



The Role of Universities in Localizing Jobs in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The study deals with the role of universities in localizing jobs by providing high-quality educational and training services, and linking them to the needs of the labor market, to enhance the ability of graduates to compete locally and achieve the Kingdom's 2030 vision, by identifying global models of universities' contribution to localizing jobs, then reaching an effective employment system between: universities, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission (the Saudi Qualifications Framework), and the Human Resources Development Fund (Hadaaf), and integrating them into the university's graduate office, focusing on providing job opportunities, develop graduates, and train them according to the needs of the labor market. The study used the descriptive approach, by reviewing and analyzing the theoretical literature, to achieve the objectives of the study, data were collected using the focus group method, then the experts' method. The study found that one of the most important global models for the contribution of educational and training institutions to localizing jobs are: Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), then, the study experts were contacted to joint visions in building a project for the role of universities in localizing jobs, and its applicability in the Saudi environment.

Keywords: Higher Education; Labour Market; Human Resources; Human Capital; Universities.

Introduction

The Saudi Vision 2030 (SV2030) emphasizes education as an influential factor in supporting the flourishing economy, and its role in building the individual, family and society, it also promotes the concepts of investment in the human element as the most important resource for nations, by developing their skills, supporting their capabilities, and adopting the philosophy of linking education with the labor market. The vision emphasizes continuing to invest in education, training and providing our children with the knowledge and skills necessary for future jobs and strengthening efforts to align the outputs of the educational system with the needs of the labor market (Roya, 2016: 36). Several studies confirm the existence of an urgent need to harmonize educational outcomes with the needs of the labor market, in various Gulf countries and the Arab world (Oman Ministry of Higher

Education, 2016; Al-Dalou, 2017, Al-Ajami, and Al-Othman, 2012; Issa, 2017). The report of the UNESCO study on financing education in the Arab countries confirmed that these countries have generally invested in free public education and have achieved relatively good results, but the time has come to introduce changes at the policy level, to move from quantitative education to education focused on quality, and this pressure comes in particular from the labor market, as it seems that education in general does not prepare people conductively to enter the labor market successfully and productively. (UNESCO, 2018: 13). When recruiting new employees, employers focus on a variety of skills that most jobs need, and these skills are acquired and can be trained, the most important of them are the ability to deal with work pressures, dealing and communicating with others, passion for work, motivation, commitment, the ability to work independently, and time management (Oman Ministry of Higher Education, 2016).

The role of most Arab universities is limited to being teaching institutions only, and therefore they do not produce the necessary specific skills required in the labor market and the business community (UNESCO, 2018:16). In the Saudi work environment, linking education and jobs requires non-traditional work that accommodates the nature of Saudi society, the educational system, as well as the conditions of the labor market in it, which has resisted many serious attempts to localize jobs, despite the large economic market size. The vision also emphasizes the commitment to an education that contributes to advancing the economy as it seeks to bridge the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the labor market, the development of public education and directing students towards appropriate career options, and the flexibility in moving between different educational paths (Ruya, 2016: 40). Studies indicate the need for new solutions and an innovative strategic vision and development plan that supports the efforts of governments in developing policies for nationalizing jobs that are more effective. This is the direction to which the vision leads us, by building innovative work systems that contribute to achieving its goals in an integrated, non-traditional, efficient and effective manner.

Problem of the study

Unemployment is one of the major challenges facing any society, because of its negative impact on development, building and progressing societies, and the Kingdom's 2030 vision has given it attention and follow-up, because of its negative effects on comprehensive development, community building, and the national economy, and a direct reflection on living standards. One of the goals of the vision is to reduce the unemployment rate from 11.6% to 7% (Roya, 2016: 39). The labor system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia requires the Ministry of Labor and Social Development to provide employment offices, in suitable and easily accessible places, in most parts of the Kingdom, to suit workers as well as employers (Al-Fawzan, 2012: p. 16).

Unemployment is a major challenge, especially for the accumulated distortions in the Saudi labor market, the General Authority for Statistics has published labor market statistics in

the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the fourth quarter of 2021 and provides comprehensive data from the quarterly surveys that the authority conducts on the workforce, and from the records of the labor market stakeholders. (The Ministry of Labor and Social Development, the Ministry of Civil Service, the General Organization for Social Insurance, the Human Resources Development Fund, and the National Information Center).The results showed that the unemployment rate for Saudis in the fourth quarter of 2021 was: (12.6%), while it was in the third quarter of the same year (14.9%), and they showed that the unemployment rate for Saudi women was (20.2%), while in the previous quarter, it was (24.6%), and the unemployment rate for Saudi males was (7.1%) compared to (7.9%) in the previous quarter (General Authority for Statistics, 2021).These percentages illustrate the need for a real treatment of the unemployment problem, and work to achieve the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which clarifies the strategic objectives document and the vision realization programs, as the second axis of the vision (a prosperous economy) includes two general strategic objectives of the first level, which are: development and diversification of the economy, and increasing employment rates), and the second goal includes four sub-goals of the second level, including:(Developing human capital in line with the needs of the labor market, and providing job opportunities for all), it includes a set of detailed objectives from the third level, which clarify the need for an effective employment system that leads efforts towards achieving them (Strategic Objectives, 2016: 27).The outputs of the educational system are a major factor affecting the future conditions of the labor market, especially the extent of its ability to keep pace with developments in economic activity and its job needs (Al-Ajmi and Al-Othman, 2012: 12).Therefore, education in the Kingdom's Vision 2030 seeks to build qualified human resources that meet the requirements of the labor market. Based on this approach, the close relationship between universities and the agencies concerned with employment becomes clear, and the extent of the need to activate a real employment system that adopts this relationship and enhances its efficiency and effectiveness.

Research Questions

- 1- What are the global models for the contribution of universities to localizing jobs?
- 2- What is the proposed scenario for activating the role of universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in localizing jobs?

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Identifying global models for the contribution of educational and training institutions to localizing jobs.
2. Reaching a proposed scenario to activate the role of universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in localizing jobs.

Significance of the study

1. One of the objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 is to reduce the unemployment rate from 11.6% to 7%, therefore, the study presents a proposed vision that contributes to addressing the problem of unemployment and working to achieve this goal.
2. The study emphasizes the importance of developing human resources in society efficiently and effectively, by developing their skills, supporting their capabilities, and adopting the philosophy of linking education to the labor market, through (learn to work) stipulated in the Kingdom's 2030 vision.
3. The study contributes to activate efforts to invest in the capabilities available in universities, the Education and Training Evaluation Authority (National Qualifications Framework), and the Human Resources Development Fund (Goal), towards nationalizing jobs.
4. The study contributes to qualifying graduates according to the needs of the labor market by supporting the development of training curricula and programs and following up on meeting their training needs to contribute to their future career development.

Limitations of the study

This study was limited to suggesting a vision in which: Universities, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, and the Human Resources Development Fund (Hadaf) contribute, and integrated roles through establishing “centers for training and employment” within universities, and integrating them with the Graduates Office within universities to be a link between Graduates and the labor market, and focuses on providing job opportunities for graduates, it also provides the required feedback to support the development of curricula to meet the needs of the accelerating labor market, to work on qualifying graduates according to the needs of the labor market, and to follow up on meeting their training needs to contribute to their future career development.

Study Methodology

The study used the descriptive analytical method, to reach conclusions that help in understanding reality, by describing what exists, as well as defining the nature of the prevailing conditions, practices and trends (Obaidat, Abdel Haq, & Adas, 2020: 245). The study used focus groups, where (4) experts participated in the first focus group, in order to take their opinion of the research idea, and its applicability in the Saudi environment, and then take their opinion on the proposed content of the experts' questionnaire. In the second focus group, (4) experts from the private and public sectors participated, in order to take their opinion on the idea of the proposed vision, its components, and its applicability in the Saudi environment, and then take their opinion on the proposed content of the experts' questionnaire.

Then the researcher used the method of experts, by correspondence with about (80) experts, 32 of them responded, and they were presented with a questionnaire of experts, they participated in defining global models for the contribution of educational and training

institutions to the localization of jobs, and their opinions were taken on the applicability of the proposed concept to the Saudi environment, as well as their developmental observations on it.

Study Tools

1. Focus groups: in order to take their opinions on the idea of the proposed scenario, and its applicability in the Saudi environment, and then take their opinions on the proposed content of the expert questionnaire.
2. Experts' Questionnaire: It was built to take their developmental opinions and observations, to reach common visions to answer the study questions, and to judge the proposed scenario that was presented to them in its initial form, by judging its applicability in the Saudi environment, and adopting their development proposals on it.

Sample of the Study

Due to the nature and objectives of the study, the researcher used the purposive sampling by selecting a group of experts, who were selected, according to the following criteria: To have leadership experiences and a variety of experiences, focus on those who have work experience in the entities participating in building the proposed system, namely: universities, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, and the Human Resources Development center.

Study Model

Education and Training

Education is a lofty message that enables acquiring knowledge, supporting students at various levels, and actively contributing to their development in their various personal aspects, therefore, the teaching profession is one of the most prestigious professions in societies, simply it contributes effectively to the comprehensive development of society as a whole, with all its members and components, as well as in other professions. Education is not an automatic performance practiced by any individual, and it is more than a transfer or delivery of information, it is one of the most prestigious professions in society, which needs specialized preparation, it is a profession that has principles, rules and scientific theories, and a lofty message with high morals (Assaf, Al-Agha, 2014: 37).

The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary defines training as: "forming according to direction and discipline, or exercising: to teach by making it fit, qualified, or perfect" (Doyle, 2006: 14). Training is one of the most important axes of work development, as it can provide workers with the skills necessary to improve the performance of their work and raise the general level of their workplaces, training is importance in financial rationalization, good time management, and not wasting effort. (Jamil, 2015: 167). As a result of the importance of training, and its impact on human resource development, and the increased interest in investing in human capital, countries and their governmental

institutions, as well as profit and non-profit organizations, have taken an interest in it. For example, organizations in the United States spend billions on training every year. Training and development activities give organizations the ability to adapt, compete, excel, innovate, produce, and achieve their goals, these organizations understand that training helps them maintain their competitive edge by constantly educating their workforce, they know that investing in their employees leads to great results (Salas, et al., 2012:74).

Localizing Jobs

The Labor Law issued by Royal Decree No.: (M/51) dated 27/9/2005, amended by Royal Decree No.: (M/24) dated 10/10/2013, and amended by Royal Decree No.: (M/46) dated 25/3/2015, that the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, in Article Twenty-Second (22), provide units for employment free of charge in the appropriate places for employers and workers, to do the following:

1. Helping workers to get suitable jobs, helping business owners in finding the right workers.
2. Gathering and analyzing the necessary information about the labor market and its development to be accessible to the various public and private institutions concerned with economic and social planning affairs.
3. Providing advice and assistance to job seekers regarding vocational training or retraining necessary to obtain vacancies (Ministry of Labor, 2015: p. 19).

Employment in the Kingdom's Vision 2030

The vision stipulates continuing to invest in education and training, providing our children with the knowledge and skills necessary for future jobs, and strengthening efforts to harmonize the outputs of the educational system with the needs of the labor market, it also stresses that education contributes to advancing the economy as it seeks to bridge the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the labor market. It also emphasizes the development of public education and directs students towards the available career and professional options, one of its goals is to reduce the unemployment rate from 11.6% to 7% (Vision, 2016: 36-40). This percentage shows the need for a real solution to the unemployment problem, and to work towards achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

Literature Review

The study of Issa, Muhammad (2017), aimed at developing the relationship of Arab labor markets with higher education institutions in the light of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The study dealt with the outstanding issue between higher education and labor markets, the study reached the following results: It is possible to diagnose the relationship and describe the treatment for the imbalance between its two ends, by emphasizing the importance of aligning the outputs of the educational system with the needs of the labor market. And taking into consideration the requirements of the comprehensive development of the Arab economies, in order to direct the outputs of the

educational system to the development of the most productive sectors capable of attracting different employment, especially qualified and graduated workers from a good educational-training system. The study emphasizes the importance of harmonizing the outcomes of the educational system, especially in the field of higher education, and the needs of the labor market. Study of the Oman Ministry of Higher Education (2016), the study aimed to identify the trends of employers in employing graduates in the private sector, the study deals with a periodic monitoring process for the labor market needs of graduates in the Sultanate of Oman, and the extent to which their specializations, qualifications and abilities are in line with the needs and requirements of the labor market. The study reached the following results:

The most used methods in recruitment are through government agencies and the publication of advertisements in newspapers (43%) for each. Employment fairs are one of the methods least used by executives and most used by graduates. A large percentage of private sector institutions (56.5%) do not use social networking websites to advertise vacancies. As well as academic qualifications are the most important criterion used to evaluate the resumes of private sector institutions when hiring graduates, followed by employment history, as (84.8%) of officials consider it a basic criterion. The most important criterion for employing a graduate in private sector institutions is work experience, as (61.3%) of officials consider it a basic criterion. The participating employers were asked to identify the three most missing skills for graduates working in their institutions. The order of skills was from the most lacking to least according to the opinion of the employers: Proficiency in the spoken and written English language (43.3%), followed by the skills of the ability to deal with work pressures (37.5%), the skills of dealing and communicating with others (36.5% of the knowledgeable staff), and the skills of working and communicating with others (36.5%). / Motivation / commitment / behavioral attitudes (32.5%), and then the ability to work independently and manage time (31.5%). It was interesting that the critical thinking skills / technical skills, as well as the practical knowledge of the specialization came in the sixth and eighth place, respectively. Jha, Sumi., Bhattacharyya, SomSekhar., & Fernandes, Christo (2016), conducted a study aimed to develop a model by creating a strategic integration relationship between management development, human resources, training, leadership. A structured questionnaire was distributed to (402) managers of manufacturing organizations in India, working in both public and private sector companies. The study reached the following results: The external variables were administrative development, human resources and training, while the extraneous variables were leadership, and the organizational structure, and the internal variable was: strategic integration. And that the integration of administrative development and human resources, with training, helps to achieve strategic integration.

Discussing Previous Studies

By reviewing previous studies, it was found that there is a relationship between each of them with this study, as well as there are aspects that are unique to it. Previous studies reported to the researcher that they helped him in defining the study's problem and determining its objectives and questions, as well as helping him to prepare the study's

questionnaire. By observing some of the difficulties that educational and training institutions face in contributing to the nationalization of jobs, as in UNESCO (2018), Issa (2017), Oman Ministry of Higher Education (2016), as well as in Building the proposed system and its components, through the study of Aldalo (2017), the study of Jha, Sumi., Bhattacharyya, SomSekhar, & Fernandes, Christo (2016), and the working paper of Al-Ajami, Sanad, and Al-Othman, Shehab. (2012). The present study is distinguished by the fact that it came out with a proposed vision for the localization jobs, as well as its use of focus groups, as one of the study tools.

Results and Discussion of the Study

First Question: What are the global models for the contribution of educational and training institutions to localizing jobs?

This question was answered by asking the study experts, to judge the answer mechanism that took place through the theoretical framework, taking advantage of the results of the focus group meeting, by selecting a group of international universities, according to the QS World University Rankings, published by Quacquarelli Symonds, and choosing the employability rating for universities, which produce the most employable graduates, and then reviewing the experience of universities that achieved the first three ranks, namely: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University and University of California, Los Angeles.

It turns out that experts in general have confidence in this mechanism, as (41.9%) of the study experts strongly agreed with it, while (45.2%) of them agreed with it, and (9.7%) of them chose neutrality, and did not agree with it (3.2%) of them, and none of them chose to disagree at all. A number of study experts made developmental observations on them, which were taken into account, and accordingly the answer was given as follows: The experiences were previously reviewed in detail in the theoretical framework, and the following benefit from them:

1. It is clear from the experiences reviewed that all universities integrate into the local labor market, and lead it as well, as for-profit universities, and despite the presence of Saudi local experiences of government universities that have distinguished experiences in entering the market and competing in it through technical valleys, business support, activating the profitable operation of some university facilities, and investing chairs Research centers, studies and research centers, which contributed to the advancement of its international classification, such as King Saud University, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, King Abdulaziz University, Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University, and others. But what has been reviewed represents pioneering and unconventional experiences in effectively leading the local economy in the private sector.
2. Employers' confidence in the outputs of these universities has a significant impact on the localization of jobs, which contributed to bridging the gap between them and

employers and activating their participation in developing curricula and training graduates.

3. These universities combined their roles as an educational and research agency, as well as an employer, which contributed to the development of programs suitable for the labor market.
4. The great diversity within the university campus, the availability of a distinctive and unique lifestyle, and the support of students with activities and events was clearly reflected in the quality of the outputs.
5. The status of the universities that were reviewed shows the need of our educational authorities for a mechanism to help them bridge the gap between them and the local labor market.

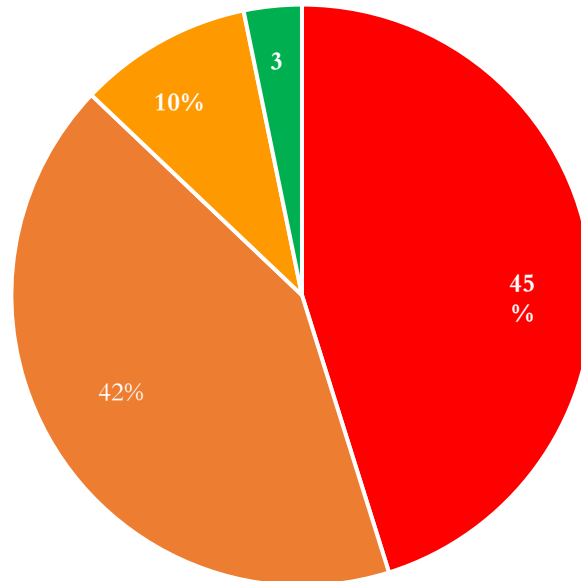


Figure 1. Experts Observations

Second Question:What is the proposed scenario for activating the role of universities in Saudi Arabia in localizing jobs?

This question was answered by asking the study experts to judge the applicability of the proposed scenario to the Saudi environment, and their developmental observations on it, which the researcher presented to them in its initial form, after benefiting from the results of the focus group meeting.It has become clear that experts in general have faith in the importance of having an employment system concerned with localizing jobs, and that

universities in Saudi Arabia embrace them. (18.8%) of the study experts agreed on the applicability of the proposed scenario to be applied in the Saudi environment to a very high degree. While (53.1%) of them see it as highly applicable, and (28.1%) of them see it as moderately applicable. While none of them chose the degree of poor application or the degree of non-applicable, (87%) of the study experts provided developmental observations on it that were taken into account in order to reach common visions in building the suggested scenarios as follows:

The Proposed Vision to Activate the Role of Universities in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Localization Jobs:

Starting Points

The Kingdom's Vision 2030, the National Transformation Program 2020, and the development of human resources.

Principles

Intellectual (philosophical) principles: Integration is a societal and developmental demand, which Islamic thought urges.

Economic principles: rational investment in human capital and activating the role of human resources in supporting the national economy.

Employment principle: activating the role of universities in localization jobs and reducing the unemployment rate.

Objectives

1. Contributing to addressing the problem of unemployment by providing job opportunities for graduates.
2. Rational investment in the capabilities available in universities, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, and the Human Resources Development Fund, towards the localization jobs.
3. Developing human resources in society efficiently and effectively and linking them to the labor market.
4. Qualifying graduates according to the needs of the labor market by supporting the development of curricula and following up on meeting their training needs to contribute to their future professional growth.

Requirements

- A partnership contract between universities, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, and the Human Resources Development Fund.

- Setting “qualifications and employment centers” within universities, and merging them with the graduates’ office to become a link between the graduate and the labor market, focusing on:
 - Providing job opportunities for graduates.
 - Providing the required feedback to support the development of curricula to meet the needs of the labor market.
 - Work to qualify graduates according to the needs of the labor market.
 - Continue to meet the graduates' training needs to contribute to their future career growth.

Roles

Universities:

- Providing the financial capabilities necessary to Setting the qualifications and employment centers and merging them with the Alumni Office.
- Providing the necessary human capabilities from faculty members, experts and consultants to train graduates, develop job skills for those involved in the labor market, and job seekers, and provide them with professional advice.

- Human Resources Development Fund (Centers for training and Employment): They are specialized employment centers that provide training and employment services for job seekers, including guidance, counseling, and training courses through an action plan aimed at raising the capabilities and readiness of the job seeker and bringing the distance between him and the appropriate job opportunity. It serves employers by providing them with advice on the localization of jobs (Hadaf, 2019).

- Education and Training Evaluation Commission (the Saudi Qualifications Framework): achieving an effective link between education and training outputs and the labor market.

Criteria

- Contribution indicators to provide job opportunities for graduates.
- Contribute to achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 by reducing the unemployment rate from 11.6% to 7%.
- Feedback from the beneficiaries of the services of the newly created centers (graduates, employers).

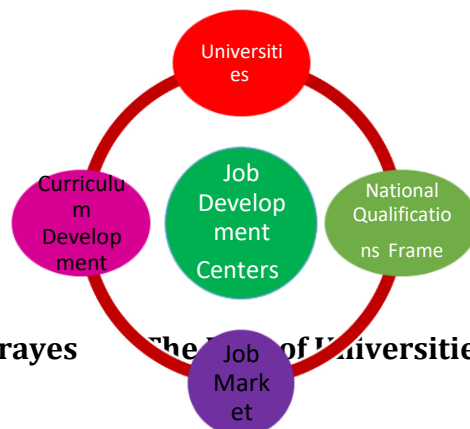


Figure 2. The Proposed Vision for Activating Universities Roles Saudi Arabia for Job Localization

Expert Suggestions

There is a set of individual comments by some experts on the applicability of the system, including:

- Adding the value basis, which is represented in work ethics and values, and adding the goal of raising the external efficiency of the outputs of universities, the Institute of Management and technical colleges.
- Building a system to measure the performance of educational and training halls in localization and publish its results.
- It is better to link through the higher councils (the Economic Council...) in order to become more effective.
- Clarify the roles accurately between the concerned authorities, coordinate between them in implementation, and involve all relevant authorities in developing the plan.

Expert Feedback

There is a set of individual development notes by some experts, including:

- SWOT analysis is very necessary for this type of studies.
- Add the following: The premise: the reputation of universities and colleges and the improvement of classification. The fundamentals of the system: the social basis, improving the quality of life and reducing the unemployment rate. The roles of the system: Universities and colleges provide what supports the graduate, such as career guidance and career day with the participation of employers. Criteria: measure the satisfaction of graduates and measure the satisfaction of the employees and related parties.
- Adding a goal related to the role of centers in the vocational training of some specializations and according to their functional needs and providing the opportunity for graduates in transformational training.

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