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Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching: The Case of the MENA

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Introduction

The focus of this volume is the study of innovation in English language teaching (ELT) and learning environments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The chapters draw on classroom, administrative and learning experiences from seven of the countries in the region. This chapter begins with the establishment of a definition of innovation and what it means to be innovative in education and ELT. What follows is a description of the current status of English language education in the region and a look at next steps and innovations that are currently being

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implemented. A brief introduction to the other 12 chapters in this volume rounds out this chapter.

Defining Innovation in Education

In educational contexts worldwide, everyone these days is striving to be innovative in their classrooms as they want their students to be engaged in their own learning. Innovation for many simply means doing what is best for all students, piquing their curiosity about learning and finding ways to keep students interested. For others it means providing them with the tools and knowledge they need to be effective and efficient twenty-first-century learners. A more traditional definition of innovation and how it applies to education has been put forward by the Society of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2018, p. 1):

The practice of effective and meaningful teaching can benefit immensely when educators thoughtfully experiment and apply new or different pedagogical approaches, technologies, curricular enhancements, course design and organization and assessments.

In more simplistic terms, innovation can also be defined as “the process of making changes to something established by introducing something new” (O’Sullivan & Dooley, 2009, p. 3). Innovation is about helping organizations grow. In business terms, growth is often measured in terms of turnover and profit, but it can also occur in knowledge, in human experience, and in efficiency and quality. It is these latter concepts that relate innovation to education.

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