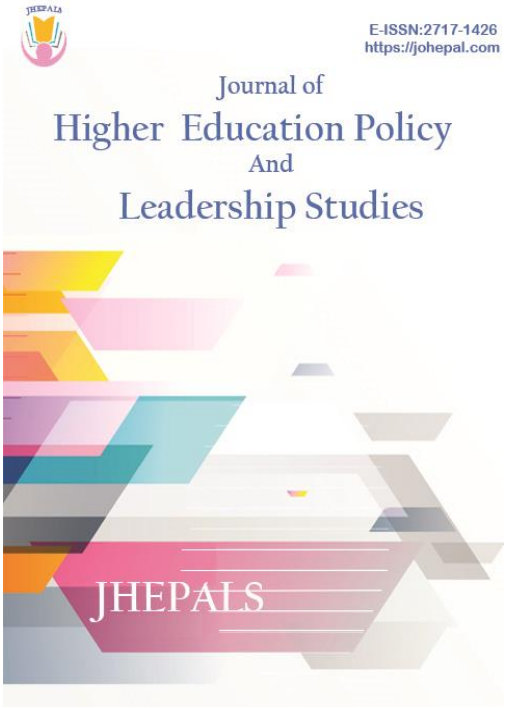
Journal of
Higher Education Policy
And
Leadership Studies

JHEPALS (E-ISSN: 2717-1426)

https://johepal.com



Book Review: Making Qatar University (1973-2018): An Informal History

Glen A. Jones

Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, CANADA

Email: glen.jones@utoronto.ca

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4305-9411

Book Review Received **2025/02/01**

Book Review Accepted **2025/03/20**

Published Online **2025/03/31**

Cite book review as:

Jones, G. A. (2025). [Review of the book *Making Qatar university (1973-2018): An informal history*, by D. N. Baker]. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies*, *6*(1), 245-248. https://dx.doi.org/10.61186/johepal.6.1.245

[Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-07]

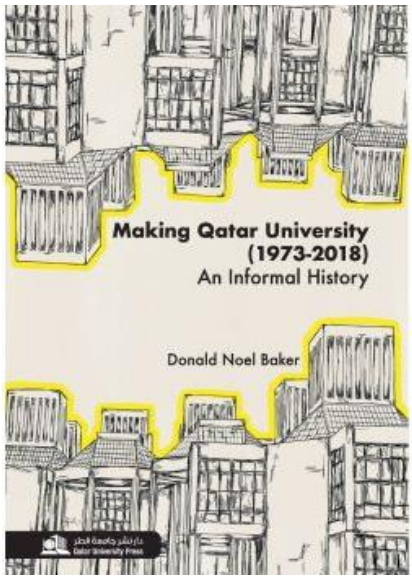
[DOI: 10.61186/johepal.6.1.245]

Making Qatar University (1973-2018): An Informal History

Journal of Higher Education Policy And Leadership Studies (JHEPALS)

E-ISSN: 2717-1426
Volume: 6 Issue: 1
pp. 245-248
DOI: 10.61186/johepal.6.1.245

Author: Donald Noel Baker
Publisher: Qatar University Press
Country of Publication: Qatar
Year of Publication: 2024
ISBN: 978-992-716-754-6
Pages: 392



Glen A. Jones*

Keywords: History of Higher Education; Arab Universities; Qatar Education; University Development; System Planning

Like other universities in the region, the history of Qatar University is inseparably linked to the development and challenges of the country. A small peninsular population with an economy dependent on the sea became transformed with the discovery of oil. The 1968 announcement by the United Kingdom that it would withdraw from the Gulf region had broad implications, including the establishment of the State of Qatar in 1971. Formally

* **Corresponding author's email:** glen.jones@utoronto.ca

[Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-07]

[DOI: 10.61186/johepal.6.1.245]

created in 1977, Qatar University was immediately assigned a role in supporting the development of the new nation, including helping the population understand the history and context of the region, but also contributing to an ambitious national agenda of transformation and modernization.

Contributions to Scholarship

In *Making Qatar University*, Donald Baker has provided a thoughtful, well-documented history of this university covering the period from its initial development to 2018. While this book can be clearly classified as an institutional history, it is not written in the celebratory tone that often characterizes the genre (a common critique of this genre by historians). Instead, Baker has carefully constructed what reads as a very balanced account of the university including its accomplishments, challenges and flaws. As such, it not only contributes to the sparce literature on higher education in Qatar and the history of its national university, but it also contributes to the historiography of higher education as a masterful example an institutional history, a point I will return to later.

Key Themes

The organizational structure of the book is broadly chronological, but with key thematic elements. One of these themes is the relationship between the university and the broader educational system, and Baker carefully reviews the early history of education in the region and the challenges faced by an emergent system without a clear structure, goals or textbooks. The process of modernization began only a few decades before the creation of the state, and the Faculties of Education, which educated school teachers, were absorbed as one of the key faculties of the new university. Qatar University was created in part to serve the needs of the first graduates of this modern school system. However, as Baker clearly notes, the university educated the teachers, but it also had to contend with the weaknesses of schools while also addressing the higher education needs of a rapidly developing and changing economy. It periodically adjusted its admissions standards to address shifting realities, at times accepting students that were understood to be below-average, and emphasis was placed on providing supplementary educational programming to address the limitations in the quality of schools. This theme of the complex, intersecting relationships between the history of schools, in terms of their weaknesses, reforms, and shifting roles, and the history of the university, runs through many section of the book.

Qatarization has been another important theme within national development, but it is also associated with complex challenges. The desire for Qatari leadership has meant that a number of its university presidents have been relatively junior scholars with quite limited administrative experience. It has also been difficult to find an appropriate balance between Qatari and foreign faculty given the unique nuances of the labour market for citizens. There have been somewhat parallel challenges associated with decisions on the language of instruction, with some pressures to maintain education in English given its role in international trade while also recognizing the role of Arabic in national development. The shifting balance becomes a compromise with different language requirements in different program areas.

[Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-07]

[DOI: 10.61186/johepal.6.1.245]

In later sections of the volume Baker reviews the evolution of the university by turning his attention to the changes within different professional program areas, and then to changes in the student body and the faculty complement. The book concludes with a quite thoughtful discussion positioning the history of Qatar University within the context of the literature on the history and analysis of universities in the Arab region.

Summary and Conclusions

Despite the reference to "informal" in the subtitle, *Making Qatar University* is very much an academic history of a university within the dynamic, rapidly changing context of the nation that founded it. Baker does a wonderful job of always locating the university within its social and political context, but also within the relevant literature on the region and the scholarship of higher education. Baker also had to deal with the reality that senior university administrators often destroyed administrative communication and records, a key source in institutional histories, when they left office, but he has identified a wide range of relevant sources and evidence and references are very carefully documented.

This book is a model of a well-written, balanced, academic history of an important national university. It provides an important, foundational history of Qatar University, but it also contributes to our understanding of the challenges and possibilities of higher education within the complex, dynamic transformations within the Arab region.

[Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-07]

[DOI: 10.61186/johepal.6.1.245]

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest.

Funding

The author received no financial support for this book review.

Human Participants

This is a book review and does not involve human participants. Other ethical considerations are observed in alignment with the journal's guidelines for book reviews.

Originality Note

The author confirms this book review is their original work, and if others' works are used, they are properly -cited/quoted.

Use of Generative AI/ AI-assisted Technologies Statement

The author claimed that there is "No Use of Generative AI/ AI-assisted Technologies" in preparing this research.

Book Review

Glen A. Jones is Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, and former dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. A globally recognized scholar in the field of higher education, Jones is a prolific contributor to the Canadian and international literature on higher education and a frequent public speaker and commentator on higher education issues. He has received numerous awards for his research and contributions to higher education scholarship, including an honorary degree. Prof. Jones teaches in the higher education program.

[Downloaded from www.johepal.com on 2026-11-07]

[DOI: 10.61186/johepal.6.1.245]


This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) which allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.