



Population Policies and Migration Department
League of Arab States

Arab Youth: Education, Employment and Unemployment

- Study about Developing Education System aiming at Youth Empowerment in the Arab region: Challenges and future prospective.
- Study about Employment and Unemployment.

Executive Summary

This study is a major activity of the project on " Empowerment and Participation of Young People in Population and Development Strategies in the Arab Region." implemented by the Population Policy & Migration Department/ Social Division of the League of Arab States.



Developing Education System aiming at Youth Empowerment in the Arab region: Challenges and future prospective

Executive Summary

Background

This study is one of the important outputs of the project «Arab youth Empowerment» implemented by the Population Policy and Migration Department (PPMD)–Social Sector in the League of Arab states (LAS) in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

This study aims at developing a group of principles and strategies for youth empowerment through education in order to attain Arab youth ambitions by investing their potentials and capabilities. The current challenges and opportunities are diagnosed to design appropriate educational plans that overcome shortfalls and maximize benefits.

The study comprises three main sections:-

- Introduction of the main concepts addressed in the study.
- Reviewing the status of youth education through identifying the achievements and exploring the main challenges.
- Presentation of some key education principles and strategies for youth empowerment.

Main indicators presented in the study

- In 1999-2000, one third of the children in the age of formal primary education did not attend schools.
- Although the number of illiterates declined relatively, the efforts to eradicate illiteracy succeeded to decrease the number of illiterates only by 7000 persons during the period 1990-2000.
- The Arab educational system failed to empower 13 Million youth (15-24) to attain the minimum educational level, so they become illiterates.
- In 1999–2000, enrolled youth in the secondary stage did not exceed 54%.
- In 2002, total enrollment rates in Arab universities did not exceed 22% for male, 17% for female out of the total number of youth in the age group (18-24).
- The rate of young people holding university degrees is low compared to the international rates, out of which female rates do not exceed 5% compared to 8% of their male peers in 1995.
- Female university specialization in the Arab region reflects cultural biases as the majority of girls tend to study pedagogy, arts, human sciences, nursery and housekeeping. The number of girls who are enrolled in natural sciences, engineering, computer science, and medicine still very low.
- Despite the disparity among Arab countries, still the Arab region is the least region coping with the communication technology and information acquisition.
- Education strategies, pedagogic planning and the development of educational curricula are processed in isolation from the socio economic strategies and the priorities of development and

production, resulting in considerable surplus in qualified calibers in certain fields and the shortage of necessary calibers in other fields. This led to the problem of unemployment of educated persons.

- Arab countries focused during the past years on expanding education opportunities without considering the quality of the education processes and services. Therefore, the reform of the education quality became a critical and major challenge facing the Arab countries.
- Poor young people and Bedouins ranked very low in most of the Arab universities whereas rich students occupy the majority of available places at Arab universities.
- The education system is based on memorization instead of critical thinking. Students are destined for factual recall and memorization rather than liberal thinking and critical analysis.
- Educational curricula keep the student away from the current social conditions and isolate him from active interaction with his surroundings.
- Authoritative relationship dominates the relationship between teacher and student. In light of this, teachers expect obedience, submissiveness and full acceptance from their students.
- Arab communities are indulged into the culture of silence and the right of holding absolute truth, which are inherently instill to the educational system through patterns of ready responses and prepared justifications transmitted to students through family, school, political authority, media, and political parties, leading to inertia and the dearth of creativity.
- Education works against the concept of empowering Arab youth through promoting passiveness, inability, submissiveness and obedience inside them and oblige them to focus on passing examination and attaining high degrees.
- To achieve the objectives of youth empowerment in the Arab region, it is important to ensure that the decision making is shared by all actors in the society. The considerable potentials of the civil society sector should be used sufficiently to help the government implementing policies and programs related to youth empowerment and education.
- Education reform aiming at youth empowerment entails the formulation of an integrated reform perspective through projects to be implemented by the community in line with comprehensive vision linking the political reform to economic and education reform.

Changes in the teaching methods must be realized by considering the learner as the cornerstone of the educational process and developing his critical analytical skills and his sense of responsibility. Education and learning should be based on the principle of «The search for Knowledge» by making teaching and learning a collective process including students and teachers as well.

The participation of civil society ensures top bottom approach for decision making. Also, it prevents that development serves privileged categories and minimizes discrepancies between urban and rural areas or male and females.



Arab Youth Employment and Unemployment

Executive Summary

- Importance of this study emerges from the dangerous current situation of Arab youth unemployment, whether for internal or external reasons. This study analyze the current situation in the Arab region and introduces the most prominent indicators, i.e. total rate of youth unemployment in the region , rate of youth unemployment in each country compared with the international rates, in addition to different concepts of unemployment and deficiencies in data , characteristics of unemployed youth related to level and quality of education, conditions affecting rate of unemployment. Also this study presents the main aspects of a strategy aiming youth employment and some recommendations to confront youth unemployment. In this context, the study highlighted several facts:
 - It is true that unemployment phenomena among youth, especially those with higher levels of education, is one of the most serious challenges facing youth as it hinders them from moving into a stage of economic and social maturity and independence. As well it is true that unemployment rates among Arab youth are highest among world's regions-including sub Sahara Africa- as it reached 26 %.
 - And although there is not a single country in the world that do not suffer from unemployment with varying rates, unemployment among youth has its peculiar challenges that poses complex questions that need to be addressed by a further comprehensive, creative and dynamic approach, for example unemployment rates accompanied by extended joblessness periods that reached almost a decade in considerable number of cases, as in case of Egypt.
 - Also these rates reflect the discrepancies as well as cultural and social developmental gaps between males and females, as unemployment rates among females is twice it is among males as in cases of Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and Algeria.
- Despite these facts still the research done concerned with deep understanding and analysis of the daily life of unemployed youth is not enough. In addition, the available data is inconsistent in estimating unemployment rates due to the utilization of different definitions and data collection methodologies.
- Considering the reasons for this phenomenon, the study indicates that a considerable number of Arab researches perceive the education system as the main reason behind unemployment. The study shows that confining to this explanation only, which is partially true, won't be useful when facing unemployment profoundly at both practical and scientific levels, due to: 1) the explanation is partial and incomplete, 2) reforming the education system will need a longer period of time.
- When scrutinizing the reality of unemployment in the Arab world, mainly among youth, it will be found that this phenomena is a result of various complex and intertwined factors,

the most important of which is that countries became unable nationally to provide jobs with its role diminishing as an employer and producer within the process of capitalist policies adaptation.

Arab investment as well tends to shrink the size of employment, and rather adopt heavy technological capital. It is also noticed that different suggested solutions for youth unemployment seems partial and non sustainable and only providing self employment to limited number of youth while there is an increased number of those willing to have access to labor markets. Among the most important indicators highlighted by the study:

- Rate of unemployment among Arab youth is the highest at the international level reaching 26% and overcomes youth unemployment in Africa south saharan which reaches 21%
- Youth unemployment in the Arab region rates 53% in average compared to total rate of unemployment
- The Arab region experiences a gap in rate of unemployment among youth according to gender, in which it reaches 22.7% among males and 31.7% among females
- Increase in rate of unemployment among young females compared to young males as it reaches 17.8 among males in Bahrain, 18.4 in Egypt, 11.6 in Qatar, 24.4 in Saudi Arabia, 17.9 in Syria and 44.9 in Oman compared to 27.5, 43.8, 50.9, 31.6, 40.4, 60.3 respectively in the same countries among young females
- The current study seeks to present some analysis that rather shed the light on the unemployment situation. This is because of lack of data itself or lack of access to it that all hinder the proper analytical and scientific observation of the phenomena of unemployment. And also scrutinizing critically and analytically some of the most important experiences and attempts to employ youth. Aiming at provoking researchers and policy planners to grant the issue of unemployment further scientific concern, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and providing better opportunities for a more profound comprehensive explanation for this crisis/phenomenon.
- Without the availability of information and data to contribute to the providing of scientific evidence on both developmental and tangible risks of unemployment, it will be impossible to conclusively challenge that phenomenon. And if not, we would be losing the historical coincidence materialized in the "demographic gift", namely the increase in number of population at the labor age in the Arab world. Such a gift that could be an opportunity to activate human capital, decrease sustenance rates and increase in economic growth, which if not seized, may turn into demographic challenge.

Finally the study poses a main question, what do we intend to do for Arab Youth as a future capital?