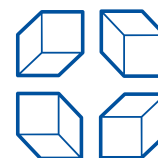


The ICEF Middle East & Africa Workshop

The leading event for international student recruitment in the Middle East, Africa, Turkey and South Asia



Jumeirah Emirates Towers, Dubai • February 01 – 03, 2009



ICEF

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ICEF Middle East 2008 Event Report

Saudi Arabia Drives Regional Growth: A Market Report from the 2008 ICEF Middle East Workshop in Dubai

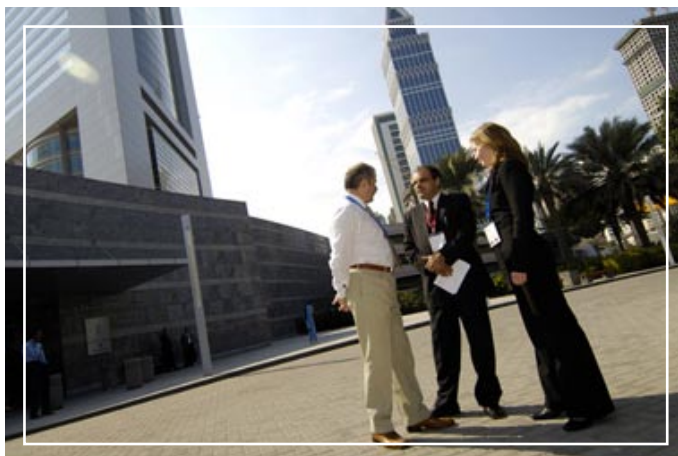
The Middle East region accounts for a growing share of the world's international students. With an oil-wealth-driven expansion of education investment throughout much of the region, and a dynamic – and growing – school-age population, the region figures prominently in the marketing strategies of the world's leading study destinations.

The annual ICEF Middle East Workshop draws carefully selected agents from more than 20 countries from around the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, and this diversity was very much in evidence at the 2008 workshop.

http://www.icef.com/component/option,com_phut/Itemid,347/lang,en/

From February 3-5, 317 participants from 35 countries gathered in Dubai – the region's cosmopolitan international hub, and a “boom town” in the true sense of the term. The workshop featured an intensive schedule of meetings and seminars designed to build productive relationships with partners from 20 countries as well as study destinations from around the world.

Seminar highlights in Dubai included an overview of UK visa processing by UKvisas' Jackie Colton, a session on working effectively with educational agents by Coventry University's Andy Nicol, a thought-provoking seminar on language



travel as a stepping stone to further education by Stephen Roussounis of Malvern House London, and an overview of student mobility trends in the Middle East by Daniel Obst of the Institute of International Education.

Workshop participants were also hosted at a special evening reception at the world-famous Burj Al Arab Hotel

<http://www.burj-al-arab.com>

The Burj Al Arab is a spectacular architectural feature of Dubai, and is often noted as one of the world's premiere luxury hotels.



The stage was therefore set for new partnerships in Dubai with 21% of the participants attending their first-ever ICEF workshop, a strong mix of education providers from Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania, and agents from throughout the Middle East. “[The ICEF Workshop] is an excellent opportunity to meet international education providers and also to know about the new courses offered to students,” said Jasmin Farooq of the Aman Management Consultancy (UAE). Peush Jain of the India-based agency SSBCL agreed, “I can say that months’ worth of work was finished [here in Dubai] in three days.”



The United States, the UK, and Australia are noted destinations for the Arab world’s international students, but the broader regional market is diverse and its rapid growth has opened doors for new competitors. New patterns of student mobility are emerging as a result. For example, emerging Asian destinations, notably Malaysia, China, and India, have also come to play an important role in hosting the region’s students.

There are certainly some important hot spots for growth in the Middle East. In particular, the burgeoning international enrolment of students from Saudi Arabia has played an important role in the region’s overall growth in recent years, and in some ways exemplifies the potential for further dramatic gains in international enrolments.

Saudi Arabia’s population of 26 million is projected to double within the next 50 years, and, today, more than 70% of Saudi nationals are under 40 years of age. The country’s higher education system is under considerable pressure as a result to accommodate many more students and also to create greater linkages between education programmes and work force training requirements.

The Saudi government has responded to these pressures with massive investments in new higher education institutions – 12 new universities have opened in the Kingdom since 2004 – as well as generous scholarship programmes for Saudi students. The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education has also supported expanded partnerships with foreign institutions, both to help build higher education capacity domestically and to host increased numbers of Saudi students abroad.



The effects of these investments are now being felt in study destinations around the world. There are roughly 40,000 Saudi students currently enrolled in universities in Europe, North America, and Asia. Saudi enrolments have grown quickly throughout this decade with Australia reporting a 500% increase from 2002-2007, and the US reporting 130% growth from 2006-2007 alone.

Historically, the majority of Saudi students have gone abroad for post-graduate studies, but the growing demand for education among Saudi students has created a shift here as well. More Saudi students are now pursuing English-language studies abroad, and as many as 50% of all international students from the Kingdom are enrolled in undergraduate programmes.



The US example illustrates the dramatic effect of the large Saudi scholarship programmes that have been endowed by the Ministry of Higher Education over the past three years. The King Abdullah Scholarships Programme (KASP) fully funds 5,000 students per year for studies in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, China, and India. More recently, the Ministry has established an even larger programme to fund 15,000 further scholarships in the US and 3,000 in Asia. This scholarship programme alone has reversed what had been a sharp decline in Saudi enrolments in the US since 2001.

“Saudi Arabia is a regional engine for growth in education,” notes ICEF CEO Markus Badde. “But it also stands as a current-day example of the great potential for further growth in the Middle East.”

Badde added that Saudi students have the means and the desire to pursue higher education, but owing to rapid population growth and the limited number of university spaces at home, more and more of the region’s students will look abroad for their education at all levels. The challenge now is for destination countries, and individual institutions, to earn their place in the market. The competition is intense, and some of the traditional patterns of student mobility are being challenged by major emerging destinations in Asia.



The 2009 ICEF Middle East Workshop will be held in Dubai from February 1-3.