

## **A Strategic Policy Framework for Activating Translation to Build a Knowledge Society: An Approach in the Arab Context**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines translation and its role in building a knowledge society by proposing a national translation strategy aimed at fostering knowledge development. It analyzes the current state of translation in Arab countries, highlighting major challenges such as limited quantitative and qualitative output, the absence of clear national visions and policies, and institutional imbalances. The study also underscores the importance of translation as a strategic tool for transferring global knowledge, localizing it, and enhancing domestic knowledge production. Adopting a strategic analytical approach based on literature review and policy analysis, the study concludes that building a knowledge society through translation requires the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy grounded in good governance, the development of specialized human capital, and the effective use of modern technologies. Such a strategy would contribute to strengthening knowledge sovereignty and supporting sustainable intellectual growth. The study further proposes a national strategy, outlining its key success factors and operational priorities.

**Keywords:** Translation; Knowledge Society; Knowledge Sovereignty; National Strategy; Knowledge Gap.

### **Introduction**

The contemporary reality of developing countries in general, and Arab countries in particular, in their efforts to transition toward a knowledge society, has given rise to new patterns in the production, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge. Consequently, the ability to access knowledge has become a fundamental indicator for measuring the progress of societies and states, as well as their integration into the global knowledge economy. However, this transformation places non-knowledge-producing societies in a state of cognitive dependency due to structural challenges associated with unequal access to knowledge and the concentration of scientific and technological production in specific languages.

In this context, translation assumes critical importance as a strategic sector capable of enhancing the knowledge society, achieving knowledge sovereignty, and overcoming linguistic

and epistemic barriers through its evolving roles. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on the existence of appropriate legal frameworks, regulatory structures, and operational mechanisms that enable it to perform efficiently. Such conditions can be ensured through a comprehensive national strategy aimed at facilitating the circulation and localization of knowledge in alignment with national development needs, transforming translation from a limited cultural activity into an effective public knowledge policy, and supporting the establishment of an integrated national project for building a knowledge society.

Accordingly, there is a pressing need to develop a national strategy to activate the translation movement, with the objective of directing, organizing, and promoting fragmented efforts, and structuring them in a way that effectively contributes to building a knowledge society capable of keeping pace with advanced nations.

From this perspective, the present paper seeks to address the following points:

1. The conceptual framework: knowledge society and translation.
2. The state of translation in the Arab world.
3. The importance of establishing a national strategy to promote translation.
4. Major orientations of translation within the context of building a knowledge society.
5. Strategic priorities of a national translation strategy for knowledge society development.
6. Key success factors of the strategic plan, with emphasis on political will and government support, including legal coverage, institutional structuring, marketing, and funding, as well as the importance of strategic thinking among planners.
7. A proposed strategy for activating translation, encompassing strategic vision, objectives, institutional structures, specialized frameworks, and the selection of an optimal strategic planning model.

### **Research Problem**

Translation constitutes a civilizational act that reflects cultural interaction among different levels of human thought, embodying the desire to benefit from and transfer human experiences into the target language without compromising the spirit of the original text, while respecting the specificity of the receiving language. It is a process of conveying meanings, ideas, and concepts through the linguistic structures of the target language. This process reveals motivating factors rooted in the interdependence of cultures, which rely on interaction and mutual influence to enrich the human experience. In this sense, civilizations are built through cumulative knowledge.

Within the context of knowledge societies, knowledge-based activities—such as knowledge generation, dissemination, and application—constitute the core of excellence. These activities are primarily concentrated in higher education, making effective engagement in the knowledge society contingent upon comprehensive reform of higher education systems, with particular emphasis on scientific research as the principal incubator of knowledge production.

In this framework, translation represents a crucial component and a priority within scientific research. Arab countries, therefore, need to invest in and develop translation in order to reduce the knowledge gap between them and advanced nations. Despite significant Arab initiatives—such as those undertaken by the National Center for Translation in Egypt, the “World of Knowledge” series in Kuwait, the Arab Organization for Translation in Lebanon, and Bayt al-

Hikma in Tunisia, in addition to specialized journals—these efforts remain fragmented and lack a comprehensive national strategy. Translation activities often remain individual endeavors shaped by the translator’s intellectual and cultural inclinations, with limited focus on translating foundational sources or original works. This study draws on the knowledge society approach and theories of cultural translation to frame its research problem.

Accordingly, the central research question of this study is: **What are the defining features of an effective national strategy for activating translation in a way that contributes to building a knowledge society?**

### **Research Methodology**

This article adopts an analytical and strategic methodology that combines a review of recent literature on translation and the knowledge society with a structural analysis of the factors underpinning the success of a national translation strategy. It employs an integrative framework linking political will, institutional structures, human resources, and funding. Furthermore, the study relies on translation policy analysis as an analytical entry point to interpret and understand its role in building a knowledge society. The national strategy is treated as the primary unit of analysis, with a particular focus on directing translation efforts to support scientific research and stimulate innovation. This methodology aims to provide a comprehensive vision for activating translation at the national level as a strategic option for building a sustainable and effective knowledge society.

### **I. Conceptual Framework**

**1. Knowledge Society:** The knowledge society represents an advanced stage of social development following the industrial era. The American sociologist Alvin Toffler referred to it as the “third wave” (1980), arguing that humanity has experienced two major civilizational waves—agriculture and industry—before entering the age of knowledge and information, in which the production, dissemination, and application of knowledge have become key drivers of economic and social transformation.

Within this framework, the knowledge society can be understood from two perspectives. The first is a narrow one, referring to groups of individuals united by shared intellectual or scientific interests who exchange knowledge and information within a limited scope. The second, broader and deeper perspective, refers to a society that relies on the efficient production, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge across all domains of societal activity, including the economy, politics, and civil society. This broader conception necessitates an integrated infrastructure encompassing information and communication technologies, scientific research institutions, and the support of professional competencies.

Accordingly, the knowledge society is distinguished from previous societal forms by several fundamental characteristics, including its reliance on information and communication technologies, the recognition of knowledge as an independent factor of production and a primary driver of transformation, and the free access to information for all citizens. This, in turn, enhances public awareness, ensures high levels of education, and fosters global competitiveness in knowledge production. Today, the distinction among nations is no longer measured by natural resources or population size, but rather by their capacity to produce,

organize, transfer, and invest in knowledge efficiently, freely, and rapidly at both the local and global levels.

**2. Translation:** Translation is considered a fundamental pillar for the transfer of knowledge and intellectual culture upon which societies are built. It is a vital instrument in establishing what is referred to as the “knowledge society.” Historically, translation has played a dual role. First, it has facilitated the transmission of heritage and the construction of knowledge through the cumulative exchange of human experiences across civilizations, enabling nations to access, assimilate, and reinterpret the achievements of others in ways that align with their own cultural, historical, social, and political contexts.

Second, translation contributes to the development of science and knowledge. Its function extends beyond mere transfer to include analysis, interpretation, and the generation of new knowledge. In this sense, translated information is transformed into local knowledge production that enriches society and fosters innovation. From this perspective, translation emerges as a strategic tool for knowledge construction rather than a simple mechanism of transfer. It supports scientific research, enhances intercultural interaction, and helps reduce the knowledge gap between nations and societies, thereby constituting a key pillar for achieving knowledge sovereignty and sustainable development.

Based on the foregoing, the relationship between translation and the knowledge society extends beyond a merely functional link to a structural one grounded in interaction and integration. This underscores the need to move beyond the classical function of translation toward its activation within a comprehensive strategy capable of directing translation efforts in a manner that effectively contributes to building a knowledge society.

## **II. The State of Translation in the Arab World**

Despite significant efforts devoted to translation across Arab countries, the overall output remains below global standards. Data published in the UNESCO Translation Index indicate a marked scarcity in the number of books translated into Arabic, with translated works accounting for less than 10% of total publications in the Arab world—approximately four per thousand compared to global annual translation outputs—despite Arabs constituting nearly a quarter of the world’s population (UNESCO, 2019, p. 6). This reflects a clear knowledge gap that necessitates the restructuring and organization of translation activities in accordance with the requirements of building a knowledge society.

Moreover, the vast majority of translated works are concentrated in traditional humanities fields—such as literature, politics, and religious ideology—as well as educational and entertainment materials. In contrast, scientific translation remains extremely limited, and even what is categorized as “scientific” often focuses narrowly on topics such as computer operating systems or household appliance repair (Shawqi Jalal, 2017, pp. 103–104). This trend highlights the dominance of market-driven and profit-oriented criteria over developmental needs and societal problem-solving priorities.

In addition, there is a notable absence of a new generation of specialized and expert translators. The translation market continues to rely heavily on established figures associated with high-quality translations, while the individualistic nature of translation persists. This is compounded by a clear lack of strategic planning aimed at developing a new cohort of professional

translators (Shawqi Jalal, 2022, p. 38), which ultimately undermines both the quality and quantity of translation outputs.

Furthermore, a UNESCO study on the quantitative output of Arabic translation reveals that the total number of books translated since the era of Caliph al-Ma'mun (813 CE) does not exceed 10,000 volumes—an amount equivalent to what Spain translates in a single year. In fact, the total annual translation output of all Arab countries combined does not reach one-fifth of what Greece alone translates annually (Barqa'an, 2019, p. 441).

### **III. The Importance of Establishing a National Translation Strategy for Building a Knowledge Society**

The development of a national translation strategy is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving effectiveness in this field, as it is grounded in the cultural, social, economic, and historical specificities of the local context. Such a strategy is based on diagnosing the national reality and identifying priorities for the transfer and localization of knowledge in order to meet actual societal needs, thereby complementing other national strategies aimed at development. Within this framework, translation serves as a mechanism for localizing global knowledge. Since the knowledge society is built upon the production, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge, it requires the establishment of a broad knowledge base through the translation of contemporary scientific output from foreign languages into the national language—an objective to which translation directly contributes.

In this regard, UNESCO emphasizes that the transfer of knowledge across languages constitutes a fundamental condition for reducing the knowledge gap between nations and promoting sustainable development. Translation has thus evolved beyond its traditional role as a mechanical tool for transferring knowledge to assume a generative and productive function, contributing to knowledge creation in the Arab world under current conditions. This transformation supports the aspiration for a “knowledge leap” that would enable the Arab world—and particularly the Arabic language—to keep pace with global scientific advancement (Jamal Qawi, 2015, p. 166).

Accordingly, translation is a key instrument for supporting scientific research and fostering innovation. It enables local researchers to engage with global scientific production and provides access to up-to-date knowledge resources, thereby contributing to the development of qualified human capital. The greater the availability of knowledge in the national language, the higher the opportunities for learning and creativity, which form the foundation of a knowledge society. From this perspective, translation becomes a strategic option within contemporary knowledge policies aimed at achieving knowledge sovereignty, as reflected in initiatives supported by regional and Arab organizations such as the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).

Given this critical importance—stemming from the role of strategy in guiding and organizing translation activities—it is essential to take into account contemporary global trends in translation. These trends are characterized by rapid transformations driven by digitalization and the knowledge revolution, where knowledge itself has become a fast-evolving and short-lived product. Consequently, it is necessary to redefine the major orientations of translation in light of these transformations to effectively contribute to building a knowledge society.

#### **IV. Major Trends in Translation within the Context of Building a Knowledge Society**

##### **The Shift toward the Digitization of Translation (Machine Translation):**

The emergence of Neural Machine Translation (NMT) represents a second wave of innovation in the field. Unlike earlier rule-based or statistical approaches, NMT relies on deep learning algorithms to analyze vast amounts of multilingual data, enabling the production of more fluent and contextually appropriate translations. Contemporary systems such as Google Translate and DeepL demonstrate remarkable capabilities, reflecting the rapid advancement of this domain (Musulmona, 2025).

##### **Localization of Knowledge through Promoting Translation as a Knowledge Industry:**

Translation is increasingly being repositioned from a mere linguistic transfer process to a strategic knowledge industry that underpins development and generates added value within the knowledge economy. While translation has traditionally played a vital role in transferring ideas, meanings, analysis, and interpretation, its function must evolve—within the broader objective of building a knowledge society—toward a generative and productive role in knowledge creation, dissemination, and application. This transformation is contingent upon the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy aimed at strengthening translation as a driver of societal advancement.

**Internationalization of Local Knowledge Production:** Promoting the international visibility of local knowledge enhances countries' participation in global scientific production, facilitates the exchange of expertise, and improves the ranking of universities and research institutions. This process contributes directly to the construction of a knowledge society. However, achieving this objective requires the parallel development of scientific research systems capable of producing high-quality, innovative, and globally competitive outputs, thereby ensuring integration into the global knowledge landscape.

**Governance of Translation:** Transforming translation into a national strategic instrument for building a knowledge society necessitates the establishment of a governance framework comprising rules, standards, and institutional mechanisms that ensure the quality, accuracy, consistency, and timely dissemination of knowledge. Translation governance involves the adoption of clear policies and structured institutional arrangements that contribute to reducing the knowledge gap and strengthening knowledge sovereignty. It also enables the effective integration of advanced technologies—particularly artificial intelligence—within a regulated framework that enhances the efficiency of knowledge production while minimizing randomness and duplication. Such governance supports the internationalization of local knowledge and reinforces its global presence. Consequently, the integration of translation, governance, and the foundational elements of the knowledge society—alongside improved translation quality—empowers individuals and institutions to access, produce, and utilize knowledge effectively, thereby reinforcing the foundations of sustainable, knowledge-based development.

**Developing Specialized Human Capital in Knowledge Translation:** The development of specialized human capital in knowledge translation constitutes a central pillar in consolidating the knowledge society. The translator is no longer merely a transmitter of texts but a highly qualified professional possessing dual competencies: linguistic mastery and domain-specific expertise across diverse fields of knowledge. In this capacity, the translator becomes an active knowledge agent who contributes to the production and transformation of knowledge rather

than simply conveying it. This perspective is supported by contemporary translation studies, notably the work of Anthony Pym (2010), which emphasizes the translator's role as a cultural and epistemic mediator.

This transformation requires the development of academic training programs and continuous professional development that integrate translation skills with digital technologies and artificial intelligence tools, in line with the digital turn in translation highlighted by Dorothy Kenny (2017). Furthermore, the concept of human capital in this context aligns with the theory advanced by Gary Becker (1993), which underscores the importance of investing in skills and knowledge to enhance productivity. This principle applies directly to knowledge translation as a value-generating activity. Reports by UNESCO (2021) further support the need to build human capacities capable of producing and circulating knowledge globally.

Accordingly, investing in the training of specialized translators represents a strategic investment in knowledge itself, strengthening the competitiveness of research institutions and contributing to the achievement of sustainable, knowledge-based development.

## **V. Strategic Priorities of a National Translation Strategy for Building a Knowledge Society**

The priorities of a national translation strategy should be grounded in the realities of society and its knowledge and research needs. In light of rapid digital transformations and the accelerated production of knowledge, it is essential to establish priorities that organize translation fields according to their importance, effectiveness, and impact. The most prominent priorities include:

**Supporting the Translation of Contemporary Scientific Research in Basic Sciences:** This priority ensures engagement with primary sources of scientific production, thereby strengthening research capacities and contributing to the development of local scientific output in pursuit of knowledge sovereignty.

**Prioritizing the Translation of Technical and Medical Sciences:** Focusing on applied and high-impact fields enhances innovation capacity and addresses pressing societal and developmental challenges.

**Institutionalizing Translation Activities:** Promoting structured institutional frameworks for translation helps ensure sustainability, coordination, and quality in translation outputs.

**Enhancing Translation to and from the Arabic Language:** Despite its rich civilizational heritage and broad cultural and geographical reach, Arabic remains underutilized in global scientific production and international publishing. Strengthening translation into and out of Arabic contributes to reintegrating it as a language of scientific production and revitalizing its role as a global cultural bridge.

**Leveraging Technological Advancements and Artificial Intelligence in Translation:** Technology is intrinsically linked to the emergence and sustainability of the knowledge society. The development of advanced technologies—particularly neural machine translation—has introduced highly efficient tools capable of processing texts with speed and accuracy, thereby accelerating knowledge dissemination and expanding access. Integrating such technologies within a national translation strategy is essential for knowledge production and circulation, while ensuring their responsible and effective use.

**Supporting the Translation of Digital Educational Scientific Content:** Translating digital academic and educational materials contributes to expanding access to knowledge and fostering inclusive learning environments.

## **VI. Success Factors of the Strategic Plan in the Field of Translation**

The success of a strategic plan in the field of translation depends on a set of interrelated foundational elements. Foremost among these is the presence of strong political will and government support, including legal frameworks, adequate institutional structuring, effective promotion, and sustained financial investment. Leadership responsibility must also be clearly assigned to executive management, as overall organizational performance cannot be delegated to lower levels.

Strategic thinking among leaders and planners constitutes a decisive factor, as genuine political commitment to change through strategic planning is central to the success of translation initiatives and their developmental role. This must be complemented by the availability of specialized translators and the strengthening of scientific research systems, enabling researchers to access the latest theories and scientific findings and thereby fostering innovation. Sustainability and long-term effectiveness further require appropriate infrastructure, stable funding, effective partnerships, and continuous evaluation mechanisms. Raising societal awareness about the importance of translation is equally crucial, encouraging engagement with translated knowledge and promoting a culture of research and learning. Establishing a dedicated national budget to support long-term translation projects and research grants is also essential.

Equally important is the development of digital infrastructure through the creation of electronic platforms, content archiving systems, advanced translation tools, and terminological databases. Strengthening multi-sector partnerships—among universities, research centers, publishing houses, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector—enhances the overall effectiveness of translation initiatives.

The success of this strategic plan also depends on the adoption of precise monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including national indicators that measure project progress, content quality, and societal impact. In this regard, Lawrence G. Hrebiniak (2006) emphasizes that weak or ambiguous strategies hinder implementation efforts and represent a major obstacle, as effective execution cannot compensate for flawed strategic design. Similarly, Kristján Vigfússon (2021) highlights the importance of coherence and clarity in strategic planning.

Effective leadership remains a cornerstone of success, as weak leadership constitutes one of the most significant barriers to successful implementation. Peter Lorange (1998) stresses the need for top management to reinforce organizational alignment and interaction, while James Rajasekar (2014) underscores that the acceptance of strategy by employees and the alignment of their capabilities with strategic objectives are critical challenges that require strong and effective leadership.

Finally, activating the role of national and regional institutions—such as the Arab League—constitutes an important success factor, as it enhances coordination and integration in efforts to develop and advance translation activities across the region.

**Seventh: A Proposed Strategy for Activating Translation to Build a Knowledge Society**

The components of a translation strategy are conceived within an integrated framework that interlinks political will, institutional infrastructure, human resources, and sustainable financing, while directing translation efforts toward supporting scientific research and innovation. Such alignment ensures the effectiveness of this strategy in contributing to the construction of a knowledge society (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2019; United Nations Development Programme, 2003).

Given the pivotal role of translation in the circulation and transfer of knowledge across societies, there is a pressing need to formulate a comprehensive national strategy to activate the translation movement. This strategy is grounded in a forward-looking vision aimed at establishing a sustainable national translation system that facilitates the transfer and localization of global knowledge, while simultaneously promoting the production and international dissemination of local knowledge (UNESCO, 2005). In doing so, it supports scientific and cultural development, contributes to narrowing the knowledge gap, and advances knowledge sovereignty.

The mission of this strategy is to develop an effective national translation system based on strengthening specialized institutions, enhancing human capacities, leveraging digital technologies, and fostering international scientific cooperation, thereby ensuring the accessibility and circulation of knowledge across diverse fields.

This strategy is further underpinned by a set of core principles, most notably scientific rigor, fidelity in translation, openness to knowledge, institutional integration, and digital innovation. Within this framework, the strategic priorities include strengthening the institutional infrastructure of translation through the establishment of specialized national bodies, enhancing coordination among universities, research centers, and publishing houses, and investing in human capital development (Arab Organization for Translation, 2015) through the modernization of translation education programs and continuous professional training for specialized translators.

In addition, these priorities encompass supporting translated knowledge production by launching national programs for the translation of books, scientific references, and recent research, thereby contributing to reducing the knowledge gap and fostering openness to international experiences. They also include the integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in improving translation processes and managing scientific terminology, as well as strengthening international scientific partnerships.

The implementation of this strategy relies on a set of operational mechanisms, including institutional mechanisms such as establishing a national translation center and expanding its branches across universities and research institutions; practical mechanisms through the launch of national translation programs and the funding of scientific projects; digital mechanisms involving the development of national translation platforms and terminological databases; human mechanisms related to training and capacity building; and collaborative mechanisms based on international partnerships.

Moreover, this strategy is supported by a monitoring and evaluation system grounded in both quantitative and qualitative indicators, as emphasized in Arab reports on knowledge development (United Nations Development Programme, 2003). These indicators include the annual number of translated books and scientific articles, the quality of published translations,

the extent to which translated resources are utilized in higher education, and the impact of translation on the advancement of scientific research.

Thus, translation should not be viewed merely as a linguistic or cultural activity, but rather as a strategic instrument for the transfer and localization of knowledge, enhancing the integration of society into the global knowledge economy.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that translation has become a strategic instrument for building a knowledge society and strengthening epistemic sovereignty. The reality of translation in the Arab world, as reflected in the literature and various reports, reveals structural imbalances characterized by weak quantitative and qualitative output, the absence of institutional frameworks, and the predominance of individual practices in translation activities. These shortcomings reduce efficiency and limit rationality in translation practice, thereby constraining its contribution to knowledge-based development.

The study further demonstrates that activating translation in the service of a knowledge society requires the adoption of a national strategy grounded in a clear, comprehensive, precise, and objective vision, with well-defined priorities and effective implementation mechanisms. Such a strategy must take into account the rapid global transformations in digitalization and scientific advancement, which directly influence both the strategy itself and its implementation pathways. It also highlights the necessity of adopting integrated national translation policies and embedding translation within higher education and scientific research strategies.

The success of this strategy depends on several critical factors, including political will, good governance, the strengthening of digital infrastructure, and the development of specialized human capital, in addition to institutional and international partnerships and agreements.

Ultimately, investing in translation as a knowledge industry represents a strategic choice that contributes to narrowing the digital and knowledge gap, while supporting scientific research, innovation, and creativity in scholarly production. This, in turn, enhances the integration of Arab societies into the global knowledge economy and ensures both effectiveness and sustainability.

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