



Three highlights from the 2022 QS Higher Ed Summit: Middle East and Africa

Description

What lessons can higher education institutions take away from the inspiring speakers at this year's [QS Higher Ed Summit: Middle East and Africa](#)?

Across [March 1-3 2022](#), industry leaders met, both in-person and virtually, to discuss 'Innovation enabling environments: Redefining education in the Middle East and Africa'.

Below are three nuggets of wisdom shared by inspiring speakers at the event:

'Teaching' and 'delivering content' are vastly different actions

Across the globe, COVID-19 is steadily transitioning from being an immediate and unknown threat, to a familiar reality that we must learn to live alongside.

For many higher education institutions, the emergency measures that were taken to simply function during the coronavirus pandemic are no longer absolute necessities, and more intentional steps can now be taken to step away from 'survival mode' and towards a better future.

In the 'Education in an uncertain world' panel discussion, speakers reflected on the lessons learnt throughout the coronavirus pandemic and discussed the way higher education institutions can use these learnings to improve their offering going forwards.

There needs to be a sharper focus on teaching and not 'delivering content', said Cameron Mirza, Chief of Party for IREX, an international NGO specialising in international development and education.

Referring to learning across all education levels in the Arab world, Mirza discussed how this reflective, post-coronavirus pandemic period was an opportunity to change the way teaching is perceived in the region, which could not be done without policy changes that take seriously the issues of teacher wellbeing, training and pay as soon as early-years education.

He continued: "Moving forwards, there needs to be a shift away from didactic teaching if we really want to achieve the long-term outcomes regarding employment and innovation, moving towards a more balanced and active blended learning approach, and having teachers with the skill sets to teach in a multi-modal setting and an overhaul, not just of teaching, but of the assessment of students moving away from a traditional rote-based learning education system."

Collaboration between university and industry must happen sooner rather than later

One of the most critical roles of a higher education institution is to prepare its students for employment not only providing them with suitable skills but with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their career pathway.

However, there is often a knowledge gap seen between what a graduate has been taught about an industry and how that industry is operating at the time the student enters the graduate employment market.

According to Rola Abu Manneh, Chief Executive Officer of Standard Chartered Bank UAE, in order to make the transition from university to work smoother for the student this gap must be closed, which requires universities to collaborate with industry leaders much earlier on in the student's journey and remain in close partnership throughout.

"Academia has a long-term vision and industry has a short to medium term vision, and this is where we really don't meet," said Manneh during the "Bridging the industry academic gap" panel.

She continued: "Typically, industries will sometimes change their strategy, change their direction, given what is happening around them. We have seen this if we take the logistics industry, or aviation, or transportation all of them have really changed their direction a lot with COVID-19, while their core remains the same. Banking has also changed because, for us, the focus is now digital, sustainability, ESG [Environmental Social Governance] but how many from universities and academia would know these industry changes? this is where we see the gap."

Universities must therefore make the connection with industries much sooner than when a student is ready to make decisions about their future, which typically happens at a career fair. This is a critical step in helping industries and universities to better understand each other

Futureproofing blended learning environments start with the teacher

Accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic, blended learning – a pedagogical approach that combines both in-person and online teaching – is rapidly becoming the norm in many universities across the globe.

While blended learning relies more heavily on digital and online tools than traditional in-person teaching methods, it is critical that the focus remains on developing the necessary skills of the teacher or instructor.

“Good teachers will always be essential to effective learning,” said Charles R. Graham, Professor at Brigham Young University.

Speaking at the “Futureproof learning environment” panel, he said: “There is a lot of talk nowadays about artificial intelligence and adaptive learning, and while these are really important, they will not replace good teachers but will augment those teachers’ abilities. This means that teacher professional development should be a very important part of any overall strategy for futureproofing our education.”

According to Professor Graham, the most critical skills required of a teacher who is conducting blended learning are online integration, data practices, personalisation and online interaction – resting on a foundation of disposition and technology skills.

It is instructor competency, combined with student and institution readiness, that will ensure blended learning remains an effective pedagogical approach moving forwards.

To hear more from industry leaders on the topic of “Innovation enabling environments: Redefining education in the Middle East and Africa”, please register for [QS MAPLE 2022](#) where you can access all event sessions on-demand.