

Follow Us:



English

العربية

الفنار للإعلام

AL-FANAR MEDIA

NEWS & OPINION ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION

HOME

NEWS

OPINION

RESOURCES

JOBS

NEWS

Education-Research Conference Stirs a Hornet's Nest

Nay Elrahi / 05 Nov 2013

Tweet

SUBSCRIBE

للاشتراك

Sign up to receive a free newsletter about Arab higher-education.

سجل للحصول على أخبار التعليم العالي في المنطقة العربية من الفنار للإعلام

للاشتراك

RELATED ARTICLES

Advanced Degree Programs Proliferating in Lebanon
Experts Reconsider Education at a Doha Conference
Conversation with Karma El Hassan: Driving Quality Control With Data
A Gateway to Arab World Educational Research

LATEST TWEETS



@AlFanarMedia

RT @HammametConf: 'Universities missing in action in the new Egyptian Literary Wave' <http://t.co/MeQYXHZcST>
يبدو أن هناك أكثر من صراع في #سوريا. اقرأ المقال وشارك
تعليم #9ao5DtSDaA <http://t.co/9ao5DtSDaA> برأيك علي هذا الرابط
#مناهج #جامعات #تعليم عالي
Apparently there is more than one conflict in
#Syria. Read & comment on this link
<http://t.co/ym4f1jGF2W>



Educational research conference in Lebanon (Photo by Nay Elrahi).

A conference on educational research at Arab universities opened a disciplinary Pandora's box, forcing everyone—graduate students, professors and researchers—to look their reality in the eye.

The scrutiny by conference participants of their situation revealed a lot: a field too preoccupied with “abstracted empiricism”, primarily concerning itself with statistics and correlation at the expense of contributing knowledge, deliberately avoiding politically-sensitive issues and evading the analysis of government documents.

That's not all. The conference—“Graduate and Postgraduate Programs in Education in Arab Universities:

Popular

Comments



Critical Citizenship for Critical Times

19 Aug 2013, 11 Comments

Quality and Added Value"—set the stage for some of Lebanese University's burnt-out-yet-proud students to vent, discuss and analyze their realities, and stirred up a hornet's nest on one of the most contentious issues on the Lebanese educational scene: The Lebanese University itself. The conference created the platform for the students to openly engage in a much-needed debate on their expectations with their peers and professors and to compare and contrast their realities with fellow education researchers from across the Arab world. The meeting, on November 1 and 2, was organized by the Arab Educational Information Network —Shamaa and the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies and was hosted by the Lebanese American University.

The conference's objective was to allow education researchers to present their perspectives on graduate education and discuss its quality. Education researchers, graduate students and professors came together in an attempt to answer what for participants is the million-dollar question: "What needs to be done to improve the quality of educational research in Arab universities?"

Participants' contributions varied. Some were resistant to acknowledge the difficult situation of educational research in the region; some were highly outspoken and self-critical in their analysis and some were even accusatory and provocative.

The conference featured panels discussing a broad spectrum of subjects. Presentations focused on the trends in educational research in the Arab world (Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon), and discussed models of international programs with presentations spanning programs in Finland, the United States, Canada and Germany.

Some presentations were heartfelt. Two students, Samar Al-Kassar and Sahar Chaer, shared their personal experience with their program. Their presentation, "Understanding the Graduate Student Journey: The Case of Lebanese University," was the result of a study they conducted together to describe the program they are in, the Doctoral School of Literature, Humanities, & Social Sciences, from their perspective. They reported facing an absence of orientation for their graduate programs, the unavailability of recent resources at the university, a lack of clear-cut guidelines, a shortage of well-established policies, the need for a professional-development center to help them with career advice, a limited number of expert advisors, a large number of candidates per class and the favoring of certain majors with the administrative excuse of a lack of specialists in some fields. Despite the challenges, Samar and Sahar described strategies that helped them to persist through the journey, namely the careful selection of advisors and the fostering of collegial ties with them, and building personal relationships with fellow doctoral candidates.

These strategies and challenges were no surprise to fellow Ph.D. candidate, Mira Alameddine. In her presentation, "The Making of a Good Ph.D. Program," about the same school at Lebanese University, she said that it does not meet international standards. She said that the program has no clear objectives, supervisors fail to prepare students for their dissertations, and courses fall short of students' expectations.

Some other Lebanese University students in the audience objected to the critical presentations, saying that the speakers had failed to mention many positive features of studying for an advanced degree at Lebanese University

One surprising presentation at the conference by Adnan El Amine, a founder of the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies and Shamaa and a professor of sociology of education, revealed what might have been the most bold statement of the conference: that the higher-education professors are the main enforcers of graduate students' problematic patterns and trends in research.

Based on his analysis of over 2000 studies by education professors, and 184 master's and Ph.D. theses stored in the Shamaa database by September 2013, El Amine boldly laid out the main function of theses and research in education in this part of the world: socialization rather than producing knowledge. In a talk that electrified the meeting, El Amine recommended "encouraging more analytical research production to enhance educational knowledge."

In interviews at the margins of the conference, other participants voiced compelling thoughts. Professor Kidai from Morocco stressed that thesis supervision is key in improving the quality of educational research, asserting that "We need to take risks with our students, in terms of choosing their subjects and research tools." Alameddine, the Lebanese University student, agreed: "We need to start working on new subjects; subjects that we have no prior research on and build a framework upon which future researchers can build."

The dean of the Faculty of Education at Lebanese University, Zalfa Ayoubi, saw the betterment of



How "Al Fanar" Got its Name

21 Feb 2013, 5 Comments



Will the Latest Generation of Online Courses Help the Arab World?

19 Jul 2013, 5 Comments



The Arab World's Tangled Linguistic Landscape

19 Apr 2013, 4 Comments



With Tongue in Cheek: How to Game the Rankings

17 Oct 2013, 3 Comments



Jihane Mrad

It would be really interesting to see how many schools will participate. With all the corruption and



adamu ahmed

The perversion of rules to get favourable ranking willy-nilly, could ultimately back -fire and descr



Rune

I fully agree that MOOCS hold many pluses for a lot of people, all around the world. Online educatio



Maha Bali

Refreshingly funny and insightful! Would love to see more articles like this one! Thanks



Nagib Choueiri

Please Link to Forbes article "We'd Be Better Off Without College Rankings": <http://www.forbes.com/>

educational research in the Arab world with the shift in the nature of the research papers produced. "We do need more analytical research work and we need to be less dependent on statistics and numbers," he said. To Suzanne Abou Rjeili, of Saint Joseph University, the prime solution is related to the researchers' ways of working. "We need to create committees of researchers and collaborate in multiple directions: "inter-disciplinarily within the same institution, as well as across different institutions; both South-South and North-South."

SHARE

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name

Email

Comment

HTML tags are not allowed.

Post Comment