

The Role of Higher Education in Economic Diversification: Skills and Employability Gaps in Qatar

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Abstract

This research work presents a critical examination of the role of Qatar's higher education system in supporting the nation's economic diversification agenda, and specifically addresses the skills mismatches and graduate employability gaps in non-oil sectors. Guided by Human Capital Theory (HCT), the study employs qualitative desk-based analysis of national policies (e.g., QNV 2030, NDS 3), institutional strategies, and sectoral reports. The findings reveal misalignment between policy intent and implementation. Although, Qatar's national strategies prioritize human capital development and labour market relevance, fragmented reforms, weak industry-academia linkages, and socio-cultural barriers hinder effectiveness. Persistent skills gaps, particularly in digital and sector-specific competencies, tend to undermine the graduate readiness for priority sectors like ICT, healthcare, and green energy. Moreover, institutional initiatives (such as- career services, internships, entrepreneurship hubs) reflect commitment but lack robust impact tracking and contextual integration. The study concludes that despite strategic alignment with diversification goals, systemic challenges in execution limit higher education's contribution, jeopardizing anticipated returns on investment and long-term economic resilience. The findings highlight the need for reforms focused on contextualized pedagogy, stronger industry partnerships, and national outcome frameworks.

Keywords: Education Policy; Job Market; Skills; Workforce; Human Capital