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OER in Bahrain

This is a short stand-alone report on Open Educational Resources in Bahrain

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Overview

The **Kingdom of Bahrain** (مملكة البحرين) is located in the centre of the Arabian Gulf, between latitudes 26° 0' 0" north and longitude 50° 33' 0" east, near the east coast of Saudi Arabia. Bahrain is an archipelago consists of 36 islands with a total area of 750 km². The biggest island, which represents 85% of the total area, is Bahrain where the capital (**Manama**) is located. Bahrain does not share a land border with another country, but it is connected to Saudi Arabia by the King Fahd Causeway (25 km) which was officially inaugurated on 26 November 1986.

Bahrain is officially a constitutional monarchy headed by the King, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, with Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa as a prime minister, and Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa as a crown prince. Islam is the official religion in Bahrain and Arabic is the official language.

According to the Central Informatics Organisation, the population of Bahrain was estimated at 1,195,020 people: 584,688 Bahraini, and 610,332 foreigners.

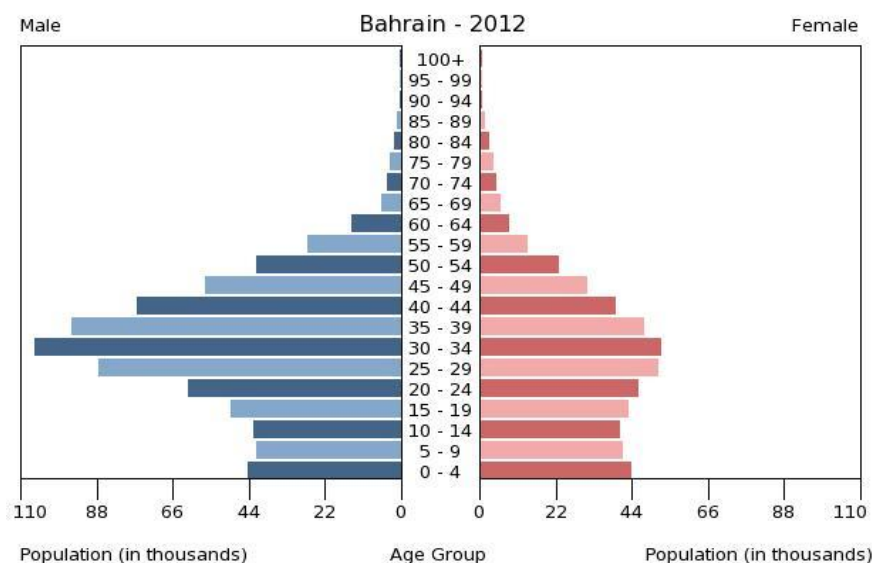


Figure 1: Population Pyramid of Bahrain

(https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/population/populationtemplate_BA.html)

According to the *Annual Economic Review 2010*, economic growth is steadily strong, with an average growth rate over 6% during the last decade. Oil accounts for 70% of government revenue, as economic activity is dominated mainly by oil. At the same time, Bahrain is considered as the most diverse economy in the GCC region, due to its small oil wealth compared to the other GCC States, Bahrain attracts foreign investors by building a friendly-business environment and offering significant investment opportunities. To achieve this, in 2006, Bahrain implemented a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, as well as 68 bilateral trade and economic agreements including those with China, France, India,

Singapore and the UK. As a consequence, Bahrain became the home of many multi-nationals businesses and firms in the Gulf States.

For further information see:

- <http://www.bahrain.bh/wps/portal/>
- <http://www.bahrainatlas.gov.bh/eatlas/>
- <http://www.kfca.com.sa/ar/Default.aspx>
- http://www.cio.gov.bh/CIO_ARA/default.aspx
- <http://www.bahrainedb.com/EDBHome.aspx>
- Bahrain Economic Development Board's *Annual Economic Review 2010*
<http://www.bahrainedb.com/economic-annual-review.aspx>
- <http://www.gulfbase.com/Gcc/Index/4>

ICT Infrastructure and Use in Bahrain

To face the economic challenges, and with the long term aim of accelerating economic growth, the kingdom of Bahrain has produced *Vision 2030*, a comprehensive economic vision for Bahrain which has been developed over four years in consultation with the public sector, private sector, academia, and civil society, to develop a better life for every Bahraini. To get this vision into reality, the government and the Economic Development Board (EDB) have co-operated to set a plan that can transform the vision into reality. This cooperation has resulted in the National Economic Strategy (NES). The NES is emphasising policies to improve productivity. These policies include education, training, as well as policies planned to stimulate the information and communication technologies (ICT) industry, in order to help making these technologies more affordable and widely accessible.

With a small population, area, and resources compared to its neighbours, Bahrain had been a pioneer in ICT: computing started in the late 1940s, which resulted in the first mainframe computer installation in 1962. In 1992, Bahrain becomes one of the first countries in the world with complete digitalisation of its national and international telephone switches. Moreover, Bahrain was the first country in the region to launch internet services in 1995. Batelco has become the first Telecoms Company in the Middle East to qualify for ISO certification recommended by the British Standards Institute. The first online referendum in the Arab World was held in Bahrain in 2001. Bahrain was the first in the region to introduce smartcards in 2005; fully liberalize its telecommunications market in 2004; and to go nationwide with WiMax wireless networks in 2007. The Kingdom of Bahrain has recognised ICT as a key strategic sector for the development of the state, therefore, it is a priority for the government to become a regional leader in the development of telecommunications and the internet.

Data from telecommunications markets indicators shows that by the end of the first half of 2012, there were about 254,000 fixed lines in Bahrain, representing a fixed line penetration

of 21%. At the same time, there were about 1.9 million mobile subscribers, representing a mobile penetration rate of 158%; and there were approximately 413,000 internet subscribers in Bahrain, all of whom were broadband subscribers. Although the number of broadband subscribers increased by 31% between 2010 and 2011, broadband revenues dropped by 1% due to reductions in broadband prices.

In 2006, the government established *Tamkeen* as a national reform initiative to support *Economic Vision 2030*, which accounts for developing the skills of Bahrainis, offers a set of training programmes to individuals and businesses. Tamkeen plans training for individuals, whether they are students, employees, employers, or job seekers, to match the skills demanded by the labour market. For businesses and enterprises, Tamkeen provides professional consulting services to raise their performance, and facilitates access to financing.

The *e-Government project*, for which the portal was launched on 23 May 2007, is a vital initiative that had been driven by the Directorate of e-Commerce & IT (established in 2004), Economic Development Board (EDB), (established in 2000), and the Central Informatics Organisation (CIO) (established in 1967 as a "Statistics Office", later "Directorate of Statistics" in 1976, "Central Statistics Organisation" in 1983, and finally renamed as "Central Informatics Organisation" in 2002). Since then the portal is the prime source for delivering services for e-Government (www.bahrain.bh). The e-Government project has major effect on increasing internet literacy, with 200 public e-services available through the portal, and as well the systems of the 22 ministries are aligned with the e-government strategy. For example, among the early initiatives, was the e-services of the Ministry of Industry & Commerce (<http://www.moic.gov.bh/moic/ar>) including: commercial registration, application follow-up, business activities requirements, daily price index, citizen complaints, as well as goods prices newsletter. Recently, it is now possible to access those services from any smart phone through www.moic.gov.bh/mobile.

In line with the e-government initiatives, in February 2011, the Ministry of Health signed a contract with INDRA, a leading Spanish Company in implementing health information systems that help to inform the decision makers of the health sector performance, to build a comprehensive medical data for patients, to inform consumers by providing e-services as making appointments and accessing medical records. The launch of the official National Health Information System (I-SEHA) took place on September 2012 in its first phase. The following extract shows the government willing for the future of Bahrain:

"The Government of Bahrain will gradually move away from mere service provision. It will shift its focus to generating and enforcing sound, forward-looking policies in critical areas, such as economy and finance, health care, education, the environment, security and social justice" (Economic Vision 2030, p. 17).

Sourced from:

- Economic Vision 2030 <http://www.bahrainedb.com/economic-vision.aspx>
- The National Economic Strategy (NES) <http://www.bahrainedb.com/national-economic-strategy-ar.aspx>
- Al-Amer, M. A. (2003, February). Bahrain and the information society. In *Western Asia Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)*, Beirut, Lebanon. <http://www.mafhoum.com/press4/131bahrain.pdf>
- Telecommunications Regulatory Authority <http://www.tra.org.bh/ar/marketreport.aspx>
- Tamkeen <http://www.lf.bh/ar/>
- e-Government Portal <http://www.bahrain.bh/pubportal/wps/portal/>
- I-SEHA (Ministry of Health) <http://www.moh.gov.bh/AR/aboutMOH/ISEHA/strategy.aspx>

Education in Bahrain

Education System

The traditional schools – *Kuttab* (Quranic Schools) – were the only form of education in Bahrain, but after the First World War, Bahrain had changed politically and socially. The year 1919 had marked the beginning of the change in education when a group of citizens discussed and agreed to open the first formal school in Bahrain, *Al-Hidaya* school for boys on Muharraq Island. Several merchants and shaikhs (Royal people) formed the first Committee of Education. The second public school for boys was opened at Manama in 1926. Two years later, in 1928, a girls' school was opened at Muharraq. In 1930, the government became the official authority for running and administrating schools and education in Bahrain.

Table 1: Educational Ladder in Bahrain

Stage	Sub-stage/ Track	Age	Grade
Basic Education	1 st Cycle Primary	6-7-8	1-2-3
	2 nd Cycle Primary	9-10-11	4-5-6
	3 rd Cycle Intermediate	12-13-14	7-8-9
Secondary Education	General OR Technical & Vocational	15-16-17	10-11-12

Pre-university formal education in Bahrain includes:

- Pre-school Education: Nursery (from birth to 3 years) and Kindergarten (3 to 6 years.)
- Basic Education: Primary and Intermediate level.
- Secondary Education: Science, Literary, Commercial, Technical, Textile, and Clothing tracks.
- Religious Education: it is the same as the basic and secondary education, but it takes place at a specialized institute.
- Private Education/Non-Governmental: Nurseries, Kindergarten, and Private Schools which comprises of national private schools, foreign private schools, foreign community schools, and educational institutes and centres.
- Special Education: responsible for identifying students with special needs and supervising those in public schools as well as in special needs' institutions.
- Non-Formal Education: Illiteracy/Adult Education, and Continuing Education programs.

Sourced from:

- Ministry of Education (MoE) <http://www.moe.gov.bh/index.aspx>
- Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations in New York <http://www.un.int/bahrain/education.html>

Higher Education in Bahrain

The Council of Higher Education, which was formed in 2005 under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education, is responsible for the universities' administrative, scientific, research and student affairs and the issuance of regulations for the academic, financial and administrative affairs relating to higher education, including policies for higher education and scientific research.

Although the Council was established quite recently, higher education in Bahrain started in the late 1960s, when the Higher Institutes for male and female teachers were established, which, developed into University College of Arts, Sciences, and Education in 1978. At the same time, the Gulf Technical College was established in 1968, and later became the Gulf Polytechnic in February 1981, and colleges like the College of Engineering and College of Business Administration at the University of Bahrain owes its roots to the Gulf Technical College.

The University of Bahrain (UoB) was founded in 1986 when the Amiri Decree No. (12) was issued for the establishment of UoB by merging the above two colleges. It is the only national university in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

In 1976, the College of Health Sciences was established under the governance of the Ministry of Health. It is the only provider of high quality health care education and training for Nurses and Allied Health Professionals in the State of Bahrain.

Bahrain Polytechnic was established by Royal Decree No. 65 for the year 2008. Bahrain Polytechnic delivers applied, professional and technical qualifications to address the need for a skilled Bahraini labour force.

Beside the previous three **National Higher Education Institutions**, there is a **Regional Higher Education Institution**, i.e., Arabian Gulf University. It was decided to establish the Arabian Gulf University in the Kingdom of Bahrain at the fourth meeting of the General Convention of Arab Education for the Gulf, in 1979, and the first enrolment was in 1982. The Arabian Gulf University is accredited by the Ministry of education in Bahrain and governed by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The current number of accredited **Private Higher Education Institutions** has reached 12 (Higher Education Directorate, Accessed 01/04/2013). These institutions include:

- Arab Open University <http://www.aou.org.bh/>
- University College of Bahrain <http://www.ucb.edu.bh/>
- Royal University for Women www.ruw.edu.bh
- RCSI- Medical University of Bahrain www.rcsi-mub.com
- Ahlia University www.ahlia.edu.bh
- Birla Institute of Technology <http://www.bitic.edu.bh/>
- AMA International University <http://www.amaiu.edu.bh/>
- Applied Science University www.asu.edu.bh
- The Kingdom University www.ku.edu.bh
- Gulf University <http://www.gulfuniversity.net/>
- New York Institute of Technology <http://www.nyit.edu.bh/>
- Delmon University for Science & Technology <http://www.delmon.edu.bh/>

Higher education milestones in Bahrain include:

- 2005: Higher Education Law / The Council of Higher Education was formed
- 2006: The establishment of the General Secretariat for the HEC (SGHEC)
- 2007: Declaration of rules and regulations governing licensing higher education institutions
- 2008: The establishment of The Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET)

Generally speaking the MoE's mission in the Kingdom of Bahrain is that it "provides educational opportunities for every citizen to develop his/her mental, physical and emotional potentials and skills through drawing up development plans, their implementation and evaluation to achieve the requirements of quality to enhance the

quality and effectiveness of education in line with the international standards as stated in the Education Law, and the Higher Education Law and Private Education Institutions Law in the Kingdom of Bahrain”

(http://www.moe.gov.bh/en/vision_mission.aspx#.UVnGDhwqiSo).

Sourced from:

- The Development of Education: National Report of the Kingdom of Bahrain <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/worldwide/unesco-regions/arab-states/bahrain/national-reports.html>
- Higher Education Directorate <http://www.moedu.gov.bh/hec/>
- University of Bahrain <http://www.uob.edu.bh/>
- College of Health Sciences <http://www.chs.edu.bh/>
- Bahrain Polytechnic <http://www.polytechnic.bh/>
- Arabian Gulf University <http://www.agu.edu.bh/Default.aspx>
- Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) <http://en.qaa.bh/>

E-Learning in Bahrain

Bahrain has an ICT education strategy in order to support the vision of the “Inclusive Knowledge-Based Society”. Since the early 1990s, “introduction of computer literacy” courses have been taught in national high schools in Bahrain. These courses had been developed over time from courses introducing the history of computers and its components, into courses include computer operation and applications. A network was established to connect computer laboratories in schools, and in-service training was provided for teachers to enable them to use computers on a personal level and in teaching.

The Government of Bahrain is showing a growing interest in creating educational conditions and opportunities for all since the 1990s, after the universal declaration of “Education for All” in the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (March 5-9, 1990) and the other universal declaration of Education for All, issued in The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (April 2000) which, both, had been ratified by the government of Bahrain. One main way of creating these conditions and opportunities is the use of ICT in special needs education, adult education, general education, and life-long education.

The government of Bahrain introduced several initiatives to contribute to the development of education in Bahrain. In 2003, an educational project “King Hamad's Schools of the Future Project” was launched. In its first phase, the project was applied to 11 secondary schools spread over five provinces in the Kingdom by linking rapid electronic communications network through the central portal. The vision of this project is to start with the integration of ICTs to the educational system and end by access to e-learning in all stages and schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

In 2007, the government of Bahrain introduced a proposal to UNESCO to establish a Regional Centre for Information and Communication Technology in Manama, the capital of Bahrain to contribute as a knowledge hub in the region, a research centre for developing, and coordinating cooperative research on technology solutions for knowledge acquisition and sharing, and a laboratory of ideas for developing ICT strategic plans, policies and practices.

Inclusive Education is another initiative stated clearly in the national report submitted to the 48th assembly of the International Conference of Education held in Geneva from 25 – 28 November 2008. Inclusive education includes the right of each child and adult in education and access to good learning experiences that cope with the information age to get valuable learning outcomes and achieve social justice. Therefore, the government started using ICTs in special needs education, and e-learning in general education. Also, the e-Government programme is providing low cost PCs and internet connection to eligible people in Bahrain. Furthermore, the e-Government has also partnered with private parties for delivering PCs to students as a part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). To serve inclusive education, e-Government, also, tied up with Microsoft in providing basic computer education to all needy in the Kingdom.

The Ministry of Education provides a list of available e-Services (<http://www.moe.gov.bh/en/eservices.aspx#.UWfdAZMqiSo>), which can also be accessed via mobile devices through mobile web or mobile applications (<http://www.moe.gov.bh/en/mobile.aspx#.UWfdNpMqiSo>). E-Consultation and e-Complaints are also provided by the MOE to the public, beside e-Kiosks (self-service) which is available in common public places.

In order to raise the level of technology use in education and create a communicative environment between students and teachers, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has started a project using the latest communication services provided by Microsoft, Live@edu, which has been upgraded to Office 365 for education in 2012. For further information about the project see the brochure, (http://www.moe.gov.bh/live_edu/LiveatEdu_Brochure.pdf).

In higher education, the University of Bahrain (UoB) has an e-Learning Centre (Zain e-Learning Centre) which was established in 2004 to cope with latest developments in information technologies and how to use them in teaching and learning. This centre provides a range of academic, technical, training, and consultation services to the academic community at the university. Three international e-Learning Conferences were organized by Zain e-Learning Centre at the UoB in 2006, 2008, and in 2010. The fourth Conference will be held on 7-9 May 2013. Two different e-learning systems, Moodle and Blackboard are officially used by the academic community. Recently, On April 2013, the first virtual scientific laboratory has been launched in Bahrain at the UoB. The laboratory is equipped with the most prominent modern technology with regard to virtual learning; the university

declared that these technologies are the same as the ones used at Stanford University, nowadays.

The Arab Open University branch in Bahrain (<http://www.aou.org.bh/>), since it was officially inaugurated in 2003, provides opportunities, through a distance and open learning model, for those in the upper age group and in employment. The ultimate objective of this institution is to provide opportunity to every individual who has the potential and interest to pursue university education.

All higher education institutions in Bahrain whether they are national, regional, or private have e-learning units or centres as well as a list of e-services. While these units and centres use e-learning in several course, and provide training workshops on e-learning as well as software to be used in e-learning there is no clear e-learning system that leads to a degree except in the Arab Open University branch.

Sourced from:

- Development Projects <http://www.moe.gov.bh/projects.aspx#.UV4TjpMqiSp>
- King Hamad's Schools of the Future Project <http://www.moe.gov.bh/KHSFP/>
- UNESCO Communication and Information
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/about-us/how-we-work/category-2-institutes-and-centres/bahrain/>
- National Report of the Kingdom of Bahrain “*Inclusive Education is the Way to the Future*” http://www.moe.gov.bh/pdf/projects/geneva/Arabic_content.pdf
- Bahrain eGovernment Programme “*Looking Beyond the Obvious*”
- [http://www.ega.gov.bh/wps/wcm/connect/8454530048e41f869648969f5722fc19/LookingBeyondTheObvious\(2\).pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.ega.gov.bh/wps/wcm/connect/8454530048e41f869648969f5722fc19/LookingBeyondTheObvious(2).pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

Open Educational Recourses (OER) in Bahrain

The Open Data Platform in Bahrain is a governmental initiative launched to establish a unified centre, to make public data available to the public and develop a strategy for open data, in order to promote transparency and encourage e-participation. The platform is making data, published by various ministries and government agencies, available in a manipulative format for public consumption.

The Journal of Educational & Psychological Sciences (JEPS), a quarterly scientific refereed Journal specialized in educational and psychological studies published by the College of Education at the University of Bahrain, is listed on the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The journal was established in 2000, and is written in Arabic or English (<http://www.uob.edu.bh/english/pages.aspx?module=pages&id=1690&SID=457>).

The Kingdom of Bahrain has a database in Arabic and English through which you can search libraries all around the Kingdom and place an order, reserve a copy, and renew borrowings.

All national, regional, and private higher education institutions have an e-Library through which students and faculty can get access to the library catalogue, several databases, theses and dissertations, periodicals, and e-books as well as useful links which includes OERs.

The MoE provide a list of OERs for Basic and Secondary Education. These resources include: educational software, e-books, educational programs for students with special needs, educational quizzes, educational videos, and the electronic versions of the school's curriculum. Most of these resources in Arabic, and there are some in English, too.

The MoE, also, has an educational bibliography online, updated yearly, for all the books available at the Educational Bibliography Centre at the MoE.

Altarbia Magazine is a publication of the MoE which is available online (<http://www.education.gov.bh/magazin/index.asp>). While e-Magazine is a publication of the e-Government Authority in Bahrain (<http://www.emagazine.gov.bh/>).

Sourced from:

- Open Data Platform (<http://www.data.gov.bh/wps/portal/data>)
- Directory of Open Access Journals (<http://www.doaj.org/>)
- Kingdom of Bahrain Database-En (<http://libwebserver.uob.edu.bh/assets/spcollections/kob.asp>)
- Kingdom of Bahrain Database-Ar (<http://libwebserver.uob.edu.bh/assets/spcollections/kobarabic.asp>)
- Public Libraries Services (<http://www.moe.gov.bh/lib/>)
- Educational e-Content (<http://www.moe.gov.bh/econtent.aspx#.UWppGrXqKSo>)

Copyright in Bahrain

Copyright is protected in Bahrain through international Agreements, Law No. 22 of 2006 related to Copyright and Neighbouring Rights as amended by Law No. 12 of 2008, and other legislation related to enforcement of copyright or affecting copyright protection.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a member of:

- The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.
- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- The Arab Convention for Copyright Protection.
- The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)
- The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)

All these organizations have ratified modern copyright law.

In Bahrain, the Information Affairs Authority is the responsible government body in charge of the affairs of internal and external formal media in the kingdom, and supervises all media

outlets, including newspapers, magazines, publications, radio and TV stations and websites. It works according to Decree-by-Law No. (47) for the year 2002 regarding organizing the press, printing and publishing, and it includes copyright protection law for any writings, paintings, songs, images, audio or audio-visual products etc. and other means of expression whether written, photographic or recorded in any way including electronic, digital, affixed, magnetic, electronic or any other new technology prepared and capable of circulation. To download a full copy of the Decree (in English) see:

<http://www.iaa.bh/downloads/PressRulesAndRegulations.docx>)

For the Open Data Platform (<http://www.data.gov.bh/>), the e-Government Authority clearly set Open Data Usage Policy and Guidelines, as well as Terms & Conditions of copyright and database material. All these guidelines and conditions are available on the website. Also, the MoE has stated Terms of Use for all the materials on its website (<http://www.moe.gov.bh/en/termOfUse.aspx#.UWq1c7XqKSo>).

Sourced from:

- Database of GCC Laws- Bahrain
- (<http://www.gcc-legal.org/MojPortalPublic/CountryHome.aspx?country=6>)
- UNESCO- WORLD ANTI PIRACY OBSERVATORY
(http://www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/bahrain_cp_en)
- The World Intellectual Property Organization
(<http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/details.jsp?id=7311>)
- Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)
(<http://www.isesco.org.ma/index.php?lang=en>)
- Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)
(<http://www.alecso.org.tn/>)
- Open Data Platform (<http://www.data.gov.bh/>)
- Ministry of Education (<http://www.moe.gov.bh/>)