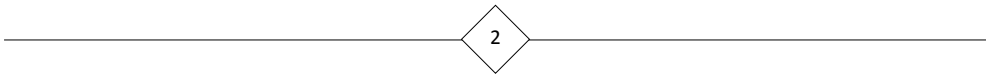


***Towards an Arab Higher Education Space:
International Challenges
and Societal Responsibilities***



***Towards an Arab Higher Education
Space: International Challenges
and Societal Responsibilities***

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Bechir Lamine

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FOREWORD

Ten years after the first Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education, held in 1998 in Beirut, Lebanon, there was a need for holding a second Regional Conference to review a decade of developments and achievements in higher education in the Arab region and explore future prospects and challenges in light of developments at the regional as well as the international level. This event is part of a wider exercise initiated in 2008 by UNESCO and covering all five UNESCO regions worldwide. Five regional conferences were held in preparation of the World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE, Paris, 5 - 8 July 2009). This publication contains the proceedings of the Arab Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARCHE+10, Cairo 31 May – 2 June 2009).

ARCHE+10 was attended by delegates from Ministries of Higher Education in the Arab States. A Regional Report was compiled, describing the state and achievements of higher education in the region over a decade, as well as present and future challenges confronting the sector. The Regional Report was based on 17 Country Reports drafted by National Coordinators commissioned by UNESCO's Bureau for Education in the Arab States (UNEDBAS, Beirut) in close coordination with ministries of higher education. The country reports provided a clear picture of the achievements of, as well as the challenges facing, higher education, using a common template designed by UNEDBAS, for increased homogeneity and comparability.

In addition to these reports by national authorities, ARCHE+10 was also an academic forum for educationalists from the Arab region and beyond. Early in the preparation process, UNEDBAS had set up an Advisory Committee entrusted with issuing a call for papers widely disseminated within Arab universities and on the ARCHE+10 website. Out of some 108 submissions, 69 academics were encouraged to prepare papers and, in fine, 44 papers were accepted with some changes. Authors of all 44 accepted papers were invited to Cairo to make presentations to ARCHE+10.

In principle, the accepted papers should have covered all of ARCHE+10's five themes: Learning opportunities; quality improvement and quality assurance; the social responsibility of universities; management, governance and funding; and Arab cooperation. However, in practice, some themes were amply provided for while others were underrepresented. Some of these papers are full-fledged research papers while a few others are more descriptive in nature and others still are analyses and reviews of promising ideas. This diversity was retained as it provides a wider picture of the state of higher education in the Arab States.

Another feature of ARCHE+10 was the student film competition entitled "The University in the Eyes of its Students".

ARCHE+10 was placed under the motto: Towards an Arab Higher Education Space. This was retained as a title for this publication, considering the strategic importance of the topic. While it is true that most academic papers do not deal directly with this issue, they nonetheless give an idea about the Arab space as it currently stands. The publication is also a sweeping review of the most important concepts and issues facing higher education. This is clearly the largest academic work on higher education prepared and published in recent years in the Arab region.

To conclude, I extend my warmest thanks to the Ford Foundation for making a major financial contribution, covering the production of ARCHE+10's substantive material, as well as its publication and dissemination; and also for providing awards for the student film competition.

Dr. Abdel Moneim Osman

Director

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