In 2005 The Palestinian National Authority through its Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) implemented a Tertiary Education Project with the support of the World Bank and participation of the European Union (EU) between 2005 and 2009. On July 2nd, 2012, the MOEHE received new financing from the World Bank in the amount of USD 6.5 million, under the project named “Education to Work Transition Project – E2WTP”. A major component of this Project was the Quality Improvement Funds (QIF). QIF is being administered by the Projects Coordination Unit (PCU), branched out of the MOEHE. The PCU includes small technical staff (QIF Team) that is accountable to a centralized Board representative from eleven qualified stakeholders representing the academia and the private sector as well. The project mainly aims at enhancing Palestinian youth’s transition from education to work through fostering the linkage between Tertiary Education Institutions “TEIs” and private sector employers. A new allocation of USD 5 million-grant was approved on December 2, 2016 by the World Bank’s Board of Executive Directors to support ongoing efforts to increase job opportunities for Palestinian graduates. The additional financing for the Education to Work Transition Project -E2WTP will focus – through additional two cycles - on improving the employability of Palestinian students graduating from tertiary education institutions, thus improving their job prospects as well. QIF will continue to manage the grants in a similar transparent and competitive manner to provide incentives to TEIs to develop and implement employment-oriented education programs in partnership with the private sector. TEIs have fostered their partnership with private sector employers through collaboratively designing curricula, updating teaching practices and providing practical training to students. It is expected that QIF will (i) increase the productive linkages between TEIs and businesses; (ii) promote social responsibility among the business community; and (iii) better prepare graduates to find and keep gainful employment.

Quality Improvement Fund “QIF” – Background

At A Glance

- The MOEHE has announced signing formal agreements with 12 different TEIs that have successfully passed the full proposal phase under cycle 3 of the Quality Improvement Fund. This cycle, which valued as approximately USD 2 million over a round of three years, is targeting different programs at different levels; out of which 4 projects are located in Gaza. It is worth to mention that this cycle is promoting the partnership between TEIs themselves in addition to the partnerships with the employers from the private sector. However, a thirteenth project is expected to be approved and signed in the coming few weeks.

- As part of their continuous efforts to support the grantees, a delegation from the World Bank has implemented a visit to Palestine between 15 – 19 October. A set of meetings with different players was held, this included gathering all new projects with their partners in an introductory meeting, in addition to have a round table discussion with leading firms from the industry who were partners in previous grants and are continuing in this cycle. It is also worth to mention that the delegation has informed his excellency Dr. Sabri Saidam about their satisfaction with the performance of all projects funded by the World Bank and implemented by the PCU – MOEHE, moreover, they referred to the Quality Improvement Fund - Palestine as the top ranked project in the MENA region.

- With the exception of two projects, it is official to report that all projects under cycle 2 have either closed or in the reporting phase, the remaining two projects will conclude by the end of this year.

- An external consultant is currently carrying out an evaluation for all 20 projects that were implemented under both cycles 1 & 2. The results of this evaluation are expected to be disseminated and shared in a national workshop with the presence of all benefitted TEIs by the end of year 2017.
### Cycle 3 New Projects

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<td>Palestine Telco (PALTEL) and Talal Abu Ghaith Organization (TAG)</td>
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<td>Nursing, Midwifery, Medical Lab Sciences, Physiotherapy, Medical Imaging (BA)</td>
<td>Augusta Victoria, Palestinian Red Crescent Society Hospital, Roya Radiology Center, Abu Sayyad K Center for Thyroidology and Rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
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### Targeted Programs

- **Upgrading the PAUC Management Information System (BA)**
  - The primary aim of this project is to upgrade the PAUC Management Information System (MIS) program and to raise the caliber of its graduates enabling them to smoothly transit into the labor market.
  - This project will also feature a model of collaboration between PAUC and its partners, in which each party provides valuable know-how in their specific area of expertise.
  - The academic-industry collaboration will work directly with MIS students to provide real cases to be solved in the established Living Lab which will be the driving force to innovation as well as an anchor to PAUC’s plans for outreach and social responsibility.

- **Bridging the Skills Gap of the Software Engineering Students at the University of Palestine to Enhance International ICT Exports**
  - This project aims to bridge the skills gap and increase the employability of graduates during their middle and last years of education for the international ICT market by providing professional training on various subjects marked as essential by the private sector.
  - During the implementation period of the project, the TEI will work progressively to develop a strong and thriving relation between the University of Palestine and the ICT private sector to create a platform of opportunities for income generation, creating business entrepreneurship, and enhance teaching practices and methodologies.

- **Improvement of Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Educational Programs to Meet the Needs of Local Market**
  - This project aims at improving the learning and training opportunities for Agriculture students by gradually moving towards more enterprise learning approach.
  - Its main goal is to develop a well-structured education model for agriculture program in collaboration with agri-businesses and the agriculture associations. The model will focus on client-driven demands for innovation and problem-solving as well as a better structured internship program.
  - It is also anticipated that the project will increase entrepreneurial awareness and skills among agriculture students and will increase higher education responsiveness to the market needs.

- **Developing Media Technology Center of Competence at PTCA Depending on Local Market Needs and TVET Skills**
  - The primary aim of this project is to improve professional, technical, entrepreneurial, and life skills of Media Technology students at PTCA and PTCA through developing Media Technology curricula and practical training to match media industry needs and to provide media technology and multimedia professionals with the right education, knowledge, and attitudes to enter media industry market directly, without a need for in-service training.
  - During the implementation period of the project, the TEI will work progressively to develop a strong and thriving relation between the media industry to create a platform of opportunities for income generation, creating business entrepreneurs and enhance teaching practices and methodologies.

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Higher Education Institutions carry an important role in producing individuals capable of incorporating within labor markets locally and abroad. A solid partnership between all labor market stakeholders is essential, by which the private sector, academic institutions, and employing organizations work in partnership to develop theoretical and training curriculum that meet the needs of the market.

Over several years, the Quality Improvement Fund provided the necessary support to the Palestinian Higher Education Institutions, in partnership with the private sector and several organizations, in an effort to improve curriculum and enhance graduates’ skills and employability. So far, many higher education institutions benefited from this program and positive impact was felt at the institutional level, as well as the graduates and the employers. We are proud that such program is one of the most successful among several other programs funded by the World Bank according to their own assessment.

After piloting this partnership between the private sector and the tertiary education institutes in 2013, the impact was satisfactory; both sides of partnerships realized that they are both benefiting from this win-win relationship. As we are now at the beginning of implementing a new group of projects in West Bank and Gaza we feel that the relationship is much stronger and more mature specially among those who experienced this partnership in the previous projects. They are well aware of the need to each other and the gains of each party. The long-term impact includes having more employable and skillful graduates, enhancing the communication channels between the PS and TEIs, bridging the gap between them and also between the students and market, and ensuring the need for more long term sustainable partnership.

We aspire for the continuity and sustainability of such program following the ending of the grant, as this has so far proved to be successful and impactful. Based on all what has been mentioned above I call all TEIs who have not yet benefited from the last QIF cycle to try again and ensure their proposals really reflect their private sector partners’ needs in workplace and this will surely be a factor to get their proposals succeed.

**Guest Corner**

**Building on Experience to Shape the Future**

*Eng. Mohammed Abu Ajamieh*
*Chairman – QIF Board*

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