

- During the period between May 2nd and May 18th, the Partnership and Mentoring Consultant Dr. Khaled Nigim has successfully completed his 4th visit to Palestine where he conducted one to one meetings with each of the QIF projects' management teams. Also a national workshop for all ongoing projects in West Bank and Gaza Projects was held where Dr. Nigim focused on strengthening the partnerships between both academia and businesses through encouraging them to review the already established Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) and to enhance them to become more solid and well-defined MoUs that ensure both parties have clear understanding of their collaboration role within the QIF frame and even beyond that. He also introduced the "Service agreement" which is usually a step further towards a more strategic collaboration.

In his meetings with TEIs Dr. Nigim also introduced international practice models of the internship and work placement for students where he also stressed the



importance of activation the Career units to take their roles in systemizing and structuring the internship for all programs. The coming months however, will witness online meetings with projects' administrators to continue achieving progress in both aspects; internship and partnership.

GUEST CORNER

Sustainability in Tertiary Education: A Keyword for Development

Dr. Ghassan Abu Orf
A QIF Board Member

It is obvious that the ultimate concern of any tertiary education institution is to breed graduates who are well-equipped and possess all required competences, professional and personal up to the international level, that enable them to compete with graduates of other academic institutions and win their jobs. By achieving this ultimate goal any tertiary education institution worldwide will justify and satisfy its existence in contributing to human development. However, research is another dimension that most strong universities put it as one of their targets to contribute to human development. Only niche universities worldwide would claim that they breed leaders of the world in different disciplines, in addition to breeding competent graduates who are leaders in research.

For tertiary education institutions to ensure achieving this goal, they have to run programs that are sustainable, i.e.; having decent quality of education, relevant to market needs, flexible and responsive to change in industry, effective, efficient, and accessible, as long as sufficient financial resources are available. Hence developing appropriate strategies, policies, and guidelines for enhancing sustainability of education programs becomes essential for tertiary education institutions to continue in contributing effectively in human development.

Creating long term partnerships with local market industry guarantees delivering graduates to the local market equipped with the needed competencies and professional skills that are required by the local market industry. Such long term partnerships will ensure developing educational programs run by tertiary education institutions that are relevant, responsive, effective, efficient, and of decent quality, i.e. sustainable. At the beginning, tertiary education institutions have to invest on attracting local market industry to be involved in the educational process. Eventually, local market industry will see the benefits of this partnership in securing well-equipped graduates who are ready to work with minimum training if none. This is the turning point where local market industry will be the driving force of this partnership and definitely will invest heavily in building the infrastructure of tertiary education institutions and contributes towards achieving full sustainability of educational programs in tertiary education institutions.

Hence, Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) stresses on developing this partnership with local market industry by making it essential for proposals submitted by tertiary education institutions for QIF grants to prove that they do have such partnerships at all phases of the projects to be funded by QIF. The idea is to create a new culture of long term essential partnership between tertiary education institutions and local market industry and hence sustainability in human development towards building strong economy.

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Quality Improvement Fund Projects

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This Newsletter will be issued quarterly aiming at promoting results and outputs of the QIF projects

Quality Improvement Fund "QIF" – Background

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has been implementing several projects since 2005 to help finance scaling-up activities of the well-performing Tertiary Education Project (TEP). As a result of the success of these projects, on July 2nd, 2012, the MoEHE received new financing from the World Bank in the amount of 6.5 million USD, under the project named "Education to Work Transition Project – E2WTP". 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 major component of the E2WTP is the Quality Improvement Fund Grants (QIF), by which a total of 20 grants were awarded to 16 TEIs through two cycles, where a total amount of \$4,580,749.21 has been committed among nine universities and seven colleges, of which, two universities and two colleges are located in Gaza Strip.

QIF continues 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.



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At a Glance

- As a step towards deepening education – private sector collaboration, the QIF Board members during their 14th meeting recommended to initiate a national dialogue forum between academia and businesses. Accordingly, a roundtable meeting was held on May 25th, 2016 where a diverse range of active representatives from both TEIs and businesses were brought together. All participants welcomed the initiative of the QIF board and stressed the importance of maintaining such cross – sector dialogue at a national level where both parties can exchange visions and share concerns and thoughts. It is anticipated however, that the QIF Board will explore mechanism for functioning and maintaining the forum in a way that ensures future cycle of QIF grants will be in line with the outcomes and areas of interest resulting from this dialogue.
- Under the frame of preparation for additional financing for E2WTP, a World Bank delegation visited Palestine from May 29 to June 7 2016. The mission –led by Task Team Leader Dr. Juan Manuel Moreno- met officials from MOEHE as well as, QIF Board and other main players from businesses and TEIs. These meetings gave the mission an opportunity to engage directly with the beneficiaries of the projects to ensure the AF project design is highly relevant to their needs.

Tourism Faculty Skilled Up with the Latest Travel Industry Knowledge and Updates

An-Najah National University (NNU) through its project: "Linking with the Private Sector: Tourism and Archaeology Curriculum Reform" is aiming at enhancing the capacity of the academic staff of the Tourism and Archaeology Department and equipping them with the latest travel industry knowledge and updates through providing a series of training courses in the worldwide ticketing reservation system (Amadeus). This system is being used widely all over the world and locally in the various travel and tourism agencies.



The target audience for the course was eight trainees from a diverse range of representatives from NNU faculty members, partnering travel agencies and Ministry of Tourism and Antiques. All have successfully completed the training which was delivered by the "Amadeus Academy" the only Amadeus system agent in Palestine allowing them to provide top quality teaching to students through the newly developed course "Travel Agencies".

The collaboration between NNU and Amadeus Academy extended to sign an agreement that allows graduates to take 40 hours training course through the Center for Continuing Education in NNU with very reasonable fees. It is worth mentioning that the training course will be certified from both Amadeus Academy and the Ministry of Labor.

Interns Driving toward Success

A successful relationship between a university and businesses is determined by a key indicator which is the satisfaction of the employers with the quality of university graduates. Hebron University under the framework of the project "Development and Improvement of Agricultural Practical Courses" is aiming to build a solid partnership with local leading companies in the area of food industries, not only to keep its program up-to-date with the latest market needs, but also to explore channels to secure job opportunities for students after graduation.

When Bushra Halahleh a senior student at the Agricultural Faculty started her internship period at



Al Qasrawi Company, her expectation was limited to receive practical training only to fulfill the graduation requirement. However, after spending two intensive weeks of job placement, she proved her skills in tackling real tasks as a quality assurance officer, and it happened that a vacancy in the quality assurance department was available, so she was offered a full time job even before she was graduated. This inspired other interns who proved their capabilities to be satisfactory to the needs of Al Qasrawi Company who in turn offered other work opportunities.

It is anticipated that the fruitful collaboration between Hebron University and other private companies will prosper and continue to benefit more students and drive them to success.

Pioneering Web application Empowers Farmers Getting Higher Yields and Profitability

Through "PalFarm to Build the Capacity of Agriculture Diploma Students" project; the University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS) in partnership with Union of Agricultural Work Committee has developed a new system to help farmers achieve far higher yields and profitability in their operations.

The 'Computerized Greenhouse' system which was developed among other modern educational models that was developed through Palfarm, enabled students to remote monitor the agricultural



procedures inside the greenhouse as irrigation, fertilization, heat control and moisture control. The system works through a website that the farmer can access via a laptop or a tablet. Through this website the agricultural procedures are applied automatically depending on the plants need.

"After the first production cycle in the Computerized Greenhouse, The system achieved the expected goals as saving effort, time and human resources. The greenhouse obtained a qualitative and quantitative improvement in the crop yields, considerable reduction of pests' infection and saving water and compost amounts. Moreover, the system gives students the opportunity to practice the modern technologies exists in greenhouses." said Mr. Nasser Deeb, 'Agriculture Diploma Specialty' Coordinator, UCAS.

Reaching Beyond Borders

In its mission to expand learning opportunities and linkages for students enrolled in the developed minor program through a project titled "Development of Archeology Program for the Benefit of Rural Tourism", the project team of Birzeit University led by Dr. Hamed Salem has successfully carried out an educational study tour to Jordan for five days. 17 students, 2 academic supervisors and a representative from the project partner Al-Rozana Association actively participated in the tour, which included field visits, meetings and training sessions with the various stakeholders involved in the rural tourism sector of Jordan.

Moreover, in order to examine different post-graduate



programs in the field, the President of the Hashemite University welcomed the whole group and invited two students along with the supervisors for a meeting, which resulted in drafting an MOU to include opportunities for student placement and exchange programs. Additionally, linkages have been forged with the different stakeholders representing NGOs, private sector, and governmental institutions which will allow for further future collaboration.

Upon their return, and through their reports, students expressed their gratitude for such a positive learning experience, which allowed them to better understand the rural tourism sector in a context similar to that of Palestine. Students were able to observe, experiment and learn from existing projects, and assess initiatives in the field by linking the materials taught through the developed courses with the practical concepts they observed on the grounds.

Practice Tip

Start Thinking About Sustainability Now

Sustainability refers to the continuation of a project's goals, principles, and efforts to achieve desired outcomes. Although one thinks that guaranteeing the sustainability of a project means finding the resources to continue it "as is" beyond the grant period, ensuring sustainability really means making sure that the goals of the project continue to be met through activities that are consistent with the current conditions and workforce development needs.

Sustainability strategies that you may want to pursue include:

- Take sustainability seriously; you need to plan your effort carefully and then systematically undertake the appropriate steps.
- Consider ways to institutionalize, or incorporate all or some part of the effort into existing, ongoing organizational or community operations, rather than continuing it as a separate project.
- Develop buy-in among your strategic partners for the aspects of your project that you plan to sustain.
- Collaborate with partners-on an ongoing basis. Make sure your partners realize the benefit of participating in your project, are kept up to date on how the project is doing, and feel involved..
- Develop a detailed description of what services and activities you want to sustain. Which ones will be maintained? Which ones will change?