

HIGHER EDUCATION

Project management education needs to catch up with the rapidly maturing Middle East marketplace.

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The maturity and development of project management in the Middle East depends not only on the availability of enough project managers to satisfy demand, but also on the education that informs how those project managers think and work.

The academic project management programs currently offered in the Middle East do capture the essence of the profession and provide the foundation on which students can build careers. The programs usually incorporate hands-on practice, interactive case studies and workshops to teach students how to transfer skills to real-life situations.

Still, the region's project management educational opportunities are not as comprehensive as they could be. The curricula aren't necessarily aligned with a specific framework such as *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)* or Prince2. And most of these programs are complementary courses, not stand-alone, dedicated specialization tracks with fully specialized and standardized curricula.

The maturity of the available project management academic programs in the region generally isn't sufficient for the market's needs.

To bridge the gap, some students opt for a master's in business administration (MBA) degree in project management offered by numerous schools in the region. These courses examine project management in the wider context of business administration, offering an insightful look at how project management really plugs into business life. Given the high professionalism of most MBA programs and institutions, we can expect project management tracks to be of the same quality and include case studies and real-world practices.

Another option for Middle Eastern students is to relocate and join more established programs outside the region. The downside of relocation, in addition to cost, is that



they won't be exposed to the local market's characteristics and needs—valuable knowledge if they return to the region's job market.

Improving project management education across the region will ensure the profession matures in the Middle East—and that we have highly educated project managers who are knowledgeable about the project landscape they're operating in. *PM*

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