

PNB-NAPEO Higher Education Delegation

Algeria ● Morocco ● Tunisia

Building Higher Education Partnerships in the Maghreb

June 2012

Partners for a New Beginning
The Aspen Institute

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Executive Summary

From June 2nd to 9th, 2012 the Partners for a New Beginning's North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity Secretariat at the Aspen Institute (PNB-NAPEO) led a Higher Education delegation to the Maghreb composed of representatives from six American universities, two education NGOs, and the US Department of State. Coordinated locally by the US Embassy in Algeria, PNB-NAPEO Algeria, AMIDEAST-Morocco, Injaz Al-Mahgrib and PNB-NAPEO Tunisia, the delegation met with local universities, NGOs, and business leaders in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia to discuss the assets and challenges within each country's education system as well as priorities for reform. The primary objective of this delegation was to seed partnerships between the participating American institutions and local universities.

Across the board, curricula in the Maghreb focus too heavily on rote memorization, lacking adequate attention to critical thinking, innovation, or creativity.



Meeting with private sector universities and companies in Algeria to discuss higher education partnership priorities

The delegation included representatives from Wayne State University, the University of Texas at Austin, MIT's Sloan School of Management, Council on Foreign Relations, American University, AMIDEAST, Babson College, the Aspen Institute's College Excellence program, Nova Southeastern University, Soliya, and the US Department of State.

In each of the three countries visited, similar overarching themes emerged:

Quality of Education

In the Maghreb, the primary focus of the private and public sector is to improve the overall quality of education. Across the board, education curricula in the region focus too heavily on rote memorization, lacking sufficient attention to critical thinking, innovation, or creativity. Moreover, curricula are often out of date and do not match current labor market trends and skill demands. Past education reform in the region has improved access to K-12 education, but the curricula does not adequately prepare students for either higher education or the workforce.

Disconnect Between K-12 and Higher Education Curricula

There are few linkages between K-12 and university curricula, creating a disadvantage for Maghreb students entering higher education institutions. At the K-12 level, more attention needs to be given to developing critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, and English language skills to ensure that students are prepared for higher education, and later on, the workforce.

Private Sector Skills Gap

An important issue across the region is the poor alignment between universities and industry. This gap prevents universities from adapting their curricula to meet labor market demand and teaching necessary private sector skills such as communication and leadership skills.

Research and Graduate Studies

Governments have placed a heavy emphasis on “knowledge-based” fields such as engineering, technology, and biomedical sciences, among others. As a result, increased government funding has been allocated towards research for doctoral candidates in these sectors. There does not appear to be the same level of resources being allocated towards research and graduate studies in the social sciences, arts, or humanities.

English Language

English language courses and training are an essential component of efforts to prepare students to work in the private sector, and more broadly the global market. Currently, English-speaking professors and students are in scarce supply, but efforts are underway to encourage students to learn English. Programs offered by AMIDEAST and the British Council are also becoming increasingly popular.

English language training should begin in elementary school in order to be most effective. Delivering education in Arabic remains a regional priority, and this may pose challenges to fulfilling this goal.

Quality of Professors

A major concern in the region is the dearth of high-quality professors. Professors often do not have up-to-date curricula, nor do they understand shifting labor market trends and how these trends impact educational requirements. There is little incentive for professors to improve the quality of their teaching, especially in the case of public institutions, where professors are guaranteed salary and benefits regardless of teaching quality. A number of higher education entities in the Maghreb expressed an interest in bringing American faculty to the region. Faculty exchanges could serve both to address the undersupply of quality teachers and increase the quality of instruction by local professors through mentorship and training. Professors in the region stand to benefit from faculty exchanges with US institutions by receiving support in developing their curricula, enhancing their teaching methods, and improving their English language skills. These types of exchange programs could also support the sharing of best practices and other teacher development priorities.



Panel at Tunis Business School on higher education with Ambassador Gordon Gray, former U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia, Dr. Saleh Ben Abdullah, Dean, Tunis Business School, Amel Bouchamaoui, President, Tunisian American Chamber of Commerce, and Kris Balderston, Special Representative, Global Partnerships Initiative, US Department of State

Development of Entrepreneurship and Business Curricula

Universities are prioritizing the development of entrepreneurship and business curricula through greater course offerings on these subjects. A number of universities in the region are eager to build partnerships with international institutions that can share best practices and curricula that offer the highest quality of entrepreneurship and business education.

American participants in the delegation came away from meetings with the impression that business and entrepreneurship curricula in the region is focused too heavily on the technical/financial side of managing a business (i.e., accounting, marketing) at the expense of developing other “soft” skills that are fundamental for entrepreneurs, such as creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving. Liberal arts courses are usually most effective in promoting these soft skills, and a strong business curriculum should contain both technical and liberal arts elements.

Action Learning

Action learning courses have been identified as a high priority for business and entrepreneurship education in the region. It is necessary to provide students the opportunity to conduct hands-on projects with private sector partners as a part of their university education in order to “practice” real world entrepreneurship and business skills. This type of action-learning initiative can serve as an effective tool for equipping students for their post-university life and employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the themes that emerged from the delegation's conversations in the region, PNB-NAPEO Secretariat would like to offer the following recommendations for higher education partnerships with local institutions in the Maghreb:

Short Term (June 2012-January 2013)

- ➔ **Build Partnerships Based on Local Priorities and Local Ideas:** When developing a partnership or project, local ownership is critical for sustainability and success. Local partners should be in the driver's seat of project implementation because they better understand the local context and needs.
- ➔ **Begin with a Small but Feasible Exchange Program between an American and Local University:** Launching pilot programs in the initial stages lead to long term sustainability. Starting with a smaller program will enable relationships to develop between individuals, creating champions at each university that strive to build out their respective institution's partnerships. An example of this approach would be an exchange program in which two professors (one American and one in the Maghreb) agree to virtually co-teach a course. With the success of one such course, subsequent partnership opportunities will be viewed more favorably and have a higher chance of being supported.
- ➔ **Utilize Virtual Technology Exchange:** The use of virtual technology is an easy and relatively low-cost way to begin co-teaching through teleconferencing, offer online courses taught by faculty from the US, provide English language training, and share online textbooks and course syllabi.
- ➔ **Leverage Existing Programs and Institutions to Foster Partnerships and Connections:** There are numerous existing programs in the region already producing results that could be expanded or enhanced through partnership

PNB-NAPEO has facilitated partnerships between Intel Corporation and Microsoft Corporation with our local PNB-NAPEO Tunisia chapter to implement FICRA, a local priority project that will expand entrepreneurship training in public universities.

with an American university. For example, Injaz Al-Maghrib is a well-established organization that is ready to work with American counterparts to expand its successful entrepreneurship training programs for students.

Long Term (June 2012-June 2013)

- ➔ **Build a Consortium of Higher Education Institutions in the US and the Maghreb:** The purpose behind this consortium would be for its members to work together to build out partnerships between American and Maghreb higher education institutions that address local Maghreb priorities.
- ➔ **Develop Partnerships with Community Colleges to Enhance Technical Education:** Much of the delegation focused on undergraduate and graduate level education in business and the sciences. However, interest was also expressed in fostering linkages between American community colleges — particularly their technical education programs — and vocational training efforts in the Maghreb.
- ➔ **Engage the Private Sector:** It is important to work as closely as possible with the private sector and maintain its involvement in the development of partnerships and projects that support higher education. The engagement of private sector entities will allow for long term impact in the areas of skill building, mentoring and coaching, and financing.
- ➔ **Engage the Public Sector on Policy Issues:** In order to develop wide-spread education reform, particularly in public sector universities and vocational training institutes, the public sector needs to remain engaged and supportive of efforts to promote curriculum development and exchange opportunities.
- ➔ **Tap into the Potential of the Diaspora:** The diaspora has expertise and resources that can be applied towards the development of educational opportunities, including by serving as a source of mentors and coaches, and providing financial resources.
- ➔ **Establish Anchor Partners:** Before seeking funding for any educational partnership, it is critical to recruit several flagship partners with a deep commitment to the initiative. The inclusion of credible partners — particularly multinational companies or other private sector entities with a strategic interest in supporting higher education efforts — will make the initiative more sustainable. In turn, the project will become more attractive in the eyes of possible funders.

Overview

The rate of youth unemployment in North Africa is higher than any other region in the world. According to the International Labour Organisation, whereas the global youth unemployment rate is 12.7%, in Algeria the average is 24.3%, in Morocco 30%, and in Tunisia it is 31% as of 2011.¹ These statistics are exacerbated by steadily increasing numbers of youth who lack the skills needed to match the private sector's needs, and a growing gap between the rate of job creation and the demand for employment by the youth. The events of the Arab Spring highlighted the critical need to address youth unemployment — particularly among university graduates — which has become a key priority for the Maghreb.

The governments in the Maghreb are investing heavily in education, with an average of 5% of their total GDP and 20% of total government budgets being allocated towards this sector; however, government efforts to expand access to education have often sacrificed quality for quantity.² Currently, students educated in local Maghreb institutions are not internationally or regionally competitive. Tunisia, the country with the most advanced education system in the Maghreb, has an average score on the international student assessment that is 20% below the OECD average.³ This statistic reflects one of the key themes that emerged during the delegation: curricula in the region focus on rote memorization rather than critical thinking and problem solving.

One of the primary obstacles to addressing unemployment is the gap between university graduate skill sets and labor market demand. Most students who complete their education in the Maghreb do not possess the hard or soft skills necessary to be hired by private companies and compete in the global economy.⁴ Linkage between universities and the private sector is critical to ensure that curriculum and skills-training meets labor market demand. This linkage is also important for creating an educational ecosystem that encourages opportunities for students to engage with the private sector directly through activities such as student internships, job placement, mentorship, coaching, and others.

Governments in each country of the Maghreb are reevaluating the education system and moving forward with reform agendas, with a particular emphasis on supporting education reform through international partnerships. Public, private and multi-stakeholder partnerships are believed to produce the best results because the linkage between the private sector and universities allow for curriculum development to match market needs. Evidence also suggests that programs implemented by the government alone often do not take private sector skill demand into account and are therefore less effective.⁵

Partners for a New Beginning

Partners for a New Beginning (PNB) is a public-private partnership operating in ten countries in which local boards composed of business and civil society leaders determine priorities and projects for education and economic advancement. The local chapters in each of the PNB countries are supported by the PNB Secretariat at the Aspen Institute, as well as an international Steering Committee that is comprised of some of the most respected private and public sector leaders in the world today. Chaired by The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, former US Secretary of State, members of the Steering Committee include Vice Chair Muhtar Kent, Chairman and CEO of The Coca-Cola Company, Vice Chair Walter Isaacson, President and CEO of the Aspen Institute, John Chambers, Chairman and CEO of Cisco, and President and CEO of Intel, Paul Otellini among others. PNB's distinguished network is a significant asset in efforts to match PNB local chapter partners with US and international organizations to advance priorities in their respective countries.

Within the PNB structure, a regionally focused initiative known as the US North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity (PNB-NAPEO) was established to foster entrepreneurship and job creation in North Africa. The historic events that have taken place in the region underscore the importance and timeliness of PNB-NAPEO. This initiative has the potential to play a crucial role in bolstering intra-regional cooperation on strategic economic issues through partnerships engaging the public and private sectors.

The Aspen Institute serves as the Secretariat of PNB (and PNB-NAPEO) and supports PNB local chapters by connecting them with US and international partners that can help advance their priorities. The Aspen Institute carries out this mission by leveraging its significant convening power to mobilize thought leaders on key issues relevant for PNB local chapters, engaging with the public sector to influence policy makers, and working with the private sector and international financial institutions in order to catalyze investment opportunities.

PNB and its partners have launched, expanded, or pledged support for more than 180 new projects since the partnership began in September 2010. In turn, these projects will have impacted over 330,000 people, result in job training for over 43,000 individuals, and will initiate over 21,000 new businesses in the next five years.

Objective of PNB-NAPEO Higher Education Delegation

In response to the regional priority of supporting higher education development in the Maghreb, the PNB-NAPEO Secretariat at the Aspen Institute led a Higher Education Delegation to the region. The objective of the delegation was to further PNB-NAPEO's ongoing efforts to build a network of universities, colleges, NGOs and private companies interested in creating partnerships with educational institutions in the region, in order to enhance educational opportunities for youth.

Participants included representatives from MIT's Sloan School of Management, Babson College, Wayne State University, University of Texas at Austin, American University, AMIDEAST, the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program, Soliya, Council on Foreign Relations and the US Department of State.



ALGERIA

Algerian Higher Education System Overview

Since the year 2000, the government of Algeria has engaged in a significant effort to reform its education system. In 2004, the government implemented the License, Master's, Doctorate (LMD) system in order to better integrate Algeria into the global education system. Currently, there are 1.3 million Algerian students spread across 90 higher education institutions, taught by 42,000 professors. By 2015, the Deputy Minister of Education projects that there will be three million university students in the higher education system.⁶ Because public education in Algeria is free, the government must prepare both to meet the growing demands being placed on the education system by an expanding population and improve the overall quality of the education.

The Algerian government has a strong interest in creating synergies between universities, the government, and the private sector. The Ministry of Higher Education is eager to build partnerships that train faculty to speak English, establish exchanges for doctoral students, create virtual exchange opportunities, and support curriculum enhancement for entrepreneurship and business programs.



Meeting with the Ministry of Vocational Training in Algeria

In Algeria, the delegation engaged in conversations with HEC Algiers, University of Constantine, Management Development International, University of Algiers, University of Science and Technology Houari Boumediene Polytechnic, among others. The outcome of these conversations is outlined below.

Assets

- There is an enormous amount of energy and will in Algeria, both from the public and private sectors, to develop partnerships with US educational entities. The Algerians are especially interested in initiatives that support faculty exchange, curriculum development and sharing of best practices to improve education, including through the budding private education sector.
- Both the government and the private sector are willing and able to dedicate resources for partnerships and exchange programs in the short term. For example, the Algerian diaspora is becoming heavily engaged in providing resources, expertise and mentoring support in the higher education sphere. Channeling the resources of the diaspora into enhancing the education sector is a key priority and can be a useful tool in building partnerships in the country.
- In Algeria, several PNB-NAPEO partnerships have already begun to yield results. These partnerships provide a foundation and lessons learned for future initiatives. One such example is the Ibn Khaldoun Exchange, a project initiated by the PNB-NAPEO Algeria chapter which is the first inter-regional exchange to train students from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria in entrepreneurship skills in English. Other existing partnerships include the Algeria Start-Up Initiative/Maghreb Start-Up Initiative and the Sidi Abdullah Incubator that houses approximately 35 technology start-up companies.

Algerian universities are eager to build partnerships with US institutions, particularly in the areas of entrepreneurship, business, and research specialties such as IT, biomedical sciences, and engineering.

Challenges

- Algeria lacks a uniform standard for curriculum across public and private universities. Without a standard curricula, there is little basis by which to judge student performance on a national level. In many cases degrees offered by universities do not match the requirements for the workforce.
- A language gap has been created by the Algerian system because students conduct their K-12 education in Arabic and then receive most of their university education in French. In addition, English is not a mandatory requirement at the university level, and is only offered as an optional course. No courses are taught in English, except in some Foreign Language Departments. Consequently, a large proportion of Algerian students do not speak English. Some universities have created English programs that have produced mixed results.
- Insufficient emphasis has historically been placed on soft skills such as critical thinking and leadership.
- Little cooperation currently exists between the local private sector companies and the universities.
- Accreditation for students in Algerian universities is different than for students in US universities. Further work needs to be done in order to allow students to participate in exchange programs between the US and the Maghreb, and receive credit for courses within these exchanges.

Key Takeaways

- Algerian universities are eager to build partnerships with US institutions, particularly in the areas of entrepreneurship, business, and research specialties such as IT, biomedical sciences, and engineering.
- Exchanges and partnerships should focus on sectors that enhance private sector skills development such as business skills, communication skills, and English language training.
- Business incubators can play an important role in assisting young entrepreneurs in developing and expanding their businesses, as well as in bridging the gap between the skills of students and their capacity to start their own business. There is a significant need for mentorship and coaching to support youth entrepreneurship.
- Faculty-to-faculty exchange is a significant priority in order to improve the quality of teaching, support curriculum development, and improve accreditation processes.
- With respect to student exchanges, short-term visits of Algerians to the US are preferred by local Algerian institutions in order to prevent students from staying permanently in the US and fueling brain drain.
- Doctoral student exchange for research in the areas of biomedical sciences, IT, and engineering is a priority for the Ministry of Higher Education, and therefore many public universities. Significant public funding is being allocated towards scientific research in Algeria.
- There is interest in exploring virtual exchange opportunities due to its cost effectiveness. Virtual exchanges can serve as a short-term approach for Algerian universities to build relationships with their American counterparts.
- English language training is a very high priority for both public and private schools.

A significant need exists for establishing career centers in universities to help students identify job opportunities, draft resumes, conduct interviews and engage in other aspects of career building.



MOROCCO

Moroccan Higher Education System Overview

The Moroccan education system allows for students to choose between two tracks for university education upon completion of high school. One track emulates the French education model whereby students complete two years of preparatory work followed by entrance into the Grand Ecoles, the competitive, private university system, where they specialize in an area of study. The other track available to students is the public university system, overseen by the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education, Executive Training and Scientific Research. Morocco has adopted the French model of License, Master's, Doctorate in their university system. In total, there are 15 universities dispersed throughout the country. In addition to universities, there are numerous teacher training programs, technology institutes, and vocational training institutes. Vocational training institutes offer a wide variety of programs, including industrial products design, building, accounting, and management, among others. The government is currently implementing various measures to improve access to education for all regions of Morocco, as well as job training.

The primary challenge for Moroccan university graduates is that while jobs are available, there is a disconnect between university graduates' skills and the needs of the private sector. The education system in Morocco remains insufficient for preparing students to enter the job market.⁷ Moreover, students are unwilling to consider employment in fields that are deemed unsuitable or lower level. The majority of students study to become doctors and lawyers, of which there is a surplus in Morocco.

The Education Ministry is interested in promoting more exchanges between Morocco and the United States, but Ministry officials who met with the delegation expressed their opinion that Moroccan students need to better understand what they want to get out of their experience in the US as well as what they want to study.

The delegation met with the following institutions in Morocco: University Hassan II, Casablanca University, University Mohammad V, Ecole Mohammadia Des Ingenieurs and Al-Akhwayn University. The discussions held led to the conclusions outlined below.

Assets

- There is a strong history of American presence in Morocco, including through institutions such as AMIDEAST, which facilitates exchange programs and university partnerships. The ability for international organizations to connect with local universities through AMIDEAST or similar entities helps simplify the process of building partnerships and facilitating exchange programs.
- There are many American students studying Arabic and French in Morocco through established exchange programs at universities such as Al-Akhwayn. Existing programs are typically short term or summer programs, but have nevertheless played a valuable role in laying the groundwork for future initiatives. Currently, Al-Akhwayn has 40 partnerships with US universities.
- There are a number of existing programs carrying out great work in higher education in Morocco. One such example is Injaz Al Maghrib, an organization which trains students in entrepreneurship through programs in public high schools and universities.



Meeting with University Mohammad V in Rabat, Morocco

A primary challenge for the education sector is ensuring that university graduates are prepared with the necessary skills to meet job market needs.

Challenges

- There is little linkage between high school and university education, which creates a disadvantage for high school students entering university. More significant efforts must be undertaken to reform K-12 education in order to prepare students for university education.
- English is not always included in K-12 or university curricula as a mandatory requirement. As a result, many Moroccans do not speak English. Some universities have created English programs that have produced mixed results.
- French is the primary language spoken at most public universities. For student and faculty exchange programs, this could be an obstacle.
- There is little emphasis placed on soft skills such as critical thinking and leadership. Several faculty indicated that more effort should be placed on liberal arts education in order to enhance these skills.
- Accreditation is different for Moroccan universities than it is in the US. This may preclude students from participating in exchange courses if they cannot receive credit.

Key Takeaways

- There is great interest in faculty exchanges that would bring American professors to Moroccan universities to teach in English.
- Course offerings in leadership skills and organizational management are a priority.
- Universities would like greater access to quality text books and e-learning capabilities to enhance curricula for their courses, especially in the fields of engineering and IT.
- The expansion of English language course offerings is a priority.
- A significant need exists for establishing career centers in public universities to help students identify job opportunities, learn how to put together resumes, conduct interviews, and engage in other aspects of career-building.
- The Fulbright program, which promotes exchange between the US and countries world-wide, is an under-utilized resource in Morocco that has the potential to serve as a valuable tool for bringing high-quality faculty to Moroccan universities.



TUNISIA

Tunisian Higher Education Sector Overview

Following the revolution in Tunisia in 2011, the public sector has placed a significant emphasis on improving the education system. A primary challenge for the education sector in Tunisia is to ensure that university education adequately prepares graduates with the necessary skills to meet job market needs. In addition, urgency exists for creating more private sector jobs that can employ these graduates. This challenge is even more acute in regions outside the capital, where resources and access to quality education is particularly low.

Currently, there are 178 public institutions of higher education including 13 universities, 24 higher institutes of technological studies and six higher institutes of teacher training. The remaining higher education institutions are subject-specific and operate under the cadre of one of the aforementioned universities. The Ministry of Higher Education supervises 155 institutions, 23 of which are under joint supervision by the Higher Education Ministry in conjunction with other ministries. The Ministry of Higher Education also recognizes 20 private university level institutions. Special attention is being directed towards the objectives of increasing the exchange between American and Tunisian students for the purposes of English language training, sharing curriculum best practices in business and entrepreneurship, and augmenting research partnerships in knowledge-based disciplines such as IT, engineering, renewable energy, and bio-technology.

The PNB-NAPEO delegation met with universities from across the country, including the Tunis School of business, the Mediterranean School of Business, University of Sousse, University of Sfax, Esprit, and the University of Bizerte.

Conversations in Tunisia led to the following conclusions.

Assets

- ➔ Tunisia has the highest level of education in the region, and its institutions place a strong emphasis on curriculum development. The Tunisian government recognizes the importance of not only developing technical skills, but also of providing an educational basis in liberal arts and critical thinking.
- ➔ Following the revolution, there is greater openness towards considering innovative methods of curriculum development and skill-building for university students.
- ➔ English is a high priority language in Tunisia and visible efforts are being made to increase student capabilities.
- ➔ Existing programs include the PNB-NAPEO FICRA project led by the PNB-Tunisia local chapter in partnership with Intel Corporation and Microsoft Corporation, Babson College's partnership with the Mediterranean School of Business, and PNB-NAPEO's Smart Center, a business incubator, housed at the Tunis Business School.



Meeting at University of Carthage in Tunis

In order to achieve sustainable partnerships in the region, it's important to launch initial pilot projects that create tangible results and set precedence for larger scale initiatives.

Challenges

- Similar to Algeria and Morocco, there is little linkage between high school and university curricula, causing students to be unprepared when they enter university. Serious efforts must be made to reform the curriculum for K-12 education.
- There is little communication between universities and local industry in order to ensure that university education properly equips students to meet the labor needs of the private sector. As a result, students are not graduating with the appropriate skills.
- University graduates from the current system lack sufficient training in communication and professional skills.
- The curricula at all levels of education must be significantly reformed to support the development of critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and communication skills.
- Given the status of the economy post-revolution, there is a scarcity of local resources available to support programs in education.
- The accreditation process for Tunisian universities is different from the US system, and therefore may not allow for US students to gain credit for exchange programs in Tunisia.

Key Takeaways

- Developing a high-quality liberal arts curriculum at the university level that can be integrated into the broader curricula for knowledge-based disciplines, such as business and engineering, is a major priority.
- There is an immediate need to increase the number of English language courses available to students at the university level and below.
- Faculty to faculty exchange is a priority, and Tunisians communicated a particular interest in programs that bring American professors to Tunisia to teach in English.
- Entrepreneurship and business curriculum development was also identified as a priority, with an emphasis on helping students develop innovative solutions to social problems through their own business ideas.
- Programs aimed at cultivating leadership skills must be developed and implemented on a large scale
- Due to limited funding options within Tunisia, organizations must be creative in seeking sources of funding for educational programs outside of the country.

PNB-NAPEO Recommendations & Action Plan

Based on the delegation’s conversations in the region, the PNB-NAPEO Secretariat arrived at the following recommendations for developing partnerships in higher education in the Maghreb.

SHORT TERM PRIORITIES (JULY 2012-JANUARY 2013)

Build Partnerships Based on Local Priorities and Local Ideas

When developing a partnership or project, local ownership is critical for sustainability and success. Collaboration around locally driven initiatives leads to a greater chance of long term success for projects.

Examples of Ongoing Local Projects and Action Items

- FICRA (Arabic: idea) is a program in Tunisia in which students in their final year of university conduct a project on entrepreneurship. The program leads students through each step of creating a business — from developing an idea to writing a business plan and pitching investors. The PNB-NAPEO Secretariat connected the Tunisia local chapter with Intel Corporation and Microsoft, who have contributed towards the curriculum. Establishing new partnerships with US universities, along with the necessary funding, can help build out this project.
- The Smart Center is a project housed at the Tunis Business School (TBS) in partnership with the Tunisian American Chamber of Commerce (TACC) and PNB-NAPEO Tunisia. The Smart Center will serve as a business incubator that will provide the local entrepreneurship community with access to resources, mentorship and coaching on how to develop their businesses. Young entrepreneurs will also

have access to multinationals and local businesses in Tunisia through TACC’s partnership. The Smart Center is looking for opportunities to partner with an American university that has experience in developing incubators. Wayne State University, who joined the delegation, will explore a partnership with TBS on developing the Smart Center in conjunction with its in-house incubator, TechTown.



Discussing higher education in Algeria with Josh Wyner, Executive Director, The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program

- The PNB-NAPEO Algeria chapter is developing an Executive MBA course to be offered at the business school of HEC Algiers, a public university. The Algeria chapter is looking for an American business school that can offer expertise on an Executive MBA curriculum, as well as bring professors to HEC through an exchange program. Local companies would pay to have their employees take the course. MIT's Sloan School of Management and Babson College are potential partners for this work.
- The PNB-NAPEO Algeria chapter initiated a yearly exchange program in July 2012 that brought together youth from the region to participate in English language entrepreneurship and business development workshops. The Ibn Khaldoun Exchange program, as it is called, is the first program of its kind in the region to teach entrepreneurship skills in English. Professors, MBA students, and others could serve as trainers for workshops in next year's program.
- The Algeria Start-Up Initiative (ASI) is a platform founded by the Algerian-American Diaspora from Silicon Valley to promote the creation of technology startups between Algeria and the US. ASI leverages its network of contacts across the Silicon Valley community to support entrepreneurs from Algeria. This model has been expanded through PNB-NAPEO's Maghreb Start-Up Initiative, which was launched in Morocco and Tunisia in May of 2012. Following the delegation, ASI is connecting with MIT Sloan School of Management to bring additional mentors and trainers to work with young entrepreneurs.
- Education For Employment has nonprofit affiliates operating in Morocco and Tunisia, providing country-specific programs that enable youth to develop the skills needed to find private sector jobs or start a business, and give back to their community. EFE is a leader in addressing youth unemployment in the MENA region and has just won the Schwab Foundation Global Social Entrepreneurs Award. EFE is also an active PNB-NAPEO partner and the primary organizer of the Maghreb Startup Initiative in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

Begin With Small Scale Exchanges and Partnerships

While the ultimate objective is to develop far-reaching university partnerships between the US and Maghreb institutions, in order to achieve this, it is important to lay the groundwork by producing tangible results through smaller-scale initiatives.

One example of this approach is an initiative in which the Aspen Institute worked with the Telos Group — a US NGO that seeks to educate Americans about the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis — to facilitate a partnership between the University of Houston (UH) and Bethlehem University (BU) in Palestine. The partnership began by developing a co-taught course where a professor at UH and a professor at BU would teleconference

into each other's classrooms twice a week to teach a course in hospitality management. The curriculum and syllabus were co-created by both professors and the students were required to work together virtually on a final project. The success of this course later led to larger exchange programs between the two universities.

Action Items

- Following the PNB-NAPEO Higher Education Delegation, Nova Southeastern University in Florida has expressed interest in the possibility of creating a teleconference course that can be co-taught with professors from the Mediterranean School of Business and the Tunis School of Business in Tunisia.
- Supporting curriculum development in local Maghreb universities through actions such as the sharing of course curricula in business or training of local professors are small but tangible approaches to building partnerships between two universities, and require minimal funding if executed via an online platform. MIT Sloan School of Management and Babson College are interested in sharing curricula in entrepreneurship and business with universities in the region. The University of Texas at Austin's College of Liberal Arts is also interested in partnering with Maghreb universities in the area of curriculum development.

Virtual Technology Exchange

Utilizing virtual technology is a relatively easy way to begin co-teaching through teleconferencing, offering online courses with faculty from the US, sharing online textbooks and course syllabi, and conducting English language training. One point to consider is that several universities in the region might not be equipped with the proper technology to participate in virtual exchanges; nevertheless, in the short term these types of partnerships can help American universities develop relationships and linkages in the Maghreb that can be expanded upon down the road.

Action Items

- Exchange 2.0 is a coalition of organizations working to leverage communication technologies to enable every student to have a profound cross-cultural experience as part of their education. One member of this coalition, Soliya, is an NGO that among other things operates the Connect Program, a semester-long virtual exchange program integrated into university courses at over 100 universities worldwide. The program facilitates dialogue between students using an internet based video-conference platform, a rigorous curriculum, and the latest in international education pedagogy. Following the Higher Education Delegation, Soliya hopes to expand this program to local universities in Tunisia and Algeria.

Use Existing Institutions to Foster Partnerships and Connections

Before developing a partnership, it's important to conduct an assessment of existing local programs and partnerships. Delegations such as the one led by the PNB-NAPEO Secretariat serve an important role in providing US entities with a comprehensive understanding of the broader local landscape for higher education. These types of delegations create the opportunity to leverage existing local initiatives to advance partnerships and priorities.

Action Items

- ➔ English language training was identified as a major priority by local partners in the Maghreb. Prior to the delegation, the University of Texas (UT) at Austin was developing a pilot program to train students to teach English as a second language. As a result of the delegation, a partnership is being developed between UT and AMIDEAST to bring this course to the Maghreb. In the summer of 2013, UT's pilot course will be launched for six weeks with students at their campus. Following their training, students will then be placed for six weeks in Morocco and/or Tunisia by AMIDEAST. AMIDEAST's connections with universities and

educational institutions in the region made them an ideal partner to help place UT students.

Work with the Diaspora from Each Country

Engaging the Maghreb's diaspora is a key component to building sustainable partnerships in the region. The diaspora has expertise and resources that can be used to help develop opportunities in the education space. It is important to engage members of the diaspora to participate in projects and delegations, as well as to serve as anchor partners to build out stronger ties between the US and local institutions. In addition, members of the diaspora can serve as mentors, coaches, and provide financial resources for building out projects and partnerships.

Action Items

- ➔ In cooperation with AIDA (Algerian International Diaspora Association), PNB-NAPEO will work to advance continued higher education exchange programs between US universities and Algerian universities. AIDA intends to utilize its extensive network to leverage expertise and finances for the development of Algeria's education initiatives.

LONG TERM ACTION ITEMS (JUNE 2012-JUNE 2013)

Building a Consortium of American Higher Education Institutions for Partnerships

The PNB-NAPEO Secretariat at the Aspen Institute will work to build out the network of higher education institutions that are looking to build partnerships in the Maghreb, as well as in other PNB priority countries. The mission of this consortium will be to develop partnerships in the region that support local efforts to develop curricula, create cross-cultural exchanges for students, faculty-to-faculty exchanges and broader university partnerships. The consortium will also provide American higher education institutions with direct links to the region and easy access to local partners, which in turn will create partnerships for local projects.

The PNB-NAPEO Secretariat will engage with higher education institutions within its network to bolster connections between these institutions and counterparts in the Maghreb, as well as facilitate follow-up roundtables, web-conferences and delegations to the region.

Develop Partnerships with Community Colleges and Technical Institutions

Much of the delegation focused on undergraduate and graduate level education in business and the sciences. However, interest was also expressed in fostering linkages between American community colleges-particularly their technical education programs-and vocational training efforts in the Maghreb.

In response to this interest, The PNB-NAPEO Secretariat will lead a 2nd Higher Education delegation to the Maghreb in early 2013 that will focus on community colleges and vocational training.

Stay Connected with the Private Sector

It is important to stay connected to the private sector and involve companies as much as possible in the development of initiatives that support higher education. It is particularly key to include partners in the local private sector that can influence and guide content that focuses on local market needs for skills. Their buy-in will allow for long term impact in the areas of skill building, mentoring and coaching, and financing.

The Aspen Institute's PNB-NAPEO Secretariat will work to further build out the network of universities that are looking to build partnerships across the Maghreb and throughout PNB priority countries.

Injaz al Maghrib serves as an example of a regional organization that has built a strong network of private sector companies in Morocco that provide volunteer mentors and coaches for students developing businesses. The private sector coaches guide students from the start-up phase to exit phase of their business, and provide hands-on training in entrepreneurship skills.

Action Items

- The Smart Center, described previously and housed at the Tunis Business School, may be built up as a significant tool for entrepreneurs in Tunisia if multinational companies join as partners. The PNB-NAPEO Secretariat is working to identify potential partners to support the Smart Center, and several members of the PNB Steering Committee have expressed a strong interest in this project.

Importance of Regulatory Framework/Engaging Public Sector

Teachers and students both need the appropriate environment to apply the skills training they receive. Public sector buy-in and engagement is crucial to ensure the right conditions to practice those skills and flourish as entrepreneurs.

Action Items

- Conducting partnerships with public universities often requires the engagement of the Ministry of Higher Education in Algeria. During the delegation's meeting with Ministry representatives, participants were encouraged to develop potential partnership opportunities with public universities that could be formalized in an MOU with the Ministry of Higher Education to create continuity and broader support.
- One action item that emerged during the delegation was for Wayne State University to work with Algerian universities to develop a 3+2 program in which Algerian students would complete their first three years of studies in Algeria and conclude their education with two years at Wayne State. Of these two years in the US, one would be dedicated towards intensive English training, and the second would focus on each student's specific field of study. Ultimately, Algerian

students would graduate with a Bachelor's and a Master's degree from their home institution after five years. Once Wayne State and its Algerian counterparts develop this model, it has the potential to be expanded significantly to include a wide participation of universities in the US and Algeria.

Funding

It goes without saying that funding is a key component for developing university partnerships and exchange programs, and yet it remains a key challenge for the implementation of projects in the region. That said, in many cases even a small amount of funding can have an enormous impact on a local community.

Before seeking funding, it is important to build out a strong network of partners that have an abiding interest in the project or exchange program. In particular, private sector partners that have a strategic interest and an established track record of success in supporting higher education efforts will make the project or exchange program more sustainable. The project, in turn, will become more attractive in the eyes of possible funders.

It is critical for organizations implementing educational partnerships to invest heavily in a true partner relationship with potential funders. Program implementers seeking funding should avoid a posture of controlling all elements and requirements of a program, but instead be open to the ideas and priorities of a potential funder. Implementers must be willing to dedicate time to talking through questions, ideas and challenges that potential funders may raise. This approach will help create a situation in which the ownership of the project is shared by both the implementer and the funder. In turn, a greater incentive for the funding organization to invest significant time and resources in developing the project will be generated, which can also lead to the funder connecting the implementing organization to other partners and sources of funding.

Engage with US Embassies in Country

The US Embassy in each country can be very helpful in forging partnerships and relationships locally. It is beneficial for US entities to keep embassies engaged as conversations are advanced with local Maghreb organizations, or as specific initiatives are developed with universities in the region. In addition, the various embassies often administer local programs that could serve as catalysts for new education partnerships in country. For example, the US Embassy in Algeria was the primary organizer and host for the PNB-NAPEO Higher Education Delegation's visit to Algeria, in partnership with the PNB-NAPEO Algeria local chapter.

Conclusion

Building sustainable partnerships in higher education is not an easy task. It requires the right mix of partners to truly invest in turning ideas into action. PNB-NAPEO strives to create an ecosystem where more partnerships and connections are not only possible, but can flourish and have long-term impact. With the support of the US Department of State, the PNB-NAPEO Secretariat aims to create the conditions where the US and local private sector partners can more easily work together to generate change on the ground in the Maghreb.

This report represents the beginning of what is intended to be a long-term conversation. The higher education delegation to the Maghreb serves as a starting point for developing a framework to build partnerships in the region. The PNB Secretariat will be conducting a series of follow-up activities, including web-seminars and roundtables, to assess the impact of the delegation and advance the short term action items outlined in this report. These activities will be followed by in-person discussions on long term action items in the Maghreb. The PNB-NAPEO Secretariat also intends to lead a second higher education delegation to the Maghreb specifically focused on community colleges and vocational training.

Follow-up Events

The PNB-NAPEO Secretariat will host the following roundtables, delegations and conferences in order to further advance partnerships in higher education.

- **Fall 2012**
Webinar on University Partnerships hosted by the Aspen Institute, Washington, DC
- **October 2012**
English Language Training Roundtable
- **December 2012**
PNB Global Chapter Meeting/Global Entrepreneurship Program Conference, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- **January 2012**
2nd Higher Education Delegation: Community Colleges and Vocational Training
- **April 2013**
3rd US Maghreb Entrepreneurship Conference, Tunis, Tunisia
- **June 2013**
Follow-up Delegation to Maghreb

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