



AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET



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Impact Objectives

- Contributing to the competitiveness of Jordanian higher education through professional development training
- Creating the National Employer Education Dialogue (NEED) seminar series, in collaboration with Jordanian universities
- Improving higher education provision in Jordan by developing cutting-edge teaching, learning frameworks and methods allowing Jordanian universities to train high calibre, market-ready graduates

An entrepreneurial mindset

May Abuhamdia, Deputy Director of the British Council in Jordan, Dr Haya Al-Dajani and Professor Nikolaos Tzokas from the University of Plymouth, UK, tell us about their work on the Entrepreneurial University programme in Jordan



May Abuhamdia



Dr Haya Al-Dajani



Professor Nikolaos Tzokas

Why is entrepreneurship an important mindset for tertiary institutions to include within their offerings?

NT: Rather than producing graduates for jobs, an entrepreneurship mindset within higher education encourages graduates to create their own jobs and to launch ventures that create jobs for others, thus leading to a dynamic economy that is forward thinking and forward looking. Many specialisations lend themselves to self-employment or venture creation, therefore, if we don't incorporate entrepreneurship training alongside these subject specialisations, graduates will remain unable to launch sustainable enterprises and instead continue to seek jobs in saturated markets. Entrepreneurship within higher education has really improved in the MENA region. However, the challenge remains in immature and disconnected entrepreneurship ecosystems that do not recognise the contribution made by higher education institutions.

What are the project's key objectives?

HA: Our overarching objective is to contribute to the competitiveness of Jordanian higher education through

professional development training. We seek to promote understanding of the entrepreneurial university model and its role in Jordan's higher education sector. The project also entails the creation of the National Employer Education Dialogue (NEED) seminar series, in collaboration with Jordanian universities. We provided professional development training for directors of faculty development and quality assurance centres, covering 21st century higher education learning strategies, planning, monitoring and evaluating faculty development programmes for research and teaching, as well as leadership and management.

Who are the primary beneficiaries and what impact do you feel that the project has had on these groups?

MA: The project targets two key beneficiary groups: Jordanian university academics and the directors of faculty development and quality assurance centres. Through our work on this project, we have promoted the academics' appreciation of the importance of engendering an entrepreneurial mindset within universities. We have also provided them with a toolkit to be used throughout their institutions and helped them build a multidisciplinary network to promote mentoring, graduate employability and experiential learning. The directors have been offered training to enable them to appreciate new learning strategies applicable to their institutions as well as developing new skillsets to understand and counteract

unconscious bias. We have helped to develop a network of directors to generate inter-institutional support they had not previously had.

HA: The primary beneficiaries are the students and graduates because, as John Dewey once said, 'If we teach today's students as we did yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow.' That is, their tomorrow and ours too.

Can you tell us about the workshop held in November 2015? What were some of the outcomes from this activity?

HA: Held during Global Entrepreneurship Week in 2015, the workshop focused on bringing together teams from industry and universities to work cooperatively to enhance the performance of universities by designing an entrepreneurial university model for their respective institutions. Key outcomes included: a national mapping of the graduate enterprise services offered through Jordan's universities and community colleges, employability programmes for university students to be 'market-ready' upon graduation and enhanced knowledge and awareness amongst industry and higher education stakeholders about the 'entrepreneurial university'. Individualised university-specific roadmaps to foster and guide the development of an entrepreneurial university model and a benchmarking framework rating Jordanian universities' extent of entrepreneurialism were also developed. ●

Entrepreneurship in higher education

Collaborative efforts by the British Council in Jordan, the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and the University of Plymouth have focused on the promotion and development of entrepreneurship training in Jordanian universities

Entrepreneurship has received a great deal of attention in recent decades as many markets evolve their service and product provisions. Entrepreneurship - the identification and exploitation of opportunities for social and economic profit - is becoming a much sought-after skill for start-ups and established firms alike.

Considerable emphasis is placed on the value of these skills and the importance of entrepreneurship education within higher education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. However, much of the delivery of this training has excluded universities despite their key role in educating tomorrow's workforce. May Abuhamdia, Deputy Director of the British Council in Jordan says: 'If universities do not become agents of innovation (i.e. entrepreneurial universities), they will hamper regional and national development as well as international competitiveness.' Thus, an initiative was launched to promote entrepreneurship education provision in Jordanian universities through investment in training and developing academic staff. 'To enhance the performance and competitiveness of the Jordanian higher education sector, Jordanian higher education institutions (HEIs) must invest in the preparedness and readiness of their academic staff,' says Professor Nikolaos Tzokas, Professor of Marketing at the University of Plymouth.

Dr Haya Al-Dajani, Professor of Entrepreneurship at the University of Plymouth, UK, explains, 'Principally, the project's overarching objective is to

contribute to the competitiveness of the Jordanian higher education sector through professional development training.' The team seeks to achieve a better understanding of the entrepreneurial university model and its role in Jordan's higher education sector as well providing training and support for key stakeholders.

TEAMWORK

Conceived as a collaboration between the British Council in Jordan, the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and the University of Plymouth, UK, to improve higher education provision in Jordan, the project aims to develop cutting-edge teaching, learning frameworks and methods allowing Jordanian universities to train high calibre, market-ready graduates, while engaging at the peak of their global research communities to support and advance Jordan's national development vision.

Abuhamdia explains the role of MoHESR: 'Their role has been critical in facilitating the participation of the relevant stakeholders from Jordan's universities, as well as ensuring that the content and deliverables from the programme are implemented and monitored within the universities.' Key representatives from Jordan's industries were also consulted. As recruiters and employers of graduates, their insights and feedback were useful in informing universities about the employability and technical skills of their graduates.

While the international and interdisciplinary nature of the project might have been

expected to challenge the team, Al-Dajani and Tzokas report, 'The British Council team in Jordan were fantastic to work with and MoHESR was super supportive throughout the programme.'

TAKING ACTION

The project carried out a number of activities, including a workshop held during Global Entrepreneurship Week in November 2015, that brought together teams from industry and universities to enhance collaborative performance through the design and launch of an entrepreneurial university model. This resulted in the production of a national graduate enterprise services map and the development of programmes to optimise emerging graduates' employability. The workshop enhanced an awareness of the entrepreneurial university model amongst attendees, while developing a benchmarking framework for Jordanian universities.

A UK entrepreneurial university study tour was organised in October 2016. Sponsored by the British Council in Jordan and hosted by the University of Plymouth, UK, the tour showcased the best entrepreneurial practices in England's South West region with visits to Bath, Bristol and Plymouth. Al-Dajani says, 'The Jordanian delegation from the German Jordanian University, Jordan Applied University, Luminus Education Jordan, Princess Sumaya University for Technology and the Queen Rania Centre for Entrepreneurship visited the universities of Bath, Plymouth and the West of England to enhance partnerships and collaboration between the two countries by focusing on accelerating the entrepreneurial ►





His Excellency the Secretary General of Jordan's MoHESR awarding the participants their certificates

transformation of higher education institutions in Jordan.' She adds, 'It was a privilege to design and organise this tour as it celebrated the collaborative spirit amongst the South West region's higher education network as well as internationally.' This activity strengthened ties between the Jordanian delegates and led to the design, organisation and delivery of the National Employer Education Dialogue Seminar Series (NEED).

The NEED series, also sponsored by the British Council in Jordan, represented a collaborative effort led by Tzokas and Al-Dajani. Based on the cooperation witnessed during the study tour, the Jordanian group sought to create a similar forum to foster collaboration amongst Jordanian universities and enhance the competitiveness of Jordan's tertiary education provision on a global stage. Al-Dajani explains, 'The focus of the NEED series was the improvement of academic and professional services staff performance, progressing the curricula offered and accelerating the employability of Jordanian graduates.' As an ongoing series beginning in 2017, the NEED seminars addressed a number of key topics, including the embedding of employability in higher education, best practices in internships and apprenticeships and mentoring.

A two-year programme was initiated to support the professional development of directors of university faculty development and quality assurance centres. These centres form the heart of universities, initiating and delivering quality assurance. 'Capacity building and professional development for the leaders of such strategic entities is critically important to realising the project's overall vision of enhancing the competitiveness of Jordan's higher education sector,' says Al-Dajani. Used to develop leadership and management skills as well as knowledge and appreciation of up-to-date higher education learning strategies and planning skills, this programme ran between 2017 and 2019 and was aimed at the directors of 32 centres. During the programme, the



The Entrepreneurial University Study Tour arriving at the University of Bath, UK

directors designed and developed higher education learning programmes which, it is hoped, they subsequently implemented and cascaded throughout their universities.

The UK-Jordan Higher Education Policy Dialogue event held in February 2019 targeted key higher education stakeholders in Jordan. It covered a number of critical issues, including competition in higher education and making a case for gains from a proactive stance and showcasing the importance of 'distinctiveness with distinction'. The UK higher education sector was used as an example, with white papers and relevant reviews used to highlight these issues.

LOOKING FORWARD

The activities completed under the aegis of the Entrepreneurial University project have had a positive impact on target stakeholders and have demonstrated the value of collaborative efforts. The training of the directors of the faculty development and quality assurance centres was one of the major sub-projects and a special high point for the project came in February 2019 when these directors cooperatively delivered a training programme on 21st century higher education learning strategies to 60 academics from Jordan. Al-Dajani enthuses, 'Seeing the capacity building in action reassured us of the sustainability and impact of well-designed and executed professional training programmes. A local and enabled network was co-created, and we couldn't ask for a better outcome.'

The project has generated several successful outcomes to date. Abuhamdia reports, 'We are very encouraged by the professionalism, passion and enthusiasm of all those we worked with throughout this programme to improve Jordan's higher education landscape.' The collaborators plan to continue working together on further activities in 2019, including the launch of a professional development training programme for early career academics, focusing upon their research, teaching and leadership performance. ●

Project Insights

FUNDING

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The Secretary General of Jordan's MoHESR

– His Excellency Dr Ahed Alwahadni stated "We are grateful for the funding from the British Council for this programme which is part of the longstanding collaborative partnership between the Ministry and the British Council and is in line with the Jordanian Human Resources Strategy for enhancing and developing higher education in Jordan".

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BIOS

May Abuhamdia is the Deputy Director of the British Council in Jordan, responsible for the strategic planning, implementation and business development for the programs and partnerships work as well as marketing and communications.

Dr Haya Al-Dajani is a Reader in Entrepreneurship at the University of Plymouth, UK, and Visiting Professor at the Mohammad Bin Salman College for Business and Entrepreneurship. Her entrepreneurial learning and enterprise training programmes have been implemented globally in many languages.

Dr Nikolaos Tzokas is Professor of Marketing at the University of Plymouth, UK, and Visiting Professor at the Mohammad Bin Salman College for Business and Entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia. He previously served as Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business at the University of Plymouth and Dean of the Norwich Business School at the University of East Anglia, UK.



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