

Foreign Universities in Qatar: A Critical Review of Policy and Sustainability Issues

FETHI B JOMAA AHMED
CILE, CIS

Hamad Bin Khalifa University
Education City, Doha
QATAR

fahmed@hbku.edu.qa; fethibja@gmail.com

Abstract: Qatar is transitioning toward a knowledge society and aims to become a hub for international education. Qatar's Permanent Constitution and Nation Vision 2030 explicitly refer to the role of government in promoting sound education and making it the prime driver of human, social, and economic development. The government has invested 3.5% of its GDP in education. Since 1998, Qatar has succeeded in contracting with 11 international foreign universities to open International Branch Campuses (IBCs) in Qatar, including Texas A&M University, Weill Cornell Medicine, Georgetown University, University College London, and the University of Calgary. These IBCs offer a range of specializations and degree programmes, such as medicine, engineering, foreign affairs, journalism, and tourism. Hence, this study attempts to examine Qatar's policy on IBCs and investigate its sustainability. The paper focuses on discussing critical policy issues, including English as a language of instruction, mixed-gender education, and IBC 'glocalization', and addresses sustainability issues related to the IBCs such as political will, economic diversification, and the contribution of the IBCs to Qatari society. This library-based, theoretical, and critical study provides a basis for extended scholarly investigations and debates on Qatar's unique model of hosting foreign universities' campuses.

Key-Words: Qatar, International Education, IBCs, Policy, Sustainability, Model

1 Introduction

1.1 Education in Qatar

Qatar has emerged as a country renowned for its remarkable achievements in education, human development, and media. A few decades ago it was a traditional Gulf society, but since the ratification of the Permanent Constitution in 2004 and the approval of the Vision 2030 in 2008, a huge transition has occurred. These two documents explicitly refer to the role of government in promoting sound education and making it the prime driver of development. Since 1998 the government has massively increased its investment in education, including inviting prominent global foreign higher education institutions to open branches in Qatar. There are 11 International Branch Campuses (IBCs) currently operating in Qatar, offering a range of specializations and degree programmes. A cursory review of the literature would suggest that there is lack of material on studying the status quo and future of these IBCs in Qatar. Thus, this article examines Qatar's pressing policy and sustainability issues regarding IBCs by critically analysing three major policy issues and three sustainability issues. The policy issues include English as language of instruction, mixed-gender education, and the 'glocalization' of the IBCs. The three sustainability topics include the political will, the diversification of the economy, and the contribution of the IBCs to the well-being of Qatar's present and future generations.

This library-based study is both descriptive and analytical and applies some normative perspectives incorporating the author's insights derived from five years of working experience with the Qatar Foundation, which hosts most of the IBCs, as well as his engagement in several events organized by the IBCs themselves. The study is significant because it is relatively comprehensive in terms of the scale of topics covered; up-to-date in terms of data; and original in terms of referring to primary sources and references. This study will have achieved the author's purpose if it is useful for other scholars, and provokes more scholarly debates on Qatar's unique model of hosting foreign universities' campuses.

1.2 Country Profile

Qatar is located on the coast of the Arabian Gulf with a total area of approximately 11,627 km². It shares a land border with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the South and a maritime border with Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Iran (Hukoomi, n.d.; Taha, 2012, p. 119). The earliest evidence of human habitation indicates that this part of the Arabian Peninsula has been inhabited since at least 4000 BC, and in classical antiquity its inhabitants were called “Catharrei” by Pliny the Elder (1st century AD), and the permanent settlement was called “Catara” or “Cadaei” and “Kadara Polis”, as depicted on a map by Ptolemy (2nd century AD). In more recent history the Ottomans ruled Qatar for four consecutive centuries until 1915, and it became a British Protectorate from November 3, 1916, until it gained independence on September 3, 1971. The Al-Thani family has ruled the country since 1868 AD (Al-Sharqawi, 2013, pp. 196-198; Fromherz, 2012, pp. 41-43; Hamdan, 2012, pp. 111-113; Taha, 2012, pp. 101-103, 140-142)

Qatar was populated by Arab, Indian, and Persian merchant communities, and served as a nexus connecting the Bedouin desert hinterland and terrestrial trading routes with the Indian Ocean maritime trade. Aside from domestic and international trade, local industries included pearl diving, fishing, farming, hunting, and camel breeding. Since the late 1990s there has been a massive influx of foreign workers, such that the net population of Qatar is now almost 2.8 million, of whom only 12% are Qatari nationals. Islam is the official religion, and Arabic is the official language, while English is frequently used as the second language. In terms of GDP per capita, Qatar is second only to Lichtenstein, with \$124,500 in 2018 (CIA, 2019; Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics [MDPS], 2019; Worldometers, 2019). In line with the Qatar National Vision 2030, the government has invested heavily in general infrastructural development and mega projects, such as \$45 billion for Lusail City, and \$25 billion for Doha Rail. Additionally, the Qatar Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) stands at \$335 billion (IMF, 2019; MDPS, 2019; Qatar Central Bank, 2017; Weber, 2014, p. 64).

2 Qatar’s Education System

2.1 Historical Development

Before the 1950s, education in Qatar was traditionally based on schools that offered casual classes, basically in Qur’an reading and reciting, and Arabic language, which were conducted at mosques or at home by traditionally trained teachers. However, some families sent their children to Egypt and Lebanon for further education. The modern education system in Qatar was formalized in 1951 with the establishment of the Ministry of Ma’arif (education). Since then, the government started building modern public schools as well as related infrastructures. The tertiary education system began with the establishment of the College of Education in 1973. The Supreme Education Council (SEC), which is the highest educational authority responsible for education policy, planning, development, and enforcement, was founded in 2002. It is worth mentioning that the government provides free education in public schools, and pays for textbooks, stationary, health services, and utilities (e.g. electricity and water) (Al-Sharqawi, 2013, pp. 203-206; Hamdan, 2012, pp. 199-207; Powell, 2014, pp. 258-259).

2.2 Qatar University (QU)

Qatar University was established in 1977 as the preeminent national institution of higher education in Qatar. It currently offers 86 academic programmes, including 20 PhD and 27 Master’s programmes, and is the home of 17 research centres. QU has over 20,000 enrolled students and over 45,000 alumni, and it employs over 2000 faculty members. The University has launched its five-year strategy (2018-2022) ‘From Reform to Transformation’ that seeks to promote excellence in four key areas; education, research, institution, and engagement. *Times Higher Education* (THE, 2019) ranked Qatar University 52 in Asia University Rankings, and 401-500 in the World University Rankings, with an impressive score of 99.8 of international outlook.

2.3 The Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF)

The Qatar Foundation (QF) was established by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani and his wife Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser in August 1995. The Foundation is the largest non-profit organization in Qatar. It consists of about 50 entities, including Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), eight IBCs (including Texas A&M and Weill Cornell Medicine), and several research establishments and world platforms

for creative thinking, such as Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP), and the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE). The Foundation promotes a culture of excellence and furthers its role in supporting an innovative and open society that aspires to nurture the future leaders of Qatar, developing sustainable human capacity, and social and economic prosperity for a knowledge-based society (Al-Sharqawi, 2013, pp. 216-217; Hamdan, 2012, p. 207; Powell, 2014, p. 269; Qatar Foundation, 2019).

2.4 International Education

The Qatari government began investing substantially in higher education more than 40 years ago, and adopted a unique policy consisting of two programmes: (a) to sponsor Qatari students to study abroad, and (b) to contract prominent foreign universities to open branches in Qatar. In the 1970s the government designed a scholarship scheme and provided generous scholarships for Qataris interested in studying in four geographical regions: Qatar; Arab region and Australia; United Kingdom and Europe; and United States and Canada. To administer this scholarship programme, the government established the Higher Education Institute (HEI) under the SEC in March 2005. The prime goal of this programme is to broaden the intellectual and cultural horizon of students and help them make educational and career choices based on their interests, abilities, and the labour requirements of the current and future Qatari economy. Ultimately, the students acquire an international standard of knowledge and skills, which they then invest into Qatari industry, education, and society (HEI, 2019; Stasz et al., 2007, pp. 71-75).

While all GCC states have long sponsored nationals to study abroad, Qatar has been particularly proactive in its substantial investment in attracting the best foreign higher education institutions to open branches in Doha, to provide Qatari students with equal premium higher education options within the country. Qatar consequently attracted different institutions from around the world to provide education for particular specialties in which they have particular strengths, with awards accredited by the same bodies as the home universities. Thus, from 1998 to 2012, Qatar recruited 11 of the best foreign higher educational institutions, particularly from the USA, Canada, UK, France, and the Netherlands. Each IBC was selected for its ability to educate and train students in fields targeted to help Qatar grow and diversify its economy, as well to prepare students for employment and global citizenship (Table 1).

Admission standards into the IBCs are high. English is the language of instruction, and offices and classrooms are equipped with cutting-edge facilities, with QF covering all expenses. For instance, the Foundation spends more than \$400 million to fund the operations of the six American institutions hosted in Education City, excluding construction expenses. In return, the IBCs pledged to provide educational programmes that are equal in quality to those in their mother campuses. They also agreed not to establish similar programmes elsewhere in the Middle East and consult the Foundation about the choice of each branch's dean and vice deans. The IBCs share the same mission, which essentially endeavours to achieve Qatar's National Vision 2030, helping develop Qatar's knowledge society, and producing global citizens (Bollag, 2016; Hamdan, 2012, p. 123; Havergal, 2016; Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2019; Powell, 2014, pp. 259-270).

3 Policy Issues

3.1 English as Medium of Instruction (EMI)

Using a foreign language as a medium of instruction is a culturally sensitive and politically contentious issue in the Arab world. The Arabic language is a particularly important aspect of Arab-Islamic ethnic identity and cultural expression, which was formerly used as the main medium of instruction in both traditional and modern educational systems throughout the Arab world except where foreign languages were specifically prioritised under colonial and neo-colonial ideologies (e.g. the widespread use of French in North Africa). In 2001 the Qatari government initiated a bold reform of the education system, including "the introduction of English as the medium of instruction (EMI) in K-12 mathematics and science classes" (Eslami, Seawright, & Ribeirto, 2016, p. 132).

The launch of this new policy could be attributed to the need for positive response to the globalization of English as the core language of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions, as well as international diplomacy and business. The education system in general was overhauled to address the low

scores of Qatari students in international assessment tests, such as PIRLS, TIMSS, and PISA, and the small percentage (8-20%) of students who mastered the set of learning outcomes in Mathematics, Science, English and Arabic subjects. Furthermore, Qatari employers expressed concerns about the poor English and communication skills of Qatari graduates.

Despite the convincing rationale for the policy, it instigated some tension, controversies, and frustration among Qataris. For instance, some students, parents and members of the community showed their dissatisfaction and viewed it as a threat to their Arab-Islamic identity, cultural values, and heritage. Meanwhile, others had positive attitudes toward English as they were already using it in and outside campus, and considered it extremely important to their future careers (Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2018; Weber, 2014, pp. 71-72). Nevertheless, in January 2012 SEC changed the policy and reverted to use Arabic as the language of instruction in both government schools and Qatar University. Apparently, the two main reasons that prompted this decision were the poor English language preparation of Qataris taught in Arabic government schools, and the fear that young Qataris would lose competence in Arabic language writing and speaking, and lose their cultural heritage.

However, it seems the general perception of Arabic and English as medium of instruction is gradually changing and there is a growing sense of understanding fact that they are both essential languages for Qataris, thus English should not be viewed as a threat to Arabic or students' national identity (Eslami, Seawright, & Ribeirto, 2016, pp. 132-145; Powell, 2014, p. 268; Stasz et al., 2007, p. 29; Weber, 2014, p. 72). The settling of government policy on a bilingual basis, with clear expansion of English in higher education, supports the IBCs current smooth running and future endurance, because they use English as medium of instruction, research, and communication.

3.2 Mixed-Gender Education

Gender is a controversial issue, which involves complex questions of social, cultural, religious, economic and political nature. Arab societies are often stereotyped as being patriarchal and gender-biased due to the traditional mores and beliefs of many cultures and communities in the past and modern times. The rapid change in culture and education in the West has been followed more slowly in developing countries, often meeting with resistance and accusations of cultural imperialism. Western critics of the GCC for instance berate gender segregation in local educational systems as a symptom of backwardness. Apologists opine that critics ignore the massive state spending on extensive and universal education for all citizens, including parallel schools and universities for males and females, full scholarships and bursaries for women to study abroad through to the PhD level, a luxury unimaginable for British or American women.

Indeed, as the Pew Research Centre (2016) notes, over a third of Gulf women born during the period 1976-1985 have higher education, an increase of over 30% compared to those born during 1936-1955, and have more post-secondary degrees than their male peers in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Gender segregation in education has enabled this development for women by enabling them to access academic opportunities, but it is increasingly unacceptable ideologically in the international pedagogical contexts, manifesting Western cultural hegemony in globalized education.

Indigenous Qatari society is conservative, and it cherishes the great value of the family institution and considers it as the nexus of the society. In the socialization process, men and women are taught to complete each other's roles with respect. The Permanent Constitution as well as Qatar National Vision 2030 do not make distinction between men and women as they all enjoy fundamental rights to various services and are equally held accountable for their actions before the law. Although gender segregation is widely observed in Qatar, it seems that residents and visitors have adapted to this social reality. Besides, mix-gender environment in some educational institutions, workplaces, and services are increasingly available. Within this context, the IBCs provide education services in a mixed-gender environment, enabling female students "to have an international education without travelling abroad" (Stolarick & Kouchaji, 2013, p. 241). However, many Qataris believe that it is essential to preserve the single-gender study environment option because "some women do not want to study in a mixed-gender environment" (Stasz et al., 2007, p. 76).

The option of studying at local universities in single-gender environments accounts for the fact that a large majority of students at Qatar University are female, which is attributed to their preferring educational options close to their homes (Powell, 2014, p. 269). It should be noted that female students have more options and

flexibility to further up their post-secondary studies in Qatar, whether in IBCs or local universities, and that they have the opportunity to become better educated over time and earn respected university degrees.

3.3 Glocalization of the IBCs

There are some concerns regarding the potential of marginalizing the national education system as the government fully supports the IBCs. Moreover, some people think that the IBCs could disturb the traditional Arab-Islamic values in Qatari society, because they provide wholly Western models of education, which bring high standards in academic programmes packaged in Western values and culture (Bollag, 2016; Powell, 2014, pp. 269-270). Qatar's leaders and policy makers are aware of the importance of both the global character as well as the national educational and societal value systems of the IBCs. Therefore, they endeavour to maintain both the global character and standards of the IBCs, and the local social and cultural atmosphere; this adaptive strategy to absorb globalization in local contexts is known as 'glocalization'. Stasz et al. (2007) highlighted some of the gaps in the glocalization process, and emphasized the need for coordination and cooperation in all aspects and phases. Qatar government and policy makers have seriously attended to these gaps and endeavoured to integrate the IBCs in the tertiary education system. This is done by supporting all types of planning, coordination and cooperation among the IBCs and across multiple organization including SEC, QF, and QU, in addition to considering employers' feedback about the labour market demand for educational services.

There are a lot of coordination among foreign universities, and between themselves and local institutions in Qatar. One of the striking examples of coordination and collaboration mechanisms is the cross registering and cross crediting of courses between IBCs between the six American universities in QF Education City. Some IBCs went a step further in collaboration and improving the integration process by offering joint courses and programmes. For instance, VCU, TAMU and WCM in Qatar have co-designed a new course "happy society" launched in January 2018, and made open to any education city students in their junior year (Bothwell, 2017; TAMU-Q, 2018; VCU-Q, 2019; WCM-Q, 2018). In addition, GU and NU in Qatar allow students to study a major subject at one institution and a minor at another (Bothwell, 2017; GU-Q, 2018). In the academic year 2018/2019, CMU is offering registration of joint programmes, training and workshops in between Education City universities and it has built partnership with more than 30 organizations, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Institute, Ministry of Interior Police Training Institute, Qatar Central Bank, and Qatar Airways (Abdurahman, 2018; CMU-Q, 2019). Furthermore, NU is considering Master's programme in health communication in collaboration with HBKU (Abdurahman, 2018). WCM expanded its collaborative efforts beyond the IBCs, and entered into partnership with Qatar University in medical education, health care, and research in Qatar (Ziegler & Associates, 2018).

4 Sustainability Issues

The huge financial and human resources invested in contracting the 11 IBCs and facilitating their smooth running in Doha obviously face the challenge of sustainability, particularly in view of the concerns raised by some observers that "these investments have been oriented mainly to Western models without sustained reflection on and tackling all of the contextual conditions needed to implement and sustain them" (Powell, 2014, p. 266). Besides, there is an emphasis on the need for balanced policy approach, which integrates local and foreign universities and supports their development. Therefore, the following paragraphs highlight three important factors that would ensure the stability and endurance of the IBCs in Qatar.

4.1 Political Will

The political leaders and the government of the State of Qatar have a clear vision and abundant resources to achieve their strategic goals. They have always been highly committed to promoting education, science, research, and innovation. For instance, HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani is considered a pioneer in establishing Qatar's knowledge society by making education the prime drive of all aspects of reform and development. During his rule (1995-2013), the Permanent Constitution was ratified and the National Vision 2030 was launched.

The Permanent Constitution includes numerous articles that explicitly refer to the right to education and emphasizes the role of the state in promoting sound education, fostering and encouraging scientific research, and helping disseminate knowledge, in addition to making general education compulsory and free of charge. For instance, Article 25 states “Education is one of the basic pillars of social progress. The State shall ensure foster and promote education” (The Permanent Constitution, 2004). Qatar National Vision 2030 explicitly emphasized education and knowledge production activities (Qatar National Vision, 2008). Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser initiated the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) in 2009. WISE is an international, multi-sectorial platform for creative thinking, debate, and purposeful action. Its community is a network of education stakeholders, from students to decision-makers, coming from about 200 countries. WISE has become a global reference for innovative approaches to modern education (Hamdan, 2012, pp. 199-206; WISE, 2018).

4.2 Economic Diversification

Qatar began exporting oil in 1949 and the country’s oil and gas reserves are expected to last for the next 57 and 100 years, respectively (Stolarick & Kouchaji, 2013, p. 226). However, the government is acutely aware of the fact that oil and gas resources are finite and their prices are fluctuating, while their populations and state expenditure are increasing over the long term. The sharp decline of oil and gas prices in recent years has inflicted heavy losses of revenues and consequently affected government capabilities in funding projects and creating uncertainties for national planning, since hydrocarbon wealth is the essential fuel of the national economy. The traditional patronage system of GCC economies with lavish social welfare spending and subsidies and a moribund local workforce depending on cheap foreign labour is increasingly untenable.

Consequently, the government has made considerable efforts to plan for diversification of the economy, in order to reduce dependency on hydrocarbon resources and the dominance of the oil and gas sectors. In 2005, the government founded the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) to strengthen the country’s economy with long-term strategic investments in non-hydrocarbon sectors, including manufacturing, financial services, and construction. For example, the Qatar Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) was valued at \$335 billion as of 2016 (Qatar Central Bank, 2016; World Economic Forum, 2016). Moreover, the government is applying an action plan to develop the infrastructure of the existing oil and gas fields, create new sources of renewable energy, and encourage recycling projects, and it has introduced other industries such as ammonia, fertilizer, petrochemicals, steel reinforcing, aluminium production, and plastics. Consequently, the share of hydrocarbon in real GDP marginally declined to 48.2% in 2017 from 53.2% in 2014, while the share of non-hydrocarbon in real GDP increased from 46.8% in 2014 to 51.8% in 2017 (IMF, 2018; MDPS, 2019; Qatar Central Bank, 2016, 2017; Weber, 2014, pp. 62-69).

Another aspect of economic diversification is reducing the dominance of the public sector on the economy and engaging the private sector and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to enable them to play a more active role in the economy (MDPS, 2019; Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008; Weber, 2014, pp. 68-69). The gradual reduction of dependence on the hydrocarbon sector and the implementation of the long-term reforms are leading toward a sustainable development system to ensure and preserve the rights of present and future generations to benefit from their wealth resources and finance existing and strategic projects, particularly in education, such as the IBCs.

4.3 Contribution of IBCs to Qatar’s Present and Future Wellbeing

The IBCs’ contributions to Qatar’s society and economy are extremely important for their survival and sustainability, as they must demonstrate tangible reforms in order to justify the massive state expenditure and political facilitation lavished upon them. To explain the quantitative and qualitative contributions, this analysis only gives an overview of the most significant aspects and illustrative examples of the IBCs’ contributions to the Qatari economy and society. The huge financial and human resources investments in contracting and supporting the 11 IBCs are strategically meant to feed the local as well as the international job market with highly qualified graduates.

Qatar has been hosting the IBCs for almost two decades, and the most striking examples of their positive impact during these years is the large number of graduates, most of whom are presumably employed in various sectors of Qatar’s economy, such as government services, engineering, and business. For example, more than

4500 graduates from the College of the North Atlantic entered the workforce locally (CNA-Q, 2019), over 760 students graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with various degrees in computer science (CMU-Q, 2019), and Texas A&M in Qatar has awarded nearly 1000 engineering degrees (TAMU-Q, 2019). Besides, about 640 students were awarded degrees in design from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU-Q, 2019), around 600 students graduated from Stenden University, many of them hold key positions in government departments and NGOs in Qatar (SU-Q, 2019), and over 300 graduates earned their degrees from Georgetown University and Northwestern University, with many of them going on to successful careers in Qatar (GU-Q, 2019; NU-Q, 2019). Also, more than 600 students graduated with different degrees in nursing and health sciences from the University of Calgary and became fully integrated leaders in Qatar's health care sector (UC-Q, 2019), and a total of 384 doctors have now graduated from Weill Cornell Medicine Qatar. A good number of them are working at Hamad Medical Corporation and other leading private hospitals (WCM-Q, 2019).

The IBCs not only feed the local workforce with thousands of qualified employees, and enter into partnerships with local institutions, but also play an active role in building capacities and contributing to the efforts toward establishing a modern knowledge society. For instance, Weber (2014) highlighted the significant role of Northwestern University – Qatar (NU-Q) in the growth of the media industry in Qatar by offering a journalism and communications programme. The demand for the graduates from NU-Q is very high, as many employers such as Al-Jazeera Media Network, Qatar News Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and communication departments (especially in universities) compete to recruit them.

The University of Calgary is also playing a leading role in delivering world class health care in Qatar. It is assisting the Qatari government in its efforts to redefine health care in Qatar and the Gulf region, VCU-Q is deeply involved with emerging design companies in Qatar (Ziegler & Associates, 2018). GU-Q conducts many public lectures and panel discussions addressing current issues in local, regional and world politics (ibid.; Redden, 2017).

HEC Paris management offers programmes designed to meet the specific needs of professionals and executives already in senior management positions in Qatar. For example, since the launch of the Executive Masters of Business Administration (EMBA) programme in 2011, 500 students graduated, 75 per cent of whom are Qatari. Moreover, in April 15, 2018 HEC held a Public Masterclass entitled 'Understanding Accounts and Financial Strategy in 60 Minutes', tailored to advance the financial strategic skills of the attendees (HEC-Q, 2018; Qatar Tribune, 2018; Redden, 2017).

The cultural influence of the IBCs has also been noticed in society. In addition to bringing their educational systems and world-class academic standards, the IBCs also brought their culture and values. All IBCs provide the same Western-style education as at their home campuses, particularly co-educational classes and academic freedom. All IBCs students and alumni communicate in English in campus and beyond. This is perhaps what prompted one researcher to say: "the American culture and educational methods exert a strong cultural impact on the country as Education City graduates enter the work force" (Weber, 2014, p. 63).

5 Conclusion

Qatar has rapidly changed from a traditional tribal community with small merchant enclaves to a dynamic and important contemporary state in world affairs and development. Qatar's leaders recognize the strategic importance of education and its strong correlation with comprehensive development. The government spends generously on education and provides scholarships for tertiary studies in Qatar and abroad. Its efforts have brought 11 world-class education institutions to Qatar's doorsteps. Qatar has developed a unique model in dealing with the IBCs, because almost all these branches belong to the top-ranked universities in the world, use English as medium of instruction, and conduct their classes in a mixed-gender environment. This model faced serious challenges and controversies, particularly in relation to certain policies, and raised some concerns about the sustainability of this project for Qatar's present and future generations. This study addressed three important policy issues: English as medium of instruction, mixed-gender education, and the glocalization of the IBCs.

It has been stressed that the issue of the medium of instruction is controversial, as Arabic is the official national language used in government educational institutions, thus the use of English in some elite institutions could induce a two-tier system, with poorer quality for some nationals. There were ad hoc debates on the rationale behind using English as a medium of instruction, and prosaically speaking it was obviously greatly to the advantage of foreign universities not to have to adapt their content delivery for Arabic clients. The matter is

quite sensitive as English was viewed as threat to the identity of the young Qataris and the future of Arabic language, but the general trend is now going toward considering English and Arabic as necessary and complementary.

Similarly, the issue of mixed-gender education is sensitive, as many female students still want to study in a single-gender environment. However, in the current Qatari context both single-gender and mixed-gender educational options are provided, and the government could not do more to facilitate women’s access to education without forcing them to attend institutions.

Maintaining the global nature of the IBCs programmes and academic standards and integrating them in the local tertiary education system has proven to be a challenging policy issue. The government in general and Qatar Foundation in particular endeavoured to sustain the process of IBC glocalization by favourable policies like the language and mixed-gender education policy, and by encouraging cooperation and coordination mechanisms and activities, such as courses cross-registering and joint programmes. However, it is important to highlight that the collaboration and coordination mechanisms and efforts have only gained momentum very recently. Besides, it is vital to provide financial as well as performance incentives for the national tertiary education institutions to uplift their level to an adequate international standard. This balanced policy approach will ensure the sustainability of the glocalization process.

The question of whether or not the educational strategy using IBCs is sustainable is legitimate, essentially in view of the substantial financial and human resources invested in it, the instability of hydrocarbon revenues, and the feasibility of the positive impact on the job market as well as on wellbeing of the present and future generations. The political will of the Qatari leaders, government, and policy makers was favourable to host the IBCs and support them to operate and endure in Qatar. Therefore, the government decision to diversify the economy is a significant step to avoid any potential risks that might affect the availability of adequate funds for the IBCs to continue operating and grow.

Furthermore, the IBCs have proven their significance by their enormous contribution to the Qatari economy and society, quantitatively and qualitatively. Nevertheless, the IBCs’ impact on the Qatari economy and society needs further investigation, particularly by conducting empirical studies using quantitative research techniques to measure the scale of their contributions.

Table1. Foreign Universities’ Branches in Qatar

Institution	Home Campus	Field	Established
University College London (UCL-Q)	UK	Museum Studies	2012
HEC Paris (HEC-Q)	France	Business	2012
Northwestern University (NU-Q)	USA	Journalism	2008
University of Calgary (UC-Q)	Canada	Nursing	2007
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service (GU-Q)	USA	Foreign Affairs	2005
Carnegie Mellon University (CMU-Q)	USA	Computer Science	2004
Texas A&M University (TAMU-Q)	USA	Engineering	2003
Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM-Q)	USA	Medicine	2001
College of the North Atlantic (CNA-Q)	Canada	Applied Sciences	2001
Stenden University (SU-Q)	The Netherlands	Tourism and Hospitality	2000
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU-Q)	USA	Design	1998

Source: (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2019; Powell, 2014, p. 256).

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