

Stay relevant, stay ahead: the evolution of executive education with Sherif Kamel, Dean of AUC School of Business.

Since its inception in 1966, The American University in Cairo (AUC) School of Business Executive Education (ExecEd) has been at the forefront of business innovation and leadership, evolving to meet the changing needs of the global marketplace. Dean Sherif Kamel delves into the journey of this pioneering institution, unveiling the transformative evolution of this unit throughout the years.

The journey of Executive Education at AUC kicked off in 1966, and has since flourished under various names and umbrellas. The focus was initially set on becoming the professional development backbone of various sectors in Egypt. It wasn't until 1977 that we established a more structured approach to executive education at our vibrant Tahrir Campus, launching targeted programs in leadership, organizational development, management, marketing, and finance, among others.

For decades, our ties with local industries have only deepened. We've emerged as a vital resource, equipping businesses with the tools they need to propel. Our commitment to the mission of the AUC School of Business is unwavering, as we continue to adapt to market needs, expand our [open-enrollment](#) and [customized program](#) offerings, and adapt our curriculum.

Our portfolio now spans everything from concise short programs to extensive multi-month diplomas, all designed to keep professionals at the forefront of their fields. These programs are led by seasoned industry experts, as well as distinguished faculty members from the school.

In 2012, ExecEd's open-enrollment programs marked a significant milestone by debuting on the Financial Times Executive Education Ranking. We proudly stand as the only business school in the Arab region and one of just three in Africa to achieve this position, underscoring our commitment to excellence and our prominent position in the global educational landscape.

The evolution of our program over the past two decades reflects a strategic shift towards enhanced specialization and quality. In the early 2000s, we trained approximately 14k unique learners annually. Today, that number has filtered down to 4k. Overall, we've seen some 250k participants throughout the years. This intentional decrease falls in line with our goal to offer more specialized programs that directly meet the evolving needs of the market. We've streamlined our offerings from an expansive 300 to a focused 25, each characterized by rigorous, high-quality curricula designed to deliver impactful learning experiences.

Approximately 25-30% of our school faculty members also teach in our ExecEd programs. This is a crucial gear in our academic journey as these faculty members gain invaluable insight from real-life, practical business scenarios of challenges and opportunities by interacting with professionals who work in those sectors every day. This exposure enriches their teaching, allowing them to bring fresh, practical perspectives back to our undergraduate classrooms and prepare tomorrow's professionals for the realities of a rapidly evolving job market.

The biggest added value that ExecEd offers program learners, besides the curriculum, is unparalleled networking opportunities. You'll find yourself sitting in the room with people who have 20-35 years of experience across various industries and functions. That in itself is a wealth of knowledge and collective intelligence that learners can truly benefit from. Learning from one's peers through the careful selection of learners brings in a value proposition that AUC School of Business is always keen to leverage.

Over the years, our focus has become more demand-driven, consistently developing programs that drive local sectors forward based on market gaps. In order to serve those companies better, we developed the [Corporate Learning and Development Report](#) in 2022. This tool has been instrumental in pinpointing the needs of companies and bridging the gap between existing offerings and market demands.

This pulled in an array of programs that are not only timely and relevant but deeply rooted in our region's cultural and contextual needs. Our programs now serve as a convener of industry-focused conversations, integrating local nuances with the expertise of our global and local partners from both the public and private sectors, as well as donor organizations. Today, our expanded portfolio provides contemporary programs in sports management, trade, real estate, and healthcare.

Our focus is not just on Egypt — we are active in the MENA and GCC regions, as well as Africa. In the GCC, specifically KSA and Oman, we are running our healthcare and real estate programs in collaboration with our partners, including the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties. The UAE is also home to our general management and leadership programs, with an additional three programs in the pipeline. Across Africa, we recently concluded the third cohort of our Trade Finance in Africa certification. The cohorts resulted in 75 alumni from 16 countries. We are also working with two universities in Brazil and Italy to introduce joint programs in the MEA regions.

Advancing the growth of hospitality management and tourism is on the agenda. We firmly believe that this sector could be one of the anchors of Egypt's economy, but there is not much in terms of professional development programs that address hospitality management and tourism, as well as the understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage. We are also eyeing the climate and sustainability sectors.

We're also ready to boost our footprint in the realm of digital transformation. As businesses and societies increasingly rely on digital technologies, our programs in digital business are designed to lead the charge in innovation and adaptation. We are set to expand more on that front, adapting to evolving trends such as AI, Blockchains, data analytics, and more.

Looking ahead, we are set to tackle underserved areas like leadership development, focusing on fostering agile leaders equipped for the 21st century. I'm not talking about one-day

training programs, but cohesive, inclusive leadership programs — such as Executive Development Programs — that teach people how to move businesses and countries forward.

ExecEd stands as a testament to continuous adaptation. We've meticulously honed our offerings, prioritizing quality over quantity. This focus on specialized programs, coupled with faculty insights gleaned from real-world scenarios, ensures our participants gain the most relevant and impactful learning experiences possible. Executive Education plays a key role in the contemporary landscape, becoming invaluable to continually upskilling and reskilling the next generation not just to adapt to the transformational changes taking place but more importantly to excel and prosper. We at AUC School of Business will continue to reconfigure our offerings to help shape future leaders.