



# Winter Edition - 2018

*This Newsletter is issued quarterly aiming at promoting results and outputs of the QIF projects*

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State of Palestine  
Ministry of Education  
& Higher Education

## Quality Improvement Fund

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### Quality Improvement Fund "QIF" – Background

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 Projects Coordination Unit (PCU), branched out of the MOEHE. 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.

### At A Glance



- The Partnership & Mentoring consultant (PM) Dr. Khaled Nigim has conducted his final visit in December 2017, the PM took part and presented his conclusion in a dissemination workshop where all granted TEIs under the two completed cycles and the newly awarded third cycle gathered. It is worth to mention that upon the completion of the PM consultant, TEIs were able to learn and use new techniques in both the curriculum development process and also the partnership with the private sector. This can be observed as follows:
  - The use of curriculum mapping tool that ensures strong curriculum design that meets labor market and engage the private sector in the process of curriculum development and planning.
  - TEIs were encouraged to establish what is called Program Advisory Committee (PAC) as a means to strengthen the partnership in developing the curriculum and identify required soft skills needed for the academic programs. PAC usually maintains continuous dialogue between the TEI and the private sector (PS) and therefore continuous update of the academic programs to meet the market need is secured.
  - A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as a means to describe the relationship between the TEI and the PS. MOU usually describes the organizational relationships (including governance) and management processes that will regulate delivery of the service; it identifies the commitments the parties are undertaking and establishes the vision, mission, and mandate that frame the service/partnership relationship.
  - Models of practical training, placement and internship were introduced to TEIs with focus on the CO-OP education concept. In addition, TEIs were encouraged to make use of existing career services to assist in the internship process.



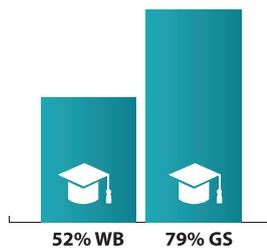
# Impact Assessment Study

## Highlights

The objective of the assessment study was to assess the impact of the 20 projects implemented in Tertiary Education Institutions in the West Bank and Gaza under the Quality Improvement Fund component of the Education to Work Transition Project– Cycle 1 and 2. The study was carried out during the last quarter of 2017 utilizing a variety of tools, ensuring that the process is as participatory and inclusive as possible. Site visits to all TEIs in the WB and Skype calls with all TEIs in GS took place. This entailed the observation of project sites, interviewing of institutions' staff and management (semi-structured in-depth interviews); holding focus group discussions and interviews with students, graduates, employers, and other relevant stakeholders as deemed necessary. Findings and recommendations were presented in two different workshops attended by QIF Board members, representatives of the various TEIs, and others. In addition, TEIs were supported to trace all their graduates who have benefitted fully from project interventions. These are mainly the June 2016 graduates who have graduated one year ago and have been exposed fully to project activities. In total, 97% (401 out of 412) graduates of the year 2016 responded and took part in tracer study conducted.

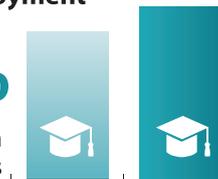
## Main Findings-Graduates

Unemployment percent among graduates  
**61%**



Unemployment

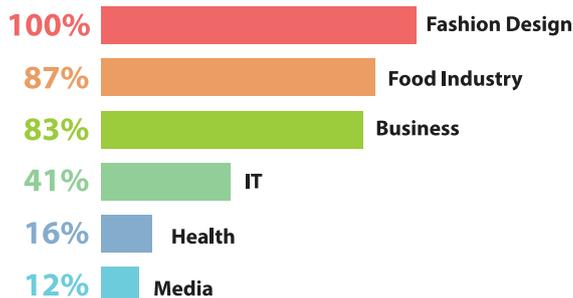
**53%**  
Diploma graduates



**62%**  
Bachelor graduates



Unemployment in regard to the area of education



Unemployment percent in terms of Gender  
(70% females, 49% males)



About **80%** of employed graduates worked in areas related to their education

Only a small percentage **5%** of unemployed graduates were continuing their higher education

Furthermore, self-employment percent reached

**23%**  
(18% WB; 44% GS) of all employed

The highest self-employment rate **44%** was among the IT graduates and the lowest **8%** among health graduates



**The average unemployment rate of graduates compared to the baseline in 2013 decreased by 4.1%. This is quite an achievement, particularly in light of the fact that overall unemployment for the target population has increased in the same period in Palestine by (5.6%)**

Not only has the project contributed to graduate employment, but it also had a clear impact on students' and graduates' competencies. Graduates were portrayed as well trained and ready for work; possessing competencies that are relevant to the needs of the labor market; in general rated better than other graduates; more productive and practical than other graduates, and ; better knowledgeable of and have linkages and networks with the Labor Market.

**In general, graduates are rated as superior by PSIs in terms of commitment; capabilities, and; technical skills and knowledge.**

### **Main Findings – TEIs**

Teaching staff noted that the program has positively contributed to their updated technical knowledge and skills; exposure to the state of the art technological advancements regionally and internationally; soft skills; links and networks with Labor Market (LM) establishments, and; ability to operate modern equipment and use specialized software. The program enhanced the staff's pedagogical competencies, particularly in the areas of: competency based education; case based approach and other active learning methodologies; simulation; relations and dealing with students / class management; organization and evaluation of on the job training / training within industry, and; international teaching standards.

### **Main Findings – Partners & LMIs**

The project has: enhanced the capacity of LMIs; strengthened the communication between TEIs and LMIs; positively promoted the LMIs and their products and services; highlighted the issues of concern to partners, and; developed tangible products and services.

## **Main Conclusions and Recommendations**

**The main recommendation of the study is to continue and expand the program. The program has clearly and beyond any doubt led to higher education programs that are of higher quality and of more relevance to the needs of the labor market.**

- At the program governance level, QIF Board members play a main voluntary role in ensuring the success of the QIF project through discussing, approving and awarding the submitted QIF proposals. To play even a bigger role in setting and monitoring the strategic directions of the project, QIF board members should have more exposure to similar international experiences, more time to self-reflect on their operation, and better access to information needed to make sound and timely decisions. Every effort should be made to facilitate QIF board face-to-face meetings.
- The QIF program has done a great job in supporting the forging of relationships and partnerships between TEIs and the LMIs. This has led to more relevant education offerings as exhibited in the employment ratio of graduate. To ensure LMIs further and stronger participation in cooperative education programs such as QIF, LMIs capacities and systems at the LMIs level to undertake an active part in the partnership should be enhanced.
- The most important input to quality education is the quality of the teachers / instructors / lecturers. In addition, pioneering projects at TEIs such as QIF will not see light, and their outputs and outcomes will not be streamlined if there is no full and strong management engagement, support and endorsement.
- The QIF program has introduced new components, methodologies, practices, and policies. However, These good practices need to be further developed, introduced, and mainstreamed at the levels of the TEIs and the HE system at large.
- Collaboration and cross learning among the various TEIs is not structured and has not reached its optimum potential. The benefits of such a collaboration can be of great value.

**Partnerships need time and patience to forge**

- As this year witnessed the official closure of all projects implemented under cycle 2, The PCU team provided every effort needed to ensure proper administrative and financial closing. TEIs were encouraged to generate lessons learned, disseminate best practices among the other departments within the TEI itself, sustain and scale up project's outcomes beyond projects life time and continue collaborations with their partners.
- As part of the administrative closure of the original QIF project, an external evaluator was selected and contracted to conduct an assessment study on the impact of the 20 projects implemented under both cycles 1 and 2. The study focused on reviewing and analyzing all the projects under both cycles of QIF component for the purpose of generating recommendations that contribute to the best use, sustainability and ownership of these projects, as well as generating recommendations to increase the benefit of implementing future QIF cycles. Moreover, the study focused on assessing the impact of implementing the QIF projects on the projects' target groups, the labor market, the beneficiary institution/s programs, partners and staff. However, the main recommendation of the study was to continue and expand the program. The program has clearly and beyond any doubt led to education programs that are of higher quality and of more relevance to the needs of the labor market.



- In late January 2018, the PCU has officially announced the launching of the 4th cycle of QIF Grants. While the characteristics of this cycle is similar to a great extent to the third one, the QIF Board while finalizing the concept note agreed to open a window to support grants targeting the establishment of new and innovative programs. Two orientation workshops took place early in February where all TEIs in West Bank and Gaza were invited to ensure better understanding of the requirements of QIF grants for this cycle. It is worth mentioning that the deadline for submitting the preliminary proposals by TEIs is on February 26th, 2018.

## Guest Corner

**Eng. Hisham Kuhail**  
QIF Board Member



Quality Improvement Fund, which was initiated to respond to higher education strategy launched in 2002, has become an effective and motivational tool that allows the higher education sector to upgrade the quality and relevance of the provided academic programs to better match the Palestinian human resources requirements.

Perhaps, the continuous success of QIF along with the increasing interaction by the Tertiary Education Institutes with its components and mechanism is an evidence to show its flexibility, functionality and sustainability to this day. It is worth mentioning that the Palestinian experience in managing the implementation of QIF grants has referred to be a successful one at the regional and international levels. This is indeed, an attribute to the commitment of the Projects Coordination Unit staff in addition to the active contribution of the TEIs in achieving the set objectives. That said, we cannot but to commend on the independency, transparency and integrity of the QIF which are the driving forces towards building a strong and solid network with all related institutions.

The accelerated technological advances and globalization and the increased number of competitors have made the producing of qualified resources even more challenging. And the Education to Work Transition Project concept through the Quality Improvement Fund came to support TEIs to be able to compete and equip their graduates with the needed competences making their transition to the workforce as employees or as self-employers smoother.

The recent impact assessment study of QIF revealed a notable improvement of the graduates' knowledge, competences and attitude to instantly being merged in the labor market. This improvement came as a reflection to the comprehensive development of programs introduced by QIF where there is a strong and serious intervention and commitment from the private sector / employers in the learning process to fully ensure a productive output capable of integration and developing their communities.

The unprecedented competition of the TEIs to benefit from QIF grants is a clear message from those TEIs to show their interest and willingness to keep improving through a more sustained tool. Hence, this is an invitation to the policy makers to adopt this approach to be one of the main sustained sources for making and maintaining improvements for the whole sector at the national level.

