Why should skills just be for the vocational sector?

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Business as usual is not an option…..

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In the world of 2014, the only certainty is uncertainty

By 2020 there could be a billion workers with low skills in developing nations, with a potential global surplus of low-skilled of c95 million (The McKinsey Global Institute World of Work Report, 2012)

In May 2013, the Chinese media reported that only 36% of the 7 million graduating students had adequate skills for employment; the percentage was even less among postgraduates (media reports)

In the Middle East, 80% of post-secondary students are in universities; however, three quarters study disciplines which are not in demand by employers (e4e report, 2013)

70% of new hires to the private sector in the Middle East lack soft skills and 67% lack hard skills

In Latin America, business leaders report the key skills missing in graduates are critical thinking, oral and written communication and life skills (Economic Intelligence Unit, 2009)

Globally, 35% of employers report difficulty in finding sufficiently employment ready new hires

In 2010, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills reported that 90% of the jobs of 2020 had not been invented, yet 80% of the workforce of 2020 was already employed

What's the skills problem?

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- Reliance on vocational education and or employers to address skills
- Disconnect between higher education and employers
- Multi-skilling requirements cutting across many disciplines
- Academic freedom versus institutional inertia
- Time needed to update university programs in a changing world
- The high-jacking of the term 'vocational'
- A focus on the differences not synergies between higher education, further education, TVET, community colleges, applied learning…….

What higher education can learn from the vocational sector about skills

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- Close involvement of industry in vision, strategy and design – at national, institutional, sector and program level
- Programs defined by or closely linked to National Occupational Standards
- International qualifications well respected by employers across boundaries – eg ACCA, CITB
- Qualifications frameworks widely used – knowledge, skills and competency

- Assurance of employment – such as through apprenticeships
- Localization – making offerings specific to local needs
- Graduate skills compared to vocational skills and competency

Skills gaps, shortages and jobs mismatch – the role of higher education

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- Research: skills gaps specific to local, national and global market
- Skills hot and 'not' spots in STEM relative to international benchmarks
- Tailoring provision to needs of private employers and future employment prospects
- Internships or placements relevant to student studies
- Balancing faculty employment with industrialists and academics

- Recognising the vital importance of the informal economy in driving up wealth and productivity
- Finding ways to encourage female participation and employment, especially in emerging nations

What higher education may need to consider in institutional and program design…..

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Programs defined by or closely linked to National Occupational (Skills) Standards (eg Saudi Skills Standards for HR) especially in absence of a professional body

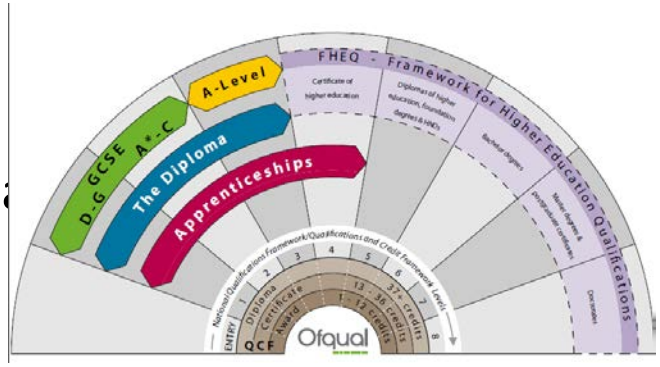
المقاييس السعودية للمهارات
Saudi Skills Standards

training.gov.au
A JOINT INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN AND STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS

NOS
NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

Link to employer competency frameworks, such as for accountancy professionals

Referencing to national or sector specific qualifications frameworks (national, meta such as EQF, AQF, FHEQ; industry focused such a oil and gas) BUT – beware!



Every nation’s economy needs flexible, employment-related higher education: it drives economic prosperity and social development

Some examples…..

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Universities and professional bodies jointly delivering academic and professional qualifications, in say, accountancy or HR (eg Oxford Brookes and ACCA)

Embedded Diplomas within degree programmes or add-on Diplomas as additional studies

Private universities jointly operated by investors and/or a company and academics (eg Arab American University in Jenin, Palestine)

Industry-based apprenticeship run by not-for profits, employers, industry associations, academics (eg Sjahi, Saudi Arabia)

Graduate programs developed jointly by companies and public/private universities to address specific skills gaps (eg Vale SA and public universities in Brazil to develop highly qualified specialists)

To conclude….

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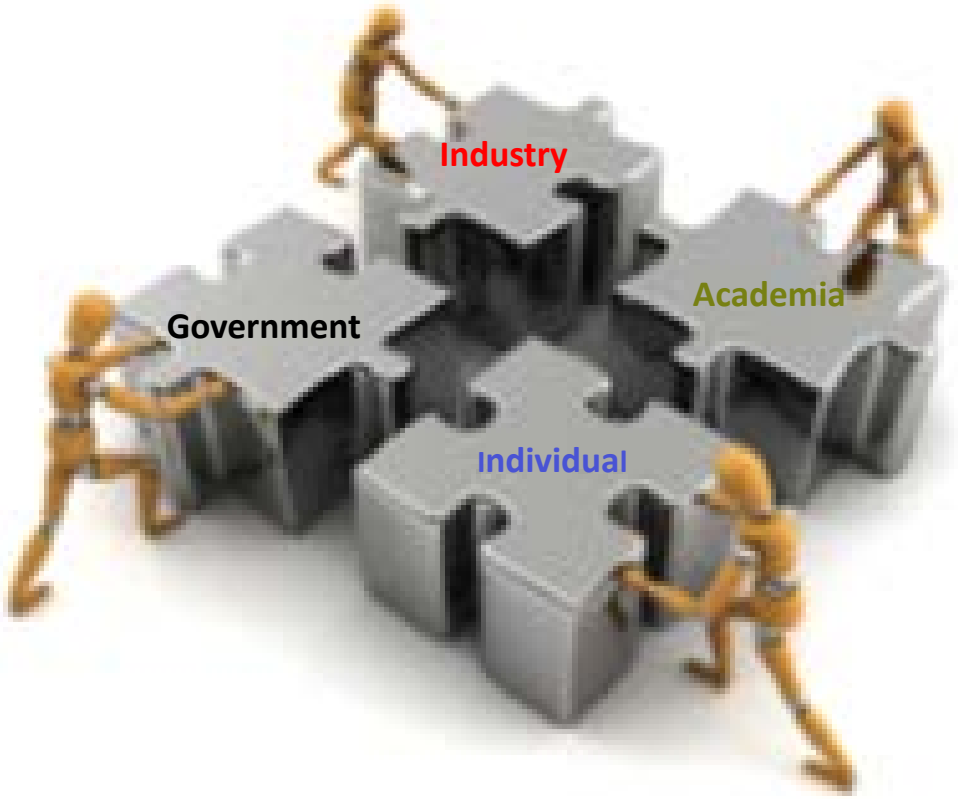
Job creation is dependent on a well qualified and skilled workforce; the alternative is labour import

Higher education needs to channel the energy of youth through helping to create better employment prospects

Robust economic growth, building a balanced economy, a thriving middle class, and broadly-shared prosperity requires a significant expansion of the skills of adults in many nations, with HE supporting flexible workplace training

Governments alone cannot address skills gaps – it has to be a shared responsibility between individuals and public and private stakeholders at federal, state, and local levels

….creating partnerships



Thank you

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