall, MENA migrants comprise 4 percent of the region’s total workforce. Some countries have a very significant proportion of the active population living or working abroad: Malta is the most striking example, with 56 percent of the active population outside the country. Other important ‘exporters’ of human capital are Lebanon (24 percent) and Morocco and Tunisia (both over 10 percent). Many of those who have migrated are well educated; up to 35 percent of MENA migrants to OECD nations have higher education.

28. There are clear differences in the profiles of migrants from the Maghreb, Egypt, and the GCC. Migrants from the Maghreb tend to have lower levels of education, and their main destinations are France, Italy, and Spain. Better educated migrants tend to immigrate to Eastern Europe, the U.K., the U.S., and Canada; 50 percent or more of MENA immigrants in these countries have tertiary education. The higher skilled MENA migrants tend to come from Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, Bahrain, and Jordan, where between 45 and 50 percent of migrants have post-secondary school education. In contrast, less than 15 percent of the emigrants from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Malta have tertiary education.

Figure 5: OECD immigrant population, 15 years and older as a % of the total active population in the country of origin

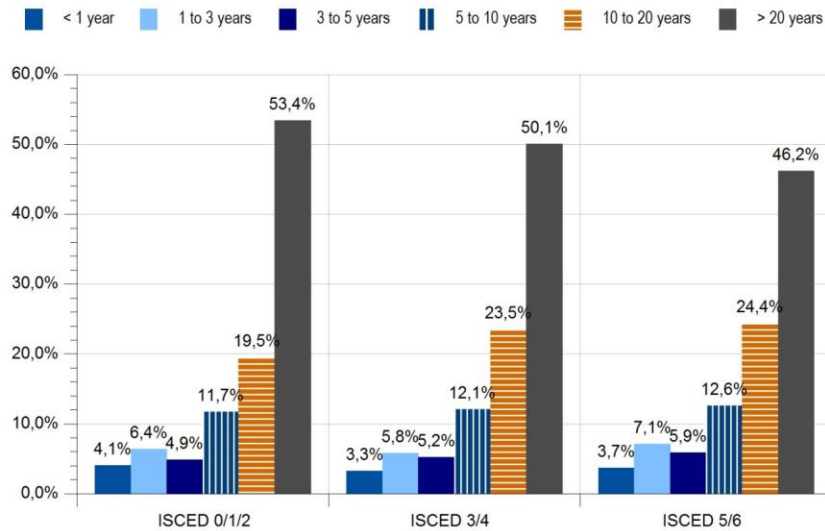


Source: Author's calculation using OECD data

29. The largest destination country is France, with 2.3 million migrants, followed by the U.S. with 800,000; and then Spain, Canada, Italy and Germany with 300,000 each. Other popular destinations are Australia, the U.K., Belgium, Sweden, and the Netherlands, each with approximately 200,000 migrants. The percentage of MENA migrants in relation to total migrant population in the destination countries ranges from 42 percent in France, around 15 percent in Sweden, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Belgium, to only 2.6 percent in the U.S.

30. On average, 55 percent of the migrants are men, most of whom have completed some education; 24 percent have tertiary education, 28 percent have completed secondary school, and the balance have primary schooling or less. This is similar to the educational profile of the foreign-born population in OECD countries. Most MENA migrants who leave their country of origin do so for long periods of time. Three-quarters of the current stock of immigrants have been abroad for ten years or more, and half of those for twenty years or more. This is independent of education level (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Duration of stay and education level of the population 15 years and older from MENA in OECD countries



Source: Author's calculation using OECD data

31. Despite their length of stay and their relatively high levels of education, many migrants are unemployed. Based on data collected in 2008-09, their overall unemployment rate is almost three times the unemployment rate for the population in the host country, and is higher for women than for men. Compared to all migrants, the MENA migrant unemployment rate is almost double that of the total migrant population, at 20 percent. MENA-born women have an unemployment rate of 57 percent, compared to 50 percent unemployment for the native-born and other (i.e., non-MENA) foreign-born women.

32. The more educated seem to be less affected by unemployment. Nine percent of those with tertiary education are unemployed, compared with 23 percent of those with primary education, and 15 percent of those with secondary education. Some destination countries offer better opportunities for employment, such as the U.S., the Netherlands, and Hungary, where unemployment rates are between 3.9 and 5.2 percent. Countries like Belgium, France, Turkey, and Ireland have high unemployment rates, between 22 and 28 percent. In Finland, a clear outlier, 48.5 percent of MENA migrants are unemployed. Migrants from Djibouti, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco have the highest unemployment rates, around 20 percent.

Figure 7: Unemployment rate for MENA migrants 15 years and older in OECD countries by gender and level of education

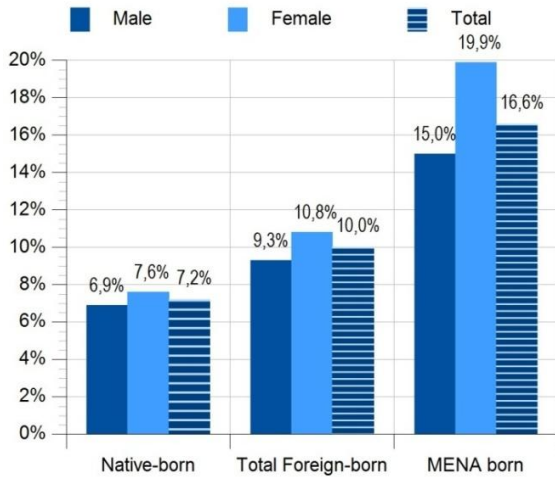


Figure 8: Unemployment rates of native born, total foreign-born and MENA natives in OECD countries by level of education

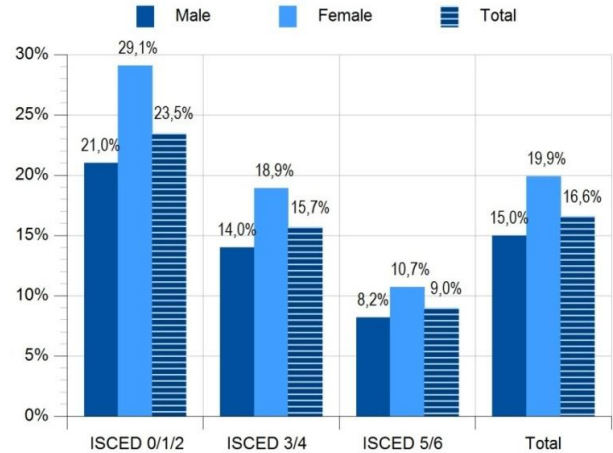


Figure 9: Unemployment rate for MENA migrants by country of destination

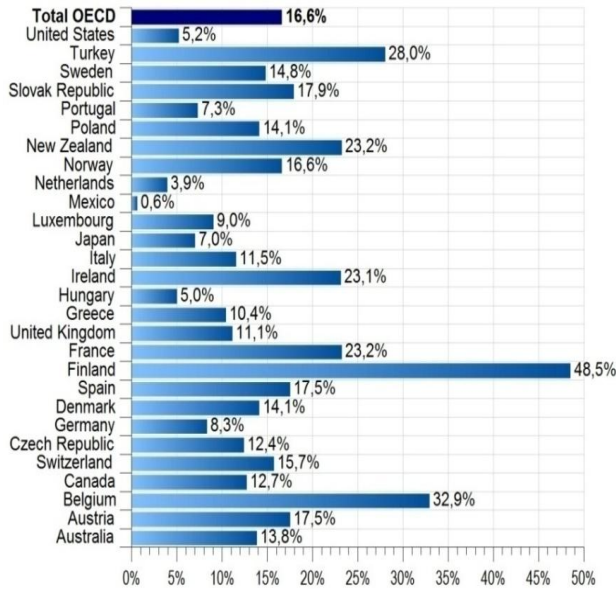
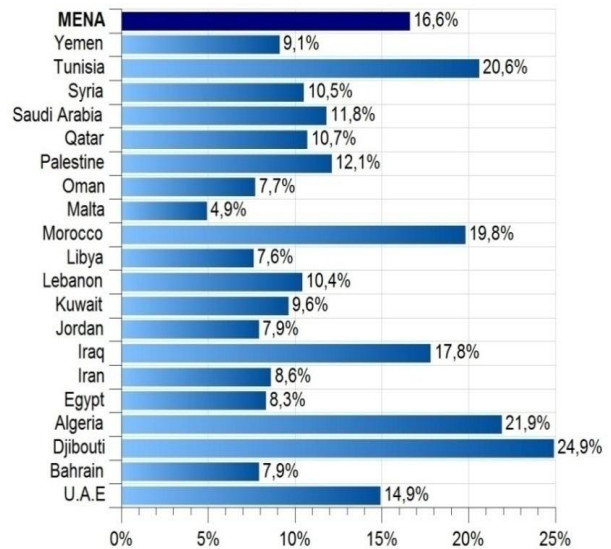


Figure 10: Unemployment rate for MENA migrants 15 years and older by country of origin



Source: Author’s calculation using OECD data

33. These demographic patterns may change as older migrants retire from the labor market and become less attached to the host country. There may also be changes as larger numbers of international students graduate and stay for shorter or longer periods. Both trends will be shaped by local and global economic and social factors, but both can be influenced by government policies on access to post-student employment, residency visas, and portability of health benefits and social security. They can also be influenced by actions of governments in the home countries to induce skilled and successful scholars and

researchers to return home. A recent set of country case studies that include Tunis and Egypt concluded that returnees make a more positive economic impact when their acquired skills are recognized at home, when they are attracted rather than compelled to return, and when they return after a period of time that is sufficient to accumulate capital and expertise that can be applied at home (Sabadie et al, 2010). All of these are amenable to policy action by governments and can be important elements in a nation's human development policy to clear the pathway for easier movement of skilled people between economies.

3.2 The Interaction Between Mobility and Skill Formation

34. The number of emigrants from MENA is larger than the number of international students, which is understandable given the differences in the base populations, but the size of the active skilled MENA workforce engaged outside the region underscores the importance of looking at the policy framework in a coherent and systematic way. There are important interactions between the formation of skills and competencies, the acquisition of credentials and qualifications and where and how those skills are applied. These include the quality of education, the ease with which credentials are recognized in different countries, the role of international partners, and the incentives to study and work in the region and elsewhere.

35. This is not an issue for MENA countries alone. Competition between countries to attract highly skilled workers has intensified in recent years, as reflected in the latest migration policy trends (OECD, 2005; World Bank, 2011). OECD member countries increasingly promote cross-border student mobility as a way of attracting a skilled workforce and building or maintaining capacity for a knowledge-based society. Students who study abroad remain there for quite some time. For example, 75 percent of Chinese students who studied abroad between 1978 and 1999 had not returned to China any time soon after graduation. (Iguchi, 2003).

36. One of the “push” factors behind the outflow of students and migrants is the relative weakness of the local labor market. Economic growth in MENA countries has not been enough to absorb the increasing labor force. Excessive GDP volatility, the dominance of public sector employment, over dependence on oil revenues and low value-added products, and weak integration into the global economy have all depressed opportunities. This macro scenario, coupled with mismatches between labor supply and demand, very slow school-to-work transition, and low quality and relevance of post-basic education and training systems, has resulted in high rates of secondary school dropouts, with many entering the labor force with low basic skills. But despite their relative advantage in the labor market, unemployment rates for university graduates are as high as 40 percent in some countries. Higher education also increases aspiration levels, and if local economies cannot offer educated people opportunities, those people are more likely to migrate to economies where their skills can be fruitfully applied (Sabadie et al, 2010).

37. Notwithstanding the current limits of the local economies, the longer term economic and social futures of countries in the MENA region depend in part on a coherent strategy framework for education, skill development, and labor mobility. One element in such a framework is cross-border tertiary education, or the internationalization of tertiary education. Countries promote cross-border education because their economies and labor markets are globalized, and to be competitive they promote internationally competent workers with internationally recognized qualifications (OECD,2004a).

38. Cross-border tertiary education can take several forms, such as students (and teachers) travelling to study (teach) in foreign countries; educational institutions partnering with foreign institutions to offer joint educational programs or degrees; educational institutions operating campuses abroad; and educational courses being supplied across borders through e-learning or distance learning (Knight, 2003 and 2005; OECD, 2004a). All forms of cross-border education can be delivered under a variety of

contractual arrangements: e.g., via development aid, not-for-profit partnerships, and trade (OECD, 2004a).

39. A key driver for internationalization is demographic trends; many nations in MENA have large young populations whose demand for higher education is increasing. Some nations face significant domestic constraints on public expenditures for education and are struggling to provide a good quality higher education for increasing numbers of students. Internationalization can be a cost-effective alternative to increase domestic provision, especially if it attracts foreign expertise and private capital.

40. As well as providing opportunities for skill formation and meeting domestic demand, internationalization contributes to the efficiency of tertiary education systems in research, and by extension, to the national innovation capacity (OECD, 2008). The international mobility of academics and students yields important benefits in terms of research and development, as it enhances knowledge flows, stimulates new ideas, develops cooperation for joint research and fosters innovation. Attracting foreign researchers is a way to improve local capacity and develop research cooperation programs between institutions.

41. From an individual's perspective, increased opportunities to migrate make cross-border tertiary education attractive. Holding an internationally recognized qualification increases an individual's access to a wider range of economic and social communities.

4. Six Benefits of a MENA Framework for Cross-border Higher Education

42. There are six significant advantages for MENA countries to develop, adopt or refine their higher education and migration policies in a systemic and comprehensive manner.

4.1 Capturing Higher Education Revenue

43. International higher education students generate significant fiscal transfers between nations. They carry government and private scholarships, and many are fully or partially self-funded and thus carry private capital to other nations. The outflows may not be substantial, but for recipient institutions foreign fee paying students are an important source of revenue, and as with any exporting industry this has important trade value. For instance, in Australia education has become a key exporting sector, with fees from international students amounting to 15 percent of total income of many public higher education institutions. In New Zealand, fees accounted for 13 percent of total revenue of all higher education institutions in 2004 (OECD, 2008).

4.2 Expanding Economic Impacts

44. In addition to generating tuition revenue, international students make a contribution to the wider economy. There is a substantial multiplier effect through expenditures on transport, housing, associated tourism, and the like. The total impact can be significant in smaller economies. For example in New Zealand, education has become the third largest export sector, with NZD 2.2 billion in revenues in 2004 (OECD, 2004a). In the U.K., international higher education students generate £ 5.3 billion in tuition fees and other spending in the local economy (U.K. Higher Education International Unit, 2010). Within the MENA region, the Jordan 2020 Strategy identified "Exporting Higher Education" as an area of potential job growth and revenue generation. Countries that are already attracting considerable numbers of foreign students, like Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon, could develop internationalization strategies to increase the volume of international students.

4.3 Expanding Access to Tertiary Education

45. Access to more university placements and to a wider range of programs needs to increase for economic and social reasons. For most MENA countries, the expansion of tertiary education has been mainly at the university level. There is a need to expand other forms of post-secondary education that can be more responsive to job markets and emerging technologies and that can act more quickly than conventional university programs.

46. Aspirations for post-secondary school education are also increasing and fuelling the need for greater access, as economic development has increased the size of the middle class. In some cases, like in Egypt, local universities are already overcrowded and are struggling to handle the increase in enrollments.

47. Cross-border education can reduce the infrastructure cost to the state of increasing the supply of public education and can be a cost-effective way of diversifying the programs available to local students. It can also attract foreign direct investment and may attract domestic investment if the policy framework is amenable to private provision of education.

48. However the financing of studies abroad can be a constraint. Countries interested in sending students abroad need to develop financing schemes favorable for students with high academic merit. To bridge inequity gaps that may occur from differential abilities to pursue cross-border tertiary education, means-tested scholarships and/or loans have the potential to widen participation to those less able to afford education abroad.

4.4 Increasing the Variety and Relevance of Tertiary Education

49. Increasing access and participation also increases the size of the cohort group making the transition from education to work more difficult when the economy is weak and when the alignment between education and work is poor. Cross-border education can offer students study opportunities that are more attuned to emerging needs in the labor market than those available in domestic institutions. Partnerships and faculty exchange arrangements can help domestic institutions adjust course offerings to become more relevant to the regional economy or national capacity development strategies. Countries with limited tertiary education systems are able to emulate OECD countries such as Luxembourg or Iceland, which have traditionally used cross-border mobility to complement domestic capacity.

50. Some countries have the overall capacity to meet domestic student demand, but not necessarily in the fields of individual preference or in the fields most relevant for the country's economic development. This can lead to labor shortages in some areas, like engineering.

51. Cross-border education can help increase domestic educational capacity more rapidly than strategies that rely on local capital or local human resources, which are often either insufficient or engaged in other sectors of the economy.

52. In a globalized economy with new skills constantly in demand, it can be very cost-efficient to develop cross-border education to take advantage of the newest technologies and programs available in developed countries. The employability of MENA citizens abroad is often constrained by skill level much as it is at home. Sound policies on internationalization of higher education could help MENA countries improve the quality and relevance of their higher education systems, open opportunities for better skills development, and improve high skilled labor migration.

4.5 Improving the Quality of Tertiary Education

53. Most MENA countries face problems meeting international quality standards in domestic tertiary institutions. In particular, many MENA countries do not have sufficient researchers or tertiary level faculty, and some lack the financial resources to attract and retain the best academics or to provide competitive teaching and research facilities. Compared to those in developed countries, MENA higher education institutions are less engaged in international knowledge networks and generally have less experience and capacity to innovate. Cross-border education may offer a partial answer to these problems.

54. Expanding and improving the quality of the tertiary education sector requires a critical mass of high quality academics and researchers. When this is not available domestically, cross-border educational strategies can help. For example, MENA faculty members and post-graduate students can study abroad to obtain higher qualifications or develop their competencies before returning to the academic sector in their home country. In addition, policies that simplify or ease residency requirements, provision of health insurance, and funding of academic research opportunities can attract foreign faculty.

55. Mexico, for example, has used academic mobility strategies to improve the quality of its higher education. Between 1996 and 2002, the proportion of Mexican full-time academic staff with a degree more than doubled, from 30 percent to 65 percent, through the ‘Institutional Enhancement Integral Programme’ (PIFI), aimed at recruiting higher qualified faculty and promoting study abroad opportunities, especially at the doctorate level.

56. Program and institutional mobility can improve the quality of domestic educational provision. Foreign programs delivered at local institutions or foreign institutions operating in the country can offer students a better education or training than some domestic institutions. At their best, such programs link developing countries with cutting-edge knowledge and assist in training an effective workforce as well as faculty for the domestic system. Finally, partnerships or foreign programs may also help develop the infrastructure for more efficient teaching and research and ultimately create a more effective and cost-efficient organization of the higher education institutions and sector.

4.6 Strengthening Research and Development

57. International mobility of academics and students yields important benefits in terms of research and development, as it enhances knowledge flows, stimulates new ideas, develops cooperation for joint research, and fosters innovation. Linkages between higher education institutions and other actors such as private firms and research centers help to develop innovation systems. Attracting foreign researchers improves local capacity and enhances research cooperation between institutions. Countries such as Korea fund scholarships to undergraduate engineering students studying abroad to increase networking in technical fields and to develop cooperative programs concerning the latest technology. Countries such as Australia, the U.S., Switzerland and the U.K. actively seek international students to improve local research capacity.

5. Managing the Risk of Talent Loss

58. While there are significant benefits from a more systematic approach to cross-border higher education, there are also some risks from adopting policies that open a valued cultural institution more widely. The most widely discussed risk is the loss of talent as the better educated often move to more rewarding environments. This risk also attracts the most political attention because it is immediate and noticeable.

59. Nations can lose talent regardless of cross-border education. The global mobility of the highly skilled occurs as a result of factors as diverse as career strategies, war, and political, ethnic, or religious persecution. But cross-border higher education is a powerful catalyst for long term movement. Globally, people studying outside their own country for advanced degrees, especially at the doctoral level, tend to stay abroad. This is most evident in the U.S., where more than half of all foreign doctorate-holders in science and engineering stayed for at least four or five years after graduation (Finn, 2003). The mobility of highly skilled people is a complex policy issue with questions of freedom of movement and individual pursuit of opportunities as well as economic issues. On the cost side, the home country loses the human capital (and productivity) of highly skilled people, and, if the education was financed with public funds, the public investment in their primary, secondary, and tertiary education. On the benefit side, highly skilled diasporas contribute to the economy through investments, remittances, and the links that foster trade, innovation and knowledge transfer.

60. Globally, remittances to developing countries were valued at \$325 billion in 2010 and are more than twice the value of official development aid (World Bank, 2011). The inflow of remittances to MENA was over \$35 billion in 2010, a 6 percent increase over 2009. Lebanon (\$8.4 billion) and Egypt (\$7.7 billion) were the dominant recipients in the region. While there is no clear evidence that skilled diasporas always contribute significantly to economic growth in the countries of origin (ILO, 2003), the scale of remittances and the size of the skilled diaspora have encouraged increasing numbers of nations to engage their diasporas as capacity builders.

61. The internationalization of labor markets sometimes leads to claims of “brain drain,” or the “emigration of skilled and professional personnel from developing countries to developed nations” (Miyagiwa, 1991). The concept originated in the 1960s and one of its weaknesses is that shifts attention from the underlying causes of movement of skilled people to the movement itself. Clemens (2009) argues that skilled professionals leave countries where living conditions are harsh, where training opportunities and working conditions are poor, and where there is a lack of political stability. They are also attracted by salaries, career prospects, living conditions, and educational opportunities for themselves and their families.

62. The policy frameworks of higher education, immigration and labor intersect here. They share the constellation of “push and pull” factors that promote cross-border mobility. The factors that “push” and “pull” individuals to study overseas them are much the same as those attracting skilled and unskilled workers to labor markets in those countries. They include capacity constraints and bottlenecks in domestic provision of higher education, economic returns, and wider opportunities.

63. What distinguishes cross-border study is that it is seen as an enabler of population loss or “skill flows” (Clemens 2009) even when immigration is not the initial motivation to study abroad. Skill flow can be the result of incentives to lure international students to stay. The demand for skills in a knowledge-based economy and aging populations leads governments to offer easier long term access to labor markets and residency.

64. Some nations have capitalized on their diaspora beyond remittances by encouraging successful citizens to return and invest in the home economy (e.g., India; Lee et al, 2006, cited in Clemens, 2009). These returned citizens bring with them savings, skills, raised expectations and familiarity with well-functioning political, social, and market institutions. China encourages students to return home through special financing to launch science and technology initiatives and business startups. China also helps citizens with children’s education, housing, and jobs for spouses. On a smaller scale, Switzerland has mobilized its diaspora by creating an online network to promote scientific exchanges and by attracting scientists to return with fast track career opportunities.

65. Much of the concern about the loss of talent has focused on China and India where those studying abroad are still less than 5 percent of the student population. Tunisia and Lebanon have 20 percent of tertiary enrollments abroad, which increases potential skill loss. There are also consequences for the domestic higher education sectors that are losing able students and the intellectual and fiscal resources they would attract or bring with them. McKenzie and Rapoport (2006) show that the prospect of large numbers of students emigrating from Mexico tended to diminish investment in education. Conversely and on a different scale, Chand and Clemens (2008) cited in Clemens 2009 show that emigration of workers from Fiji increased investment in higher education there. It seems that when the likely destinations have skill-based immigration policies, demand for education at home, and hence investment, tend to increase. Given the proximity of MENA countries to Europe, and the demographic trends, there are many opportunities for skilled MENA migrants to join international labor markets. Clearly, the critical factor is the quality and relevance of the skills that potential immigrants develop through tertiary education.

6. Maximizing Benefits through Stronger Quality Assurance

66. Cross-border higher education can have both positive and negative impacts on the quality and relevance of national higher education. Effective, transparent QA mechanisms, including certification and accreditation procedures for cross-border education, will maximize the benefits for students, programs, and/or institutions and national systems as a whole. An important challenge for policymakers in MENA when introducing cross-border tertiary education is to ensure that QA and institutional accreditation are in place. The growth in student mobility and program and institution mobility require transparent systems for recognition of institutions and qualifications. Both will strengthen accountability of higher education institutions. Developing stronger accreditation systems will link MENA institutions more closely with international standards as regional QA systems tend to adopt common standards. Individuals also benefit if the processes for recognition of qualifications are easier to navigate and are fair, reliable, and transparent. This is true regardless of location and where the skill was acquired.

6.1 Who Benefits from Accreditation of Institutions and Programs?

67. Accreditation benefits students, parents, employers, the public, and the institutions and programs themselves. Students benefit because accreditation means that the knowledge and skills in their program of study are those necessary for professional practice or for graduation. It also helps them and their parents choose between institutions and invest prudently in programs of an acceptable quality.

68. Employers benefit because students from accredited programs are more likely to have the skills and capabilities needed for specific roles. This makes recruitment easier and more reliable, and reduces on-the-job training costs.

69. The general public, as taxpayers and as users or consumers of services from educated people, benefit because their taxes are used in reputable programs and because service providers such as doctors and accountants have reached a minimum standard.

70. Accreditation benefits institutions by encouraging self-evaluation and by benchmarking that evaluation against recognized standards identifying areas for improvement. Combined, these acts also enhance the reputation of the institution. Accredited institutions use their status and reputation to recruit and retain students and faculty. Their status will often give them access to government funds and grant competitions and help them attract private support.

71. Institutions can also use accreditation standards to monitor what they do and ensure they maintain or enhance quality. They can also use the standards and the accreditation process to illustrate to the public and the government that they are operating effectively and efficiently. It is a powerful form of accountability.

72. In the case of MENA nations with significant numbers of skilled and educated citizens living and working in other nations, accreditation may increase the likelihood of their credentials being recognized in the host nation. This will benefit the individual by increasing opportunities and reducing “under-employment.” It will benefit the host nation by easing skill shortages and it will benefit the home nation by lifting higher education standards as local programs are calibrated with global qualification requirements. These benefits flow to the general population in the form of better services and a more highly educated population.

Box 1. Functions of Accreditation

- Attests that an institution or program meets explicit and public standards;
- Helps students choose institutions and protects their interests;
- Guides the allocation and distribution of public resources;
- Stimulates a culture of self-improvement and peer review to maintain and raise standards;
- Provides a basis for the transfer of credits between programs and institutions;
- Aligns programs with the requirements for professional certification and licensing;
- Establishes the standards or criteria for the regular review and revision of programs of study; and informs the accounts; and
- Involves the academic community in evaluating and improving the work of the institution.

73. QA processes can also assist countries that decide to use cross-border tertiary education to build capacity to ensure that the foreign institutions and providers deliver robust programs in line with national needs. In this respect, establishing transparent and clear QA and accreditation frameworks for national and foreign institutions is vital.

74. National QA systems monitor the quality of higher education within the country and delivery across-borders and are essential for establishing institutional credibility. The lack of comprehensive frameworks for coordinating various initiatives across countries, together with the diversity and unevenness of QA practices and organization at the national level, generate gaps in the QA of higher education provided across borders. This makes students and other stakeholders more vulnerable to low-quality provision. The issue is even more complex for online delivery across borders.

6.2 Cross-border QA

75. Cross-border modes of delivery in higher education raise quality issues and require better systems of consumer protection (OECD, 2004b; OECD, 2005). Most national systems of QA and accreditation focus on the quality of domestic programs delivered by traditional institutions. They are often grounded in national legal structures and codes of practice that are based on in-person, same-time provision. Agencies and governments need to learn about different institutional models and systems of cross-border delivery, especially virtual education, and the features that make them effective to ensure that local standards and QA processes recognize and validate innovative practices.

6.3 Global Convergence of QA Standards and Processes

76. There are national and international initiatives to improve QA, accreditation, and recognition of qualifications of cross-border provision. An example is UNESCO/OECD’s “Quality provision in cross-border higher education” guidelines¹ which aim to protect students against misleading information and low-quality provision and to make qualifications readable, transparent and stronger in their international validity and portability. These are non-binding, however, and need to be enforced through national and accreditation bodies, and by national regulations.

77. The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for QA are a response to demands from governments, society, and higher education institutions for “mutually acceptable mechanisms for the evaluation, assurance and certification of quality” (EUA, 2010a). The ESG were developed to be applicable to all QA agencies in Europe, irrespective of structure, function, and size.

78. To increase the value of the guidelines and to promote greater transparency, the participants in the Bologna Process established a European Quality Assurance Register to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy QA agencies following the guidelines.

79. This could extend the reach of the guidelines past the European Higher Education Area and have a significant impact on the development of national systems of QA. The question for MENA nations is whether to join in this convergence process or to seek to improve comparability by different means. The choice is complicated by the presence of many U.S. aligned branch campuses following accreditation processes that are less dependent on government actions and more closely grounded in peer review and self-regulation.

6.4 The Particular Case of Branch Campuses

80. The array of transnational higher education arrangements in the MENA region creates some confusion. There are branch campuses, academic partnerships, and single discipline schools, like Cornell Medical and the self-styled New York University “portal.” There are also other variants: franchises, multiple school campuses, joint degrees, and dual site and mixed mode programs. There are also many terms used to describe the different models. Creating a taxonomy of these models and studying the different incentives used to attract leading universities to the region are important research topics that go beyond the scope of this paper. In general, the modalities found in the region range from partnerships based on mutual agreements to commercial arrangements such as joint ventures and franchises. Table 1 describes the different types of agreements with examples from MENA and elsewhere (modified from Kataoka, unpublished).

Table 1. Description of partnerships associated with branch campus education worldwide

| Type of Partnership | Examples | Description |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Branch campuses of overseas universities (agreement between the host | Education City (Qatar) | Education City is an educational district on the outskirts of Doha that houses educational institutions including schools, research centers, university campuses, and an equestrian center. Education City's multi-institutional campus has branch campuses from U.S. universities, including Virginia Commonwealth University, offering a Bachelor of Fine Arts; Weill Cornell Medical College, offering 2 and 4 year medical programs; Texas A&M University, offering bachelor's and master's degrees in science programs; Carnegie Mellon University, offering undergraduate |

¹ See www.oecd.org/edu/internationalisation/guidelines.

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| government and overseas universities) | | degrees in business and technology; Georgetown University, offering a bachelor's degree in foreign service; and Northwestern University, offering degree programs in journalism and communication. (http://education.theemiratesnetwork.com/zones/qatar_education_city.php). |
| Portal model | New York Univ. (Abu Dhabi) | NYU's agreement with the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to create NYU Abu Dhabi is the outcome of a shared understanding of the essential roles and challenges of higher education in the 21st century. (http://nyuad.nyu.edu/about/index.html). |
| Joint venture | The Johns Hopkins Univ.- Nanjing Univ. Center for Chinese and American Studies (China) | Established in 1986 (first university partnership with a foreign university in China). Chinese students study the U.S. and the international system in English with American professors, while international students focus on contemporary China, taught by Chinese professors in Mandarin. Additionally, with collaborative research projects, joint seminars and cross-registration opportunities, the center fosters a rich cross-cultural learning experience. (http://www.nju.edu.cn/cps/site/njuweb/fg/index.php?id=12). |
| Academic partnerships | Nazarbayev University (Kazakhstan) | Each school within the university will have an international academic partner among the leading universities in the world with strong research, clinical and industrial bases. Partners include: University College London to set up the Foundation Program – first year of the undergraduate programs (basic education); Harvard Medical International Inc. to set up the Medical School; Duke University to set up the Graduate School of Business; iCarnegie (affiliated with Carnegie Mellon) to set up the School of Natural Sciences; University of Wisconsin-Madison to set up the School of Social Sciences and Humanities; University of Pittsburgh Medical Center to set up the Center of Life Sciences; University of Pennsylvania to set up the Center for Education Policy; and Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (National University of Singapore) to set up the Graduate School of Public Policy. (http://eng.nu.edu.kz/). |
| Double degree programs | Nat'l Research Univ. Higher School of Economics (HSE) (Russia) | The International College of Economics and Finance is an autonomous department within HSE, runs with the participation of the London School of Economics (LSE), and offers a double degree from HSE and LSE for the BS program. The faculty of economics offers the MBA program with participation of Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam (Netherlands). (http://icef.hse.ru/en/About). |
| Collaboration | Singapore-MIT Alliance (Singapore) | An innovative engineering education and research collaboration among the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The three universities have combined their expertise and superior resources to create a distance learning environment at the forefront of current technology. In partnership with faculty from both MIT and Singapore, the program has been designed to offer students full access to every element of course delivery in both synchronous and asynchronous form: students attend live course lectures between universities, may interact with professors through video-conferencing, and review all lectures and materials electronically. (http://web.mit.edu/SMA/about/overview/index.htm). |
| Cross-registration | Olin College (U.S.) | Mini-consortium with Babson College, Brandeis University, and Wellesley College to mutually recognize credits. (http://star.olin.edu/StudentRecords.cfm#cross-registration) |
| University-non- | China-Europe Int'l | The leading China-based international business school, with all three programs ranked in the global Top 30 by the Financial Times. Not-for-profit joint venture |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| university partnership | Business School (Shanghai) | established in 1994 under an agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation and the European Commission, signed by Shanghai Jiaotong University and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD). EFMD is an international membership organization and Europe's largest network association in the field of management development, it has over 700 member organizations from academia, business, public service, and consultancy in 82 countries. (http://www.ceibs.edu/today/establishment/chinaeu/index.shtml). |
| The Erasmus Mundus - External Cooperation Windows | European universities and third country HEIs | Erasmus Mundus partnerships with third country HEIs are designed to foster institutional cooperation in the field of higher education between the European Union and third countries through a mobility scheme addressing student and academic exchanges for the purpose of studying, teaching, training, and research. (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/results_compendia/selected_projects_action_2_en.php) |

81. The main distinguishing feature of the different branch campuses is the extent of operational control over academic programs, standards, and faculty that is held and exercised by the home institution. The tighter the control of student admissions and faculty recruitment and the closer the alignment of standards for selection, the stronger the role of the home campus and the less opportunity for local variation. The portal model followed by NYU-Abu Dhabi is clearly the most tightly aligned system, with common standards in both locations. Partnerships and memoranda of understanding are much more loosely coupled, reflecting an expressed desire to work together. At both ends of the spectrum there are questions about how much control is exercised by the home institution and to what extent the operations of the local campus are shaped by the laws and regulations of the host nation. These are well illustrated by examining the issues that surround a policy decision to welcome or invite a cross-border higher education program.

6.5 Due Diligence and Cross-border Education

82. A minister or a government considering a proposal for a “branch campus” has many issues to consider, from the credibility and commitment of the proponent to the protection of potential student consumers. While these are important, the most pressing issue is establishing what benefits can and cannot accrue to the host nation and how those benefits can be realized.

83. Branch campuses can:

- Diversify provision by offering academic programs that are not available in the region, especially in areas of specialization or where cost structures justify centralization of infrastructure, like medicine or robotics;
- Internationalize higher education by linking the local academic community to the global community of scholars and educators;
- Transfer knowledge and expertise about teaching, learning and research, and the design and operation of modern world class universities;
- Attract and retain talent in the student, faculty, and research communities;
- Model new and innovative policies and practices in the operation of universities and of modern corporations, from boards of trustees to procurement procedures; and
- Exemplify free speech, democratic practice, tolerance, and equality.

84. Branch campuses cannot absorb demand from a growing youth population or an aspiring middle class. Nor can they attract significant amounts of foreign direct investment into higher education. Branches are not a simple substitute for allowing or facilitating student mobility through measures like scholarships for study abroad. While they can have some impact on the margin of these three issues, a

branch campus typically does not have the scale to fully satisfy demand or to attract substantial capital, or to offer the full range of courses that national needs demand or that individual interests seek.

85. Successful establishment and operation of a branch campus or academic partnership will, through observable example and opportunity to learn, motivate others to emulate or change, inspire reformers, and create competition, leading others to improve. It is a refinement of the lighthouse or laboratory school model of reform. To maximize the benefit to the host nation, the operational basis needs to be transparent and open to all so that information about its workings flows readily to those who are to benefit. There also needs to be an active strategy of building local capacity to disseminate, replicate, operate, and evaluate good practices. Without these strategies, branch campuses can become “asylums,” protected places serving only a few, with no connection with the surrounding community and no wider impact or public benefit.

86. In practical terms, thinking about these issues will help a Minister of Higher Education or leading authorities in the host country conduct the necessary due diligence on a branch campus proposal. The first step of that due diligence is much like that of a normal commercial transaction: Is the vendor reliable, reputable, and recognized in the wider academic community? Is the vendor financially stable and able to sustain a major development program? Is the vendor experienced in cross-border programs? Does the vendor have competitors?

87. The second step is to look at the fit between the proposal and the objectives and sovereign needs of the nation. For example, does the proposal respond or contribute to the attainment of national development goals such as the improvement of dry land agricultural productivity or the widening of access to health services? Does it acknowledge language and cultural requirements associated with national identity? These are difficult questions as they touch on academic freedom and institutional independence, hallmarks of modern universities. But these principles are not in conflict with a nation’s right to guide and shape the direction of future economic and social development or its responsibility to protect its citizens through appropriate regulation such as academic accreditation and recognition of qualifications.

88. Nations and states around the world set different types of sovereign requirements or regulations. For example, some U.S. states have differential fees for out-of-state students and some set quotas on the number of “outsiders” who can attend public institutions or particular programs. Developing nations in the MENA region can reasonably set some sovereign requirements to maximize the benefits of their investments in higher education without intruding on the academic independence of partners. Box 2 highlights some examples of sovereign requirements identified in the Asia Pacific region.

Box 2. Sovereign Requirements for Cross-National Education in the Asia Pacific

- China requires foreign providers to establish links with domestic institutions to promote knowledge exchange, limits repatriation of excess revenues, and stipulates that boards must have local members.
- Singapore requires foreign institutions operating in cooperation with local providers to apply for government approval, supplying details of course content, the status of the foreign provider at home and the division of responsibilities between the foreign and local partners. Partnerships with local universities can only be created at the government's invitation (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2000).
- Malaysia requires foreign providers to follow a five-stage approval and review process, covering educational, business and legal requirements and stipulates the subjects that Malaysian citizens must pass in order to graduate, regardless of discipline (Kandasamy and Santhiram, 2000; McBurnie and Ziguras, 2001).
- Indonesia requires that cooperation should not be solely for revenue purposes, should benefit all parties and be in line with national and institutional priorities and "shall be prioritised in the fields in which graduates are especially required" (Republic of Indonesia, 2000).

89. The third step of due diligence is to look past the immediate creation of a program to the QA process. The aims of such a process are twofold:

1. to ensure that the integrity and standards of the academic programs are maintained over time; and
2. to ensure that the qualifications and credentials awarded have currency, meaning and value in the global labor market and are recognized by other academics.

90. The first aim is directed at the internal processes of the institution, its admission and progression standards, its academic integrity policies, its faculty promotion and retention policies, its course development and approval processes and its requirements for the award of degrees and diplomas. These are well documented and can be subject to peer review and external validation by agencies, like institutions and leaders in the relevant academic disciplines. These reviews are at the heart of many accreditation processes which recognize programs that meet the necessary standards and offer institutions advice on how to improve performance. These processes can be discipline-based, e.g., in engineering, or university-wide.

91. A regional approach to sharing expertise, experience, and good practice in these areas is cost-effective and would strengthen the higher education sector. There are various models around the world of successful cooperation, notably the regionally based U.S. accreditation programs and the Bologna Process.

92. The second aim of QA focuses on the qualifications that are obtained by successful study. How do they compare to the qualifications of other institutions preparing students in similar fields or for the same profession? The cross-regional recognition of qualifications has been an area of international cooperation for many years under UNESCO and other inter-governmental agencies. As population mobility increases and the trade in skills become more significant, the importance of cross-border recognition of qualifications also increases. Qualifications become passports to economic security, residency, social standing, further study, and a community of professional practice.

7. A Regional Approach to Accreditation

93. A regional approach to accreditation and recognition of qualifications requires a level of consensus on the goals and reference points to be used by the national agencies in charge of quality assessment and evaluation. This should not be approached by assembling all of the standards and indicators in use in the region or by gathering detailed descriptions of the evaluation/accreditation procedures relevant to and applied within each national system. Neither approach offers the necessary analysis of the relevance, utility, applicability, or transferability of standards or processes to different national settings. They fail to provide any information on the links between standards and procedures and the constraints and requirements of the national system. While assembling this information will provide knowledge on what exists, it will not produce an effective regional approach to QA (ENQA, 2005).

94. More progress can be made by identifying the values that underpin commonly accepted notions (like independence, transparency, and peer review) used across MENA countries. At times there will be differences in how these values are prioritized and expressed and these need to be examined systematically and thoughtfully to build mutual understandings and trust among agencies and hence make it easier to accept decisions of other parties about institutional accreditation and degree recognition. There have been some successes using such a process. For instance, QA agencies in Europe have delineated some key principles to shape their work together with an aim of recognizing each other's accreditation decisions. In summary, these principles are that:

- There will be regional standards for internal and external QA, and for external QA agencies;
- Regional QA agencies will be externally reviewed regularly;
- Regional agencies which meet the agreed standards will be identified in a publicly accessible register; and
- The register will be maintained by agencies acting together to maintain standards.

95. Such a public register assists consumers, employers, and students to identify professional and credible agencies, strengthens procedures for recognizing qualifications, and enhances the public standing and authority of QA agencies.

8. Principles for Accrediting Accreditation Bodies

96. It is easier to build trust between agencies when there are some common standards to assess the authenticity and integrity of an accreditation agency. The U.S. Department of Education has benchmarks to guide its recognition processes of the numerous national, regional, and programmatic accrediting agencies. The following principles, drawn from those benchmarks and from good administrative practice, could be the basis of a MENA framework for recognizing QA or to develop mutual recognition of agencies.

To be successful, an accreditation agency must follow the following core operating principles:

- The agency should be singular in purpose; i.e., involved only in QA and not in the design or delivery of educational programs;
- The agency should have sufficient intellectual and fiscal capacity; i.e., be solvent and appropriately staffed;
- The agency should be separate and independent, not subject to direction or control in accreditation decisions by state funding agencies;

- The agency should be not for profit;
- The agency should be accepted by peer agencies, the academic community, employers, and relevant professionals;
- The agency should encourage public participation and transparency in governance;
- The agency should maintain accurate and open records of accreditation decisions; and
- The agency should be experienced and recognized for its work in the region, discipline, or programs of study.

The status of current quality assurance structures in MENA countries is as follows:

- There are QA agencies in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Yemen, Sudan, and the UAE.
- The Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) has sixteen member countries, which already have, or are in the process of establishing, a QA agency.
- Most QA agencies are independent or semi-independent, and accredit programs and institutions.

97. QA is an important driver to improve the quality of tertiary education, and QA methods and systems are being revised worldwide to be more efficient in serving students, institutions, and governments. One important trend is the need to measure tertiary learning outcomes in meaningful ways. In addition to serving domestic purposes, recognition of degrees obtained abroad or through foreign institutions operating in the home country is critical to promote student mobility as well as successful return of students who go abroad.

98. To make the most of cross-border tertiary education, international and/or mutual recognition of diplomas is critical, as it can facilitate student mobility and allow students with foreign qualifications to work in their home country or, more generally, in the international labor market. To promote student mobility and recognition both in the home and host country, MENA countries could engage in a regional and a cross-regional dialogue to promote mutual recognition of diplomas, and increase its engagement in the international convergence of QA practices. More information sharing could facilitate the recognition of domestic degrees and the understanding of foreign qualifications in general.

9. Maximizing the Returns from Cross-border Education

99. Overall, cross-border tertiary education can assist developing countries in strengthening their higher education systems and fostering economic development. Cross-border education can expand domestic access to post-secondary education, through outbound student mobility and inbound program and institution mobility. Student and faculty mobility builds international networks, which underpin national innovation and research and development systems. Partnerships between local and foreign universities through program and institution mobility can improve the quality of domestic education services.

100. MENA countries choosing to use cross-border tertiary education to build capacity and complement domestic provision face several policy challenges. To benefit from cross-border education, countries should create a framework that:

- Facilitates participation in cross-border education and co-operation between foreign and domestic tertiary education institutions;
- Sets clear goals and targets for the different forms of internationalization linked with the development needs of the nation;

- Develops sound QA principles and processes to ensure that cross-border education meets the needs of students and is relevant to meet national goals and labor market needs;
- Establishes policies and procedures for ease of movement of students, faculty, and skilled labor, including visa and immigration policies;
- Sets goals for intra-regional student mobility and for student and faculty flows into the region through accreditation, student and faculty exchange, hiring incentives, and research infrastructure, including competitive research grants and a clear policy on the “export of educational services and private investment in higher education”;
- Aligns regional and international agencies to promote mutual recognition of degrees and credit transfer; and
- Fosters innovation and research and development capacity to adapt and respond to a continuously evolving technology-driven environment.

10. A Basis for National and Regional Dialogue

101. The observations, data and examples set out here can be used as a basis for debate, discussion, and analysis with and between MENA nations.

102. Regional cooperation could begin with shared efforts to understand the complex interactions between student mobility, domestic higher education, and the economic and social development priorities of the MENA countries. Topics of mutual interest include a better understanding of student flows and the programs they study in other countries. This would provide some insights into areas of under-provision in the region and assist in labor market forecasting. Joint work on the relative successes of students studying abroad, in the region, in branch campuses, and in national institutions, including measures such as time to first job on graduation and relative earnings, would also have policy relevance, as would cross-national work on longer term destinations of skilled citizens, and the effectiveness of different incentives to return to the home country. An illustrative research agenda is presented in box 3.

Box 3. An Illustrative Research Agenda for MENA Student and Labor Mobility

1. What programs do MENA students take abroad and why?
2. What are the ratios of outward- and inward-bound students to the base population in each MENA country?
3. What are the return rates of overseas students at 5, 10 and 15 years?
4. What proportion of MENA students self-finance their international study?
5. What role are branch campuses playing in National Higher Education Strategies?
6. What are the regional trends in university transformation, and what is driving them?
7. What are labor market destinations, and insertion rates of domestic and cross-border graduates?
8. To what extent is there conversion towards QA standards and qualifications?
9. What are the common elements in regional immigration policies on skilled migration?
10. How effective are policies and programs facilitating movement of skilled people between nations for finite periods?

103. The outcomes of such work can frame and inform a dialogue between ministries, governments, institutions, and stakeholders about the strategic directions for skill formation and the development of higher education within individual countries. They can promote systematic examination of different scenarios for the creation and application of human capital and provide opportunities for participation in policy formation for a wide range of constituencies. Similar suggestions were made in the World Bank

(2009) report on longer term perspectives on labor and job mobility in the MENA region, which recommended a three stage process to assist the smooth integration of the region to the globalized skill market. Those steps would involve improving basic demographic and labor force projections and scenario building around the policy options in education, migration and social protection; and would be open to national governments and intra- and inter-regional cooperation between agencies.

104. The same observations, data, and examples supplemented by the outcomes of national discussions can inform an intra-regional discussion between principals (i.e., ministers, senior officials and institutional leaders) on the opportunities and benefits of regional cooperation on matters of common interest in the area of cross-border education and the mobility of highly skilled people. There are clearly synergies and cost savings from sharing expertise, experience, and development work in areas such as recognition of qualifications, QA, diversification of programs, and the due diligence appropriate for cross-border provision.

Key Topics for Regional Policy Options

- Efforts to develop a regional approach for accreditation and setting up qualifications framework need to be strengthened.
- The above needs to be coupled with a mutual recognition of qualifications between home and host countries.
- Joint research on building better pathways for student and skilled labor mobility will strengthen countries' individual capacities.

Annex 1. MENA countries exporting students, by country

| Country of origin | 2000 | | | 2004 | | | 2008 | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| | Number of mobile students | Rate of mobile students (%) | Share (%) in total MENA mobile students | Number of mobile students | Rate of mobile students (%) | Share (%) in total MENA mobile students | Number of mobile students | Rate of mobile students (%) | Share (%) in total MENA mobile students |
| Algeria | 15 823 | 3.2* | 11.1 | 24 128 | 3.4 | 12.6 | 21 457 | 2.2* | 9.7 |
| Djibouti | 1 071 | - | 0.7 | 1 794 | - | 0.9 | 1 265 | - | 0.6 |
| Egypt | 5 737 | 0.3* | 4.0 | 6 831 | 0.3 | 3.6 | 8 714 | 0.4 | 4.0 |
| Libya | 1 417 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 3 074 | 0.8* | 1.6 | 2 862 | - | 1.3 |
| Morocco | 41 575 | 15.0 | 29.1 | 47 486 | 13.8 | 24.7 | 41 632 | 10.4 | 18.9 |
| Sudan | 2 749 | 1.3 | 1.9 | 2 763 | - | 1.4 | 2 072 | - | 0.9 |
| Tunisia | 9 110 | 5.1 | 6.4 | 13 875 | 4.8 | 7.2 | 18 152 | 5.2 | 8.2 |
| Bahrain | 1 225 | - | 0.9 | 2 300 | - | 1.2 | 2 997 | - | 1.4 |
| Iran | 16 242 | 1.2 | 11.4 | 18 451 | 0.9 | 9.6 | 23 500 | 0.7 | 10.7 |
| Iraq | 2 637 | 0.9 | 1.8 | 2 087 | 0.5 | 1.1 | 5 723 | - | 2.6 |
| Jordan | 5 627 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 6 976 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 9 004 | 3.5 | 4.1 |
| Kuwait | 4 268 | 13.3* | 3.0 | 5 698 | 15.5 | 3.0 | 6 570 | - | 3.0 |
| Lebanon | 6 499 | 5.6 | 4.5 | 11 684 | 7.6 | 6.1 | 13 181 | 6.7 | 6.0 |
| Oman | 3 056 | 9.3* | 2.1 | 5 368 | 12.9 | 2.8 | 4 781 | 7.6 | 2.2 |
| Palestine | 5 044 | 7.1 | 3.5 | 7 037 | 5.8 | 3.7 | 9 596 | 5.3 | 4.4 |
| Qatar | 861 | 11.0* | 0.6 | 1 091 | 11.7 | 0.6 | 1 724 | 13.7 | 0.8 |
| Saudi A. | 7 904 | 2.0 | 5.5 | 9 487 | 1.7 | 4.9 | 20 802 | 2.9 | 9.4 |
| Syria | 5 441 | - | 3.8 | 10 536 | - | 5.5 | 14 516 | - | 6.6 |
| UAE | 3 974 | 9.1 | 2.8 | 4 701 | 6.6* | 2.4 | 5 968 | 7.3* | 2.7 |
| Yemen | 2 613 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 6 734 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 5 908 | 2.5* | 2.7 |
| ME | 65 391 | - | 45.8 | 92 150 | - | 48.0 | 124 270 | - | 56.4 |
| NA | 77 482 | - | 54.2 | 99 951 | - | 52.0 | 96 154 | - | 43.6 |
| MENA | 142 873 | - | 100.0 | 192 101 | - | 100.0 | 220 430 | - | 100.0 |

Source: UIS data; Authors' calculations.

*Authors' estimation of tertiary enrolment

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