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A Review of Manpower Crises in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Tourism Industry

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Abstract

There is a serious shortage of trained personnel in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' tourism industry, and the major challenges that this region faces are lack of training and manpower development. The tourism industry in the GCC region has grown at an unprecedented rate and the economies of this region have grown continuously too. Training and manpower development, however, have not kept pace with the situation. While various measures have been suggested to develop manpower capabilities in the tourism industry in this region, not enough has been done to meet the challenges. This paper will review the manpower shortage in the tourism industry in the region. It will also suggest ways to address this issue. The manpower shortage issue will be analyzed in terms of review of the economic significance of the region, key components of growth in its tourist industry, conditions that restrain this industry, and strategies to meet the challenge.

Keywords: Tourism Industry, Manpower Shortage, Manpower Development

Introduction

Travel to and within Middle Eastern countries has grown at an unprecedented rate, especially in the GCC countries. The GCC is the acronym for Gulf Cooperation Council. Its full name is Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCASG). Also referred to as the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC). The six member countries are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The economies of the GCC region have grown continuously since 1970. However, the job market for local nationals has not adapted to changing economic conditions. The main reason is the shortage of a home grown labor force that is skilful and well trained.

The GCC was founded with the vision of "a union of GCC Countries" or one united regional forum. The leaders from GCC envisioned an exciting future for the GCC as it works towards becoming a thriving, well developed and interconnected region like Europe. The concept of "a GCC union" was a radical ideal then as region was seething with division and tensions amid the ongoing superpower rivalries and terrorist tussle. The Iran-Iraq war was at its peak in the late 70's and early 80's and later the Kuwait-Iraq war erupted resultantly. Amid these circumstances, the member countries decided to hold their meetings to express their economic and political solidarity.

This paper reviews the manpower shortage in the tourism industry among local citizens in the tourism industry in the region and suggests ways to address this shortage. The issue of manpower shortage is analyzed in terms of economic significance of the GCC, key components of growth in its tourist industry, conditions that restrain this industry, and the strategies to meet the challenge. First we take a look at the economic significance of the GCC region.

Economic Significance of the GCC Region

Over the past few decades, the GCC has been one of the fastest-growing regions in the world. In the last couple of years, the rising oil prices have been uplifting various sectors of the economy, and consequently the job market has also been expanding a great deal. The expansion of the job market however, did not benefit the local citizens fully well. Macro-economic policies, investments in health, education, and infrastructure, reforms to the business environment and human development index scores have improved substantially. Despite all of this, the job market for local citizens has not seen the same result. In addition, infant mortality has decreased, expected years of schooling have increased, and life expectancy has risen in Saudi Arabia as well as other GCC member states. This has created the bulk of local population seeking jobs but most of the jobs have gone to expatriates who were willing to accept lower wages and carry a relatively large workload.

In the past few decades strong GDP growth among GCC countries has been supported by rising government spending because of increasing oil revenues. However, oil prices have been volatile and recently have gone down, and this trend of government spending could not be sustained for long (Gruss 2014; IMF 2014). Even with strong economic growth, and average labor productivity growth, the total factor productivity growth for the private sector of the economy and for the non-oil sector has been negative for the GCC countries, with the exception of Saudi Arabia which has shown slightly positive improvement. Total factor productivity (TFP) growth in the non-oil sector has also shown weakness (IMF 2013). Indeed, in Saudi Arabia, a sector wise decomposition of employment and average labor productivity over the past decade has been increasingly shifting toward sectors with relatively low productivity such as construction and non-government services (Fayad and Rasmussen 2012). Meanwhile, the private sector activity has remained concentrated in low-skilled sectors such as construction and consumer goods and services. The expansion of this sector is enough to meet the consumption and investment needs of the domestic market. Since the non-oil sector is paid low wages, most workforces have been recruited from expatriates. However, the GCC has projected to increase local national labor force by some 1.2–1.6 million by 2018 (IMF 2013). The GCC countries main economic and social indicators are given in table 1.

Table 1: GCC Countries' Main Economic and Social Indicators

	Saudi Arabia	Bahrain	UAE	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar
Surface (km)	2249690	760	83600	17818	309,500	11,586
Population (2012)	26,534,504	1,281,332	8,364,000	2,646,314	3,090,150	1,951,591
Density/km (2011)	14	1747.2	94.4	158.2	9.2	161.1
GDP (in billion US$ (2012)	883.7	33.03	255.8	150.9	89.06	185.3
GDP Growth rate% (in real terms, (2012)	5.1	4.8	4.4	6.2	5.0	6.2
GDP per capita in US$, est. (2012)	25,084.6	24,149	64,840.3	45,824.1	21,560	104,971

Source: UN World Face book 2013 Edition, Central Intelligence Agency World Face book, GCCSTAT (2012), DZT (2014)

The main issue in GCC countries is dwindling oil revenue and a burgeoning expatriate labor market. To meet the challenge, labor force economic diversification is regarded very important and this has been recognized as vital in the economic and social strategies in the region. First, in the event of low oil prices the diversification could lessen the exposure of the economies to uncertainties and volatilities. Second, economic diversification will help the private sector to grow and absorb populations of working age local citizens. Given the fact that GCC countries are high-income countries, the local citizens could be attracted in the private sector, if the salary scale for local citizens is matched to their living standard and reforms are carried out in the working conditions. Third, if the private sector succeeds to attracting local citizens, the strategy could improve the productivity and sustainability of economic growth. Fourth, the non-oil sectors such as construction, tourism and hospitality could grow rapidly to replace the declining oil revenue sectors. If the divaricating of the economy continues, it is expected that the non-oil sector growth will capture enormous public spending on infrastructure to support the growth of the tourism sector. The following is the Ease of Doing Business Index and the World Economic Forum's Global Competitive Index to support the prospects of the future tourism sector.

Table 2: GCC Competitive Index

GCC Countries	Ease of Doing Business Rank		Global Competitive Rank	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Saudi Arabia	22	26	18	20
Kuwait	101	104	37	36
UAE	26	23	24	19
Qatar	45	48	11	13
Oman	44	47	32	33
Bahrain	47	46	35	43

Source: GCC Economic Overview by Global Investment House, May 2014 https://www.google.com/search?q=outlook+of+economic+growth+rate+for+gcc+countries&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefoxb&gfe_rd=cr&ei=k75BV4zWG_Da8Aeuq6OAAw

Among non-oil sectors tourism stands on top of the agenda. This sector has the potential not only to contribute to the GDP of GCC countries, but also create enormous opportunities for employment. The recent rapid growth of domestic tourism and national heritage is a good example of creating added value in the national economy and employment opportunities. Tourism contributed 5.4 percent to the non-oil GDP in 2015 and is expected to reach to 5.7 percent by 2020. This sector is envisaged to benefit from government spending, corporate lending and solid domestic demand. The Human Resources Development Fund estimates that tourism is expected to create more than 400,000 jobs by 2020 (Rashid Hassan, 2013.

Tourism Sector in GCC Countries

GCC countries are attracting both domestic and international tourists. The reason is their elegant beaches, cultural and archaeological sites, and ancient monuments. The region offers various entertainment and shopping facilities, and many other countless attractions. The Hajj session is full of pilgrims and Umrah visitors flock to Makkah Mukarman and Madina Munawara all year long. International Tourists' arrivals in GCC countries remained unchanged between 2012 and 2013. However, in 2014, arrivals grew by 4%. The GCC region has a significant share of total world tourist arrivals, attracting additional 2 million arrivals bringing the total to 50 million. The international tourist arrivals are expected to reach 101 million by 2020, and 149 million by 2030. It is estimated that tourism in GCC countries accounts for 5.7% of the combined GDP in 2014. The table below shows the 2013 travel and tourism competitiveness index rankings of the GCC countries and overall rankings of 140 countries.

Table 3: Tourism Competitive Index GCC, 2014

Country	Index Score	Overall Rank Among 140 countries
UAE	4.86	28
Qatar	4.89	41
Bahrain	4.3	66
Oman	4.29	57
Saudi Arabia	4.17	52
Kuwait	4.39	101

Source: World Trade and Travel Council, 2014 https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/major-tourism-trends-gcc-marmore-mena

As the table shows, in terms of overall ranking among GCC countries the UAE leads the region and is ranked 28th overall. Although the UAE is not rich in terms of oil resources, it has built its premise on leisure attraction and business travelers with several international fairs and exhibitions, and increasingly diverse industries. Besides leisure and business travel, the UAE has also created a hub for international air travel connecting various countries in the world. Good governance, and an effective marketing and branding campaign have made the UAE prominent. The country is most friendly in terms of foreign direct investment and open visa policy. The UAE's travel & tourism contribution is the highest among GCC countries. It was SR 115 billion (US$ 31.96 billion) in 2013 and expected to arrive at SR 211. 70 (US$56 billion) by 2020.

According to the Travel & Tourism Competitive Index, Qatar is ranked 2nd in the GCC region, and 41st overall. Qatar is not rich either in terms of oil resources, it is known for safe and secure environment, good tourism infrastructures, and excellent air transport infrastructure and ease for expatriate labor force (Statista, 2016) Qatar placed its tourism sector as a strategic pillar within its National Vision 2030, which has recognized that tourism can boost the country's image, diversify its economic base and drive sustainable development. The Museum of Islamic Art and Cultural Village is an example of developing tourism infrastructure. In addition, Qatar plans to invest SR 75.5 billion (US$20 billion) to improve its tourism infrastructure as the number of tourist arrivals grows at a rate of 15.9 per cent compounded annually, to reach 3.7 million by 2022.

Among GCC countries Bahrain ranks 4th and 55th overall. It has the advantages of quality human resources, health and hygiene standards, good governance, education infrastructure and a sound transport system, but has weaknesses in its tourism infrastructure. The main hindrances of Bahrain to attract tourist arrival are its limited natural resources, poor environmental sustainability and political vulnerability. To improve tourism prospects the UNWTO organized an International Conference in 2013, in Bahrain. The Conference aimed at identifying new ways to introduce innovative products based on cultural heritage and socio economic development.

Saudi Arabia's non-oil sector is maintaining a robust growth with tourism expected to contribute 5.4 percent to the non-oil GDP in 2015, and is expected to reach 5.7 percent by 2020 (Rashid Khan, 2015). The share of the tourism sector in the Kingdom's GDP stands at 2.7 percent and is expected to increase 5.2 percent (Iqtisad Magazine, 2015). The Iqtisad Magazine reported that the Kingdom acquired 15.3 percent of tourism revenues in the GCC region in 2014, which amounts to 5 percent of the tourists of the globe overall. Meanwhile, the Kingdom ranked 52 in the Index of the Competitiveness of Travel and Tourism and although not ahead of the GCC region, it still came ahead of many Arab nations such as Tunisia (79), Egypt (83) and Kuwait (101). The report elaborated that the Kingdom enjoys a strong business environment, sound infrastructure, improved safety and hygiene measures and heightened safety and security standards. Saudi government's interest to boost tourism sector is evident from the fact that the name of the Saudi Commission of

Tourism and Antiquities to the Commission for Tourism and National Heritage. This reflects Saudi government's vision to benefit from vast and rich historical heritage and cultural monuments.

The attraction of tourists from GCC countries has been heightened lately. From GCC countries 6.9 million tourists arrived into the Kingdom in 2014 and spent SR22.8 billion (US$6 billion) (SCTNH, 2015). The domestic tourism spending hit US$5.50 billion (SR20.60 billion), a whopping 53.7 percent rise compared to 2015. It is expected 17.8 million Saudis will visit various destinations inside the country by 2020, a 44.7 percent increase compared to 2015 (SCTNH, 2016). There will be 70 tourism festivals and 620 other activities across the Kingdom, a 30 percent increase compared to 2015 including culture, heritage, sports, adventure and shopping festivals. About 8.8 million Saudis are visiting overseas destinations by the end of 2016, a rise of 36.9 percent over 2015. The SCTNH have already have designed 100 programs to take visitors to various parts of the country including heritage sites, museums, and cultural landmarks (Hassan, 2016).

A meeting was held by the GCC Tourism Ministers in October 2015 in Doha (Qatar) to implement the GCC minister's vision. In this meeting a plan of action was chalked out to strengthen intraregional tourism to pursue the plan and they established a group to lay out a joint tourism vision for achieving strategic goals. SCTNH envisages travel companies to organize tours for GCC nationals in order to engaging them in specialized travel exhibitions such as the Arabian Travel Market which is held annually in Dubai (Qatar) and the Travel and Tourism Exhibition in Kuwait. The number of people arriving for Hajj and Umrah is increasing by the year, and is estimated to increase to almost 17 million by 2025. The high number of travelers has contributed to the development of the religious tourism industry. A new regional capacity building initiative program UNWTO was held in Doha from 11 to 15 May 2014. This program was implemented with the cooperation of Qatar Tourism Authority. The main aim of this program was to build capacity, knowledge and skills in Qatar to enable implementation of tourism strategies so as to uplift destination competitiveness and sustainability which benefit the Qatar community ultimately (GCC Economic Overview, 2014).

Oman has also speeded up towards travel and tourism advancement. The Travel Ministry of Oman has announced in April 2013 the "Tourism Challenge Program". This program is aimed at preparing young Omnis to initiate new ventures in tourism sector.

Constraints to Tourism Growth in GCC Countries

While the visitor arrivals and tourism receipts have increased steadily during the past years, the average length of stay in the GCC region hasn't been done the same. The following table depicts tourism receipts of Gulf Cooperation Council countries from 2008 to 2020. The total GCC market is projected to be at US$187.18 billion (SR702.86 billion) in 2020.

Table 4: Tourism Receipts of GCC countries (Billion US$)

Countries	2008	2010	2015	2020
UAE	37.87	38.45	53.14	73.59
Qatar	3.79	4.35	7.28	11.8
Bahrain	3.06	3.31	4.23	5.35
Oman	5.07	4.21	6.18	8.55
Saudi Arabia	26.71	29.11	49.69	72.88
Kuwait	7.46	7.85	11	15.02

Source: Statista (2016)

Travel spending of outbound visitors from the GCC from 2013 to 2030 (estimated) are US$55 billion (SR206.52 billion) in 2013, US$64 billion (SR 240.32) in 2015, US$94 billion

(SR353 billion) in 2020, US$140 billion (SR525.7 billion) in 2025 and US$216 billion (SR811 billion) (Statistica, 2016). This statistic shows the travel spending of outbound visitors from the GCC countries from 2013 to 2030 has been projected to steadily kept out.

The two most notable reasons for the latest surge in tourism among the GCC countries are increased disposable income, and visitors taking longer holidays. Other factors include affordable fares, greater mobility, and availability of package tours, much larger commercial aircraft, improved amenities, and available tourist information. Tourism receipts of the GCC region for 2015 have exceeded US$131.52 billion (SR493.85 billion). While the visitor arrivals and tourism receipts have increased steadily during 2014, some factors are considered creating potential risks in the region for its future prospects. The short average length of stay of visitors as exhibited in table 3 can be explained to a mix of reasons. This trend however, is expected to increase in future years.

Most people who visit the destinations in the region are repeat visitors. Having seen the attractions earlier, they choose to shorten their stay at one place. There is an exception for Saudi Arabia, where the situation is quite the reverse because of most the sacred religious destinations for Muslim visitors.

Table 5: Average Travel Spending Inter-Regional and International

	Average Spend per Intra-Regional Trip	Average Spend per International Trip
Saudi Arabia	US$5,650	US$11,550
Bahrain	US$6,900	US$12,205
UAE	US$5,000	US$10,400
Kuwait	US$4,265	US$9,590
Oman	US$4,415	US$9,090
Qatar	US$3,650	US$6,690

Source: Frost & Sullivan and Insight Middle East, 2014

There are now more free attractions that visitors can go to in some countries than others. The average length of stay in those countries (such as Qatar and UAE) tends to be longer than those that have few attractions. In fact for Saudis, the length of stay is longer in GCC countries is because of their business interests.

Some travel companies have shifted their family packages from attractions to shopping mall which reduces average length of stay in those destinations that previously focused mainly on the attraction market. Hotels in the GCC region are bracing themselves for stiff competition as new destinations in Turkey and Egypt will come on board . Some hotels in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar have raised their daily room rates between10% to 15% recently. Some critics, in fact, say further increases may be necessary as costs keep escalating. Most Saudi Arabian hotels have increased their rates in 2015 to cope with increases in operational costs.

Rising costs of food, lodging and shopping are some other reasons cited for slackening of the average length of stay. The Business Traveler (Middle East) magazine reported that the cost of food and drinks for instance, have gone up in some GCC countries.

Apart from rising costs and average length of stay, some other contemporary issues pervade the tourism industry in the GCC region. For instance, the GCC Free Trade and Travel agreement is aimed at liberalization of entire GCC region by the year 2020. This forum in its pursuit for liberalization of trade, finance, telecommunications, maritime transport, aviation, construction, professional services and travel among visa free travel among member countries may have the inherent danger of exercising certain protectionist measures (through the process) to retrain economic growth, and consequently slacken the pace of tourism in the region. Due to the influx of many million expatriates in GCC countries, it is, at present, not that easy to extend visa free travel to and from Saudi Arabia.

The World Bank in its annual report published in 2015 mentions constraints for tourism development in GCC countries such as (1) development of modern market-based institutions in which the development is necessary to strengthen financial sector institutional growth essential for both market economies and countries with centrally-planned economies (2) development of environment which is fighting against deforestation, worsening air quality, pressure on water resources and consequences of rapid industrialization. The main recommendations forwarded by World Bank are greater regulation and use of prices to encourage sound environmental management (3) development of education, health and social security system so that the urbanized population could harmonize the modern economy and improve social infrastructure. Otherwise tens of millions of people across the region will face dire conditions of fear of terrorism, diseases and education (World Bank, 2016).

Meeting the Challenge

Success in the tourism industry cannot be achieved by price competitiveness or the range of attractions available alone, but also requires quality by the service rendered by its trained workforce. A major study sponsored by the International Labor Organization in Geneva, Switzerland (2010) found that there was a serious shortage of trained personnel in hospitality and tourism around the globe and the major challenges that Middle East countries face is the manpower development for its employees in future years.

A study conducted by Advance Technology Intelligence Center in Dayton, OH in 2015 revealed a major shortage of skilled manpower in Middle Eastern countries' tourism and hospitality sector. The study noted that if direct actions were not taken to train personnel both at craft and managerial levels, the future expansion and development of the tourism industry will be jeopardized by the deficiency. The Economic Social Commission of the UNO initiated a project in 2015 to conduct a detailed study of the requirements of the institutions that will train tourism workforce for GCC countries (UN's Economic and Social Commission, 2016).

The Saudi Arabian Commission for Tourism and Antiquities has launched an integrated national economic project in 2001 which was aimed at a major human development program. It is in its third phase at present. The main focus of this program is to train more hospitality and tourism workers to meet rapid growth in this sector as new five star hotels under construction come on stream by 2020. This vision of SCTA is to implement strategic planning for achieving goals as well as raising economic, organizational and administrative capabilities. This comprehensive planning of the project in its third stage has paid off in preparing the General Strategy of National Tourism Development.

The Kuwait Ministry of Information which handles tourism affairs has set out certain key areas of focus which in 2020 will see training and manpower development programs aimed at Kuwait having even more attractive tourism destinations. There is no dedicated Ministry for Tourism in Kuwait. However, there is an intention to make changes in the near future with the creation of an authority to enhance tourism in Kuwait. It is hoped that the agency, although not a full ministry, will encourage tourists to visit cultural and historical sites. Kuwait was historically a trading port, and not an oil rich country. It possesses 10% of the world's petroleum reserves. Although revenues from the industry account for nearly half of the country's GDP and for almost all of the government's income, its diversification towards arming its manpower is highly essential. It is envisaged among governmental circles that Arab visitors do not visit Kuwait's heritage sites like museums. They prefer to visit restaurants and shopping malls instead. Most tourist attractions in the country are located in Kuwait City having, “excellent museums, a corniche of combed beaches and lively restaurants, malls and souqs,” besides which there is not much to see in the rest of the country (Swift, 2015). Besides developing infrastructure to boost businesses related to restaurants and hotels, it is necessary to allocate funds to uplift the skill level, and the educational institutes, according to this author, can do their part to produce a multi-skilled workforce in view of the current labor crunch in the GCC region.

The rapid rise of Doha as a favorite tourist destination is giving Qatar's tourism a lift. The city of Doha is quickly emerging as a regional hub, similar to Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The Qatari government has been investing heavily in infrastructure and tourism development ahead of the 2022 Soccer World Cup. (Petroff and Kottasova, 2016). To make the 2022 World Cup successful, Qatar needs to make its workforce multi-skillful. Muti-skilled workforce aside, hotels and restaurants can automate their technology to save labor cost. For example, use of ATM-like kiosks can provide speedy service when a guest uses either the credit card or the smart card for check-in.

Apart form the multi-skilling and automation, the tourism industry in the GCC region needs a training approach to update the knowledge and technical know-how of the labor force. Through this approach, a trainee will go through a certificate program of skill development. To implement this approach all countries in the region must develop basic craft training standards. To alleviate manpower shortage, GCC countries should come up a systematized scheme of production and delivery of education/training product.

Similar ideas were forwarded previously by Doswell (1988) in his report on the South Pacific training needs. GCC tourism authorities can take advantage of these ideas. Doswell observed “the need for the training and registration of tour guides” and “trade testing and certification” as “recurring themes common to all (Asia Pacific) countries.” A 1991 survey conducted by the International Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) and the University of Calgary presented similar points which are important as a guide for tourism authorities in GCC countries. These points are (1) place greater priority on human resources management generally in the organization and (2) advance their ‘people skills’ and use more effective approaches to manage and utilize human resources in the work setting in order to (3) ensure the consistent delivery of quality service which is the key to competitive advantage in the hotel industry”.

Recently UNESCO stressed the importance of tourism education and manpower development. It stated in its latest report that tourism is one of the world’s fastest growing industries and is a major source of income for many countries. Being a people-oriented industry, tourism also provides many jobs which have helped revitalize local economies.

In 1985, UNESCO was alarmed when it had published a special treatise on the topic of education and manpower development. UNESCO had recommended distance learning to meet the shortage of skilled labor force in the tourism industry. The advantage of distance learning stated by UNESCO was: access; emergence of new discipline; instructional designs; self-pacing; and cultivation of attitudinal qualities.

The aforementioned recommendations are essential in the tourism education delivery system. They are meant to capitalize on numerous industry education and training endeavors and increase the opportunities for future learning and manpower development.

Direction for Future Research

There clearly needs to be more research performed to further examine the problems created by high labor turnover by local citizens in GCC countries in part as a result of over dependence on expatriate labor force, over supply of tourism product and the resultant shortage of trained and skillful labor force both at craft and supervisory levels. Several issues and implications can be raised for future research.

a. One area to investigate empirically would be an examination of productivity and efficiency issues and their relationship to the situation in each labor market.

b. Another area to investigate is the reduction in staff-to-room ratios and the standards of service. The staff-to-room ratio among hotels in GCC region is among the highest in the world due to the cheap expatriate labor force available. While this situation has resulted in some of the highest standards of service in the world, this phenomenon needs further examination in order to establish the correlation between the reduction in staff-to-room ratio and the standard of service. This is possible by reducing high level of dependence on expatriate staff, and training, motivating and empowering local citizens.

c. Yet another area to investigate is the introduction of labor-saving technologies, automation of procedures to affect savings in staffing levels.

d. The absence of empirical analysis concerning the extent to which flexible use of staff, including job rotation, causal labor force leads to the identification of another avenue for future research.

Conclusion

The vision of the GCC as an exciting region has limitations and flaws. As the region looks forward to the next century, the challenges of infrastructure development, environment protection and shortage of skilled manpower both at craft and management levels in tourism industry looms over.

GCC economies rely mostly on oil as the main source of export and fiscal revenues. Over the years, GCC governments have employed expatriate staff and managed to expand public sector employment. Local manpower has been ignored to great extent because of high labor cost and the low level of efficiency. The governments and private sector in GCC countries have benefited from spending on infrastructure but health, and education of local manpower in the tourism sector have been neglected. The current growth model requires giving greater importance to training and developing local manpower so as to reduce exposure to volatility and uncertainty in the global oil market, helping create private sector jobs, increasing productivity and sustainable growth, and establishing the non-oil economy so that when the oil revenues start to dwindle, dependence on oil is sustainable. This is possible through improving the skills of local manpower. The writer of this report stresses that the need for trained and skilled manpower is one of the most pressing issues facing the GCC region at present.

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