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### Public Versus Private Higher Education in Qatar: Quality, Returns and Matching to the Labor Market

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Education is the major driver of growth. Recently, special attention is being given to the mismatch between the education system and the skills required and needed by the labor market. The aim of the present research is threefold. First, it assess the higher education system in the state of Qatar through a comparison of the quality of education provided by public versus private universities. The second goal of the research is to understand- using a new micro dataset that is collected for the purpose of this study- the mismatch that exists between the Qatari's labor market and the education that one receives at the university level. Third, this research makes an effort towards understanding the returns of education in Qatar, which help putting the first two objectives of this study into a relatively more complete framework. The collection of a quantitative micro dataset represents an important goal of this study. This dataset follows individuals who graduated from a public or a private university in Qatar to see whether these do participate in the labor market or not and, to what extent their jobs (if working) are matching their field/area of education. The sample is designed to include graduates who have a bachelor degree in one of the three disciplines (biological sciences, computer sciences or business administration). A representative sample of graduates from Qatar University (as the main public/national university in Qatar) on the one hand and, from Carnegie Mellon University (as one of the well-based private universities in Qatar) on the other hand. This quantitative dataset is also complemented with a qualitative one that allows us- through round-table discussions- to ask students about the main challenges they face in entering the labor market as well as their views about the quality of education they receive/ed. The literature on this topic has clearly focused on the quality of higher education institutions but not on how this supposedly high quality education will help graduates once they are in the real world. This missing element is not often thought of when discussing education although it should be. The present research attempts to amend that especially, for the case of case. The outcome data from this project fills a gap in terms of the mismatch between what university education offers and the labor market needs particularly in Qatar. Other studies have

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focused on other countries from the Middle East and North African region but the present study aims to fully comprehend how these same matters affect Qatar. Although there is research done on education in the context of Qatar, there isn't a lot of exploration neither of the quality of university education nor the labor market mismatch, possibly because the unemployment rate is really low. However, the unemployment rate does not reflect the number of graduates (female graduates in specific) who have decided to go out of the labor force and become inactive only because they believe that they will not find the job that they desire and that matches their education within the Qatari's labor market. Therefore, the unemployment rate in Qatar possibly neglects in its calculation a large part of the population who should rather be called "discouraged unemployed". Based on my discussions with my Qatari students, the majority of them consider themselves as discouraged rather than unemployed or inactive. To identify the effect of public versus private higher education institution characteristics on the labor market outcomes, we first need to isolate the factors that could have affected the individual's choices between the public and the private education in the first place (correct for this selection bias). For instance, factors as the household wealth may affect the choice between public and private institutions. As an example, while wealthier individuals may select into private higher education institutions because they can afford the costs, the poorer individuals may not. Thus, labor market outcomes in this case may be a function of the individual's socio-economic characteristics rather than the institution they attend. Studying the factors that come into play and where exactly the problem lies will help in providing officials/policy makers with the answers they need in terms of how to solve the issue of mismatch as well as the issue of low participation rates (especially for women). This research will result in yielding answers that will hopefully be turned into policy actions. Research is great on its own but, it is in the best interest of Qatar, considering that the state is moving into a knowledge based economy. This research and the policy recommendations it will produce will help to bridge the ever-present gap between education and the labor market.