



CSEND Side Event

Linking human capital development with employability, competitiveness for sustainable trade, economic growth and social inclusion

Date and Time: 23rd April, 2012, 12.30-14.30

Place: Conference Centre Room G02



Prepared by
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Theme:
Skills and knowledge development, employability, trade policy and better governance

Language: English

Goal:

1. To promote more efficient and more effective use of education and training resources by linking education to employability as a means to alleviate youth unemployment

2. To improve impact of training investment through quality management and organisational performance improvement as a means to increase national competitiveness and capabilities in participating in global economy
3. To show examples of organisations or states that have successfully applied quality management to their learning system and skill development.

Distinguished address: Dr. Mohammad Fathy Saoud, President of Qatar Foundation (invited)

Speakers:

1. Raymond Saner, Basle University/Sciences Po Paris (Chair/Moderator)
2. Lichia Saner-Yiu, Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development
3. Ghanim M. Al-Naimi, Qatar Foundation
4. Magdi Farahat , United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

Synopsis:

Structural and systemic changes that are occurring in the MENA region have resulted in a multitude of challenges. The sweeping political changes in large parts of the MENA region suggest that inadequate economic participation of the youth and the lack of social equity have reached a critical point. In order to ensure constructive outcomes of the process of change, innovative approaches are necessary to assist MENA countries to develop business opportunities and at the same time focus on ways to enhance skills and employability of the region's inhabitants, especially the youth population. Employment creation that offers work with reasonable financial return, human dignity and sustainable livelihood is an essential to ensure that the political changes will be successful and sustainable.

The dramatic changes in political arrangements should not have taken the international community by surprise. The 2009 UNDP Human Development Report pointedly underlined the key security issues in the region which included the security of persons related to their environment, to their institutions and employment possibilities. It advocated an integrated concept for human capital development in the interest of progress and stability within the region and beyond. Not enough rigorous responses were made to address such a time bomb effectively. Not to respond in due time increases likelihood that marginalization of the youth continues and with that their unrealisable aspirations. The key issue now is how to bring a sense of hope back to the MENA youth and provide them with concrete skills and possibilities to achieve equitable economic growth and to restore stability and ensure sustained development. Structural changes concerning the governance of human capital development will be a needed first step. Such a governance structure will be needed to amplify the feedback signals on the actual performance of the education and training investment and its impact on youth employability and economic growth. Accompanying systems will also be needed to enable a nationwide responsiveness and foster continuous improvement and innovation.

Putting the above in place would ensure that the youth of the MENA region will be encouraged and supported to play an active and constructive role in their societies so that they can contribute to the economic dynamism of their community. They should not be seen as a "costly and dangerous problem" but rather as an investment to the

benefit of their communities and societies through their skills, entrepreneurial spirit and innovativeness.

This seminar brings together experts who will elaborate on these issues of human capital development reform through effective governance structure and mechanisms. The panel will present different perspectives from regional, national and organizational levels on how such a responsive governance structure could be constructed. The aim is to identify an integrated approach to entrepreneurship and human development based on complementarities and coherence of policies. Most importantly, the panel will examine how to create effective links between the learning space and the work space, and the links between the workforce demands and supply.

In light of the political and economic uncertainties in the MENA region, it is more than urgent to overcome the present lack of efficient and effective coordination between financial and human capital within the region and to facilitate employability and job creation and a culture of results based governance. Such a governance system could fruitfully apply a quality assurance approach which stresses policy coherence, stakeholder participation, process orientation, transparency and institutional learning. These are the basic ingredients for good governance and accountability. When people are the most important asset of a country, efforts should not be spared to ensure that the investments made in learning and developing of human capital will not be wasted through mindless repetitions of tired formulas in terms of curricula, pre-assigned choices of professions and vocations, traditional ex-cathedra pedagogy, and the structure of formal education.

Innovations in this sector are needed and can only occur when the governance system actually works. Work force supply and demand need to be carefully monitored and educational investments adjusted accordingly. It would be wasteful to attempt to solve e.g. MENA region's need for the creation of sustainable jobs by simply increasing education budgets without close attention to labour market supply and demand assessments. The goal should be to educate and train the labour force in such a way that their acquired new competencies will be congruent with tomorrow's needs of the local and international supply and value chains of the local and world economy.

From a micro perspective, organisations and companies need also adopt similar governance approach and quality assurance system to ensure needed competence and productivity gains in order to participate in gainfully in local and international supply and value chains of the local and world economy.

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