

NINTH BIENNIAL GCES CONFERENCE

**RETHINKING EDUCATIONAL
REFORM IN THE GCC:
REFLECTING ON THE PAST
TO INFORM THE FUTURE**



المؤتمر التاسع للجمعية الخليجية للتربية المقارنة

**إعادة النظر في الإصلاح التعليمي
في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي:
نظرة على الماضي لإعلام المستقبل**

Conference Program

March 21-23rd, 2021

Hosted and Sponsored by



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FOUNDATION FOR POLICY RESEARCH



مؤسسة الكويت للتقدم العلمي
Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences



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الجمعية الخليجية للتربية المقارنة
The Gulf Comparative Education Society


Welcome to the Gulf Comparative Education Society (GCES)!

Dear GCES Guests and members,

On behalf of the GCES, it is my pleasure and honor to welcome the presenters and participants to the 9th Biannual Conference. Founded in 2008, the GCES is a non-governmental academic society that was formed to enable academic, professional, and educational discourse, from a comparative stance, with a focus on the Gulf region. The GCES Conference 2021, which was initially planned to take place in Kuwait in 2020, was delayed due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the social distancing requirements that all of us had to follow as an aftermath of this global pandemic.

The pandemic has left lasting effects on almost all areas of life, and education systems are no exception. Considering these impacts, particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, we took this opportunity to allow academics to reflect on their contextual experiences in relation to distance learning. We have called for a special panel to be presented at GCES 2021 entitled “COVID-19: GCC Education Systems’ Response to the Global Pandemic.” The aim of this special call for papers acknowledges the effects of the coronavirus outbreak on the education system and is focused on highlighting original research that can help us all in overcoming the challenges that this pandemic has brought to us. School closures and the subsequent shift to remote and online learning have been challenging in many ways. Traditional methods of assessment became redundant, and it also affected the budget of public and private stakeholders in education. We have successfully received a surge of papers on the topic, creating three panels instead of one. These panels will bring forward solutions to this major problem, with the main topics discussed being digital tools and innovation, teacher training and development, and policymaking to empower the education system to overcome this issue at hand. Understanding the long-term effects of this global pandemic on the education system is also a significant milestone.

As such, I am pleased to announce the launch of the first virtual GCES conference entitled “Rethinking Educational Reform in the GCC: Reflecting on the Past to Inform the Future.” The theme of this conference reflects back on the theme of educational reform in the Gulf from our first symposium in 2010 to see what has changed and the lessons and practices that can be shared since then. The conference aims to stimulate discussions on educational reform in the GCC, providing a platform for current and future research that explores achievements, challenges and pitfalls in education. It is anticipated that the engagement by the researchers, students, practitioners, and policymakers will be vibrant. It will provide a great interactive platform to the professional and academic community, welcoming and inspiring them toward the future.



The theme for the first day is to bridge past and future perspectives. Educational reforms can only work in the future if they are informed by the past. It is particularly important to examine educational developments that have taken place in the past, including traditional indicators and measures of student performance, and re-evaluate their role in the present and future in light of technological developments and the impact of COVID-19 on education. The leadership approach that educational institutions should follow must be debated as there should be an evidence-based approach that institutional leadership should adopt at this stage.

The theme for the second day is the potential for development and education exchange. Educational reforms are not always successful, and one reason for their failure is the lack of understanding of the globalized world as we know it today. The focus here is to understand the importance of national and international comparative studies and collaborative efforts that can help resolve this issue. The theme also briefly touches upon the need to discuss often ignored issues in the GCC context, such as inclusiveness debates in education, and to reflect on the experiences of our educators. The theme for the third day relates to moving forward and learning from COVID-19. The pandemic and its aftermath have proved to be a major challenge for education systems across the world. Tackling these challenges requires us to have an innovative and contemporary approach. To overcome the problems that education systems have faced during this pandemic, it is important to not only understand and analyze these issues but also to create the right policies that can help us resolve the matter at hand.

This year's event was made possible with the support of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and the Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research, whose help and sponsorship have made this conference possible. The constant dedication and support of the Al Qasimi Foundation have also played a pivotal role in the organization of past events and continue to play an important role in shaping educational policy in the UAE and the greater Arab Gulf region.

Intending to tackle the problems that our education systems are facing today and consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to this conference.

Let us work toward informing future policies by our past!

Dr. Ahoud Al-Asfour
GCES President

Assistant Professor of Education Foundations & Administration, College of Basic Education, The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Kuwait.

Keynote and Featured Speakers



Keynote Speaker

Susan L. Robertson

Dr. Susan L. Robertson is currently a Professor of Sociology and the Head of Faculty at the University of Cambridge. Susan has held academic positions at the University of Bristol in the UK as well as in New Zealand and Australia. Her research engages with education policy, state transformations, governance, and social justice. Susan is also the founding editor and editor-in-chief of the journal *Globalization, Societies, and Education*. She has published articles in leading journals, including the *Journal of Education*

Policy, and her recent books include *Public-Private Partnerships in Education* and *Global Regionalisms and Higher Education*. Some of her most recent publications include the book chapter “Non-state Actors, and the Advance of Frontier Higher Education Markets in the Global South” (2019) and the article “Ordinalization and the OECD’s Governance of Teachers” (2020).

Title: “Learning to Live Futures through Re-Reading Pasts and Negotiating Presents”

The rise of big data and the potential for technology-driven artificial intelligence and machine learning to shape educational and wider social worlds have led to an uncritical, if not passive, view of the future. From this perspective, the future has already been “taken” by technology, rather than a view in which the future is, by definition, unknown and needs to be claimed and made. This angle is particularly important in the context of climate change, sustainability, rising social inequalities, and narrow populisms, which will require educators to take a different approach to education and learning. In this keynote address, Susan L. Robertson makes the case for education as a key site of such deliberations and for educators as important actors in claiming the future. Educators and learners must challenge the limitations of a singular temporal (future) and social (technology) lens and argue for alternatives that are negotiated and materialized through the recovery of rich cultural pasts and contested presents.



Keynote Speaker

Ahmed Al-Shahi

Dr. Ahmed Al-Shahi is a social anthropologist and Research Fellow at St. Antony's College, Oxford University, and the co-founder of "The Sudanese Programme" with Bona Malwal, a Sudanese journalist. He taught social anthropology at the universities of Khartoum, Newcastle upon Tyne, and Oxford. He undertook anthropological fieldwork on the Shaygiyya tribe of northern Sudan and particularly on the large community in the city of Nuri. The themes of his fieldwork research are agricultural and economic development, sectarian politics, social differentiation, social and kinship institutions, and oral literature (stories, poetry, sayings, and songs) among both the sedentary and nomadic populations of the area. He is a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great

Britain and Ireland and a Member of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. Some of his latest publications include *Wisdom from the Nile* (in Arabic) and *Wisdom from the Desert* (in Arabic), in collaboration with F.C.T. Moore.

Title: "Educational Cross-Currents: A Recent Perspective"

Forty-one years ago, Ahmed Al-Shahi authored an article entitled "Educational Cross-Currents," which discussed the nature of and problems associated with the system of education in the Middle East. In this article, he argues that the persistent pattern and method of secular education had been closely copied from traditional religious education, which is based on rote and repetitive learning. In religious establishments, learning has followed this pattern for centuries. Although some progress has been made, the system is still steeped in tradition and conservatism. In the present article, he reflects on the developments that have taken place since his initial elaborations, and he will suggest some reforms that may help to improve the standards and performance of the recipients of the present system of secular education. Although his assessment may appear to be critical, the reforms that he suggests are across various levels of the educational ladder, and they are proposed as a positive step toward an improved system of education in the Middle East. He further argues that critical thinking and a sensible methodology of learning will help to alleviate the shortcomings of this system. His reflections are based on his practical experiences in observing, teaching, and assessing students who have graduated from educational institutions in the Middle East and elsewhere.



Keynote Speaker

Fatimah Al Hashem

Dr. Fatimah Alhashem is an Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Instruction at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) and chair for the Center of Teaching, Learning, and Research at GUST. She worked as general manager for the teacher development department at the National Center for Education Development (NCED) from 2015 until 2018. Her professional interests focus on professional development for teachers, teachers' practices, teachers' policies, STEM education, and the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) model for teachers. Her research discusses the TPACK model and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Additionally, she worked as director for the Ibitikar Initiative to support women and young girls in science and research for two years. She is a member of the National Science Teacher Association and

Kuwait Soroptimist. Some of her most recent publications include the article "Analysis Based on the Three Objective Educational Domains for Final Summative Secondary Examinations of Science Subject (Chemistry, Physics, and Biology)" (2020). In 2021, she also published the article "Analyzing Plans of Localizing Professional Development of the Ministry of Education in Kuwait Based on TPACK Model for the Rolling Out Competency-Based Curriculum."

Title: "The Need for a National Teacher Framework in Kuwait: A Situation Analysis of a Hidden Project"

Educational policies are considered an important element in the package of initiatives, reforms, and approaches that the state of Kuwait seeks to achieve through its various institutions and realize through its societal obligations and goals. Since the educational process is traditionally centered on the teacher, the NCED has focused its framework on teachers in Kuwait. Accordingly, a National Teacher Policy Framework (NTPF) was developed to include several workable policies intended to regulate the professional career path of a teacher from the time of their appointment until their retirement. The NTPF aims at developing mechanisms that raise the efficiency of teachers in various stages of their careers: pre-service teacher colleges, post-graduation and appointment, and throughout their career in the educational field. In this context, these policies were designed as guidelines for decision makers to enable them to develop policies and regulations that affect teachers in Kuwait. This work was conducted over four years as part of a two-core deliverable under Component 2 (i.e., Effective Teaching) of the School Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQI 2). The NTFW is intended to be a set of national teacher policies and a regulatory framework to raise the effectiveness and motivation of the teaching profession in Kuwait. The second deliverable is a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program linked to teachers' standards and teachers' career paths.



Keynote Speaker

Diego Santori

Dr. Diego Santori is a Senior Lecturer in Education and Society at King's College London. His research interests include relationships between education policy, economics, and subjectivity and the ways in which their interpenetration produces new cultural forms and practices. He is currently researching the effects of test-based accountability on teacher–pupil interactions and the mechanisms, motivations, and influences of grassroots organizations involved in resisting standardized testing in England. He has also served as a panel member for prestigious funding bodies such as UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), a non-departmental public body of the Government of the United Kingdom. With Stephen Ball and Carolina Junemann, he has recently published *Edu.net: Globalization and Education Policy Mobility* (2017). His work has

appeared in leading academic journals and major international collections, such as the *World Yearbook of Education* 2016, the *International Handbook on Ethnography of Education*, and the *Handbook of Global Policy and Policymaking in Education*.

Title: “Learning from Failure: Drawing Lessons from Educational Reform in the Global North”

Education policy “gurus” and entrepreneurs tend to focus on “what works” in thinking about educational reform, particularly scalable solutions that could lead to rapid, systemic change. This work aims to “rethink educational reform,” as the conference theme invites us to focus on England as a case of policy “hyperactivity.” This keynote address will examine policy failure, instead of success. While still admired and considered a leading education system, schooling in England is in crisis, as is affirmed by the National Education Union and some of last year’s headlines in *The Guardian* and *BBC News*, such as “25% of Teachers in England Work More than 60 Hours a Week” (*The Guardian*, 2019). As data and metrics become increasingly privileged over teacher expertise and professional judgment (Thompson & Cook, 2014), teachers face tremendous pressure to comply with the mounting demands of data and inspections (Bradbury, 2019). These demands have significantly affected teachers, their pedagogical decisions, and their daily workloads. However, more importantly, these demands have resulted in homogenous and rigid practices (Santori, 2018). In many ways, the ubiquity of data-driven accountability, testing, and inspection has fundamentally changed every dimension of schooling, including not only what teachers do but also who they are (Ball, 2003; Perryman, 2009). This keynote address will examine and theorize the effects that ill-planned reforms have had on wellbeing, justice, and quality, as well as consider their implications for the GCC.



Featured Speaker

Salwa Al-Jassar

Dr. Salwa Al-Jassar is the Associate Professor of Curricula and Sociological Teaching Methods at the College of Education at Kuwait University. She is also a member of the board of directors of the Society for Citizenship and Development in Kuwait, a former member of the National Assembly, and the former chairwoman of the National Assembly's education committee. Her research interests include the field of educational policies, curricula, women empowerment, citizenship education, social leadership and entrepreneurship, and teacher preparation and training programs. She is one of the first Kuwaiti women to win a seat in the Kuwaiti National Assembly in the free elections of 2009. Some of her most recent publications include the article "The Teaching and Classroom Problems Facing

Student Teachers of the College of Education at Kuwait University during Field Training" (2019). She has also published the article "A Framework for the Professional Development of in-Service Teachers in Kuwait" (2020).

Title: "Sustainability of the Relationship between Education and Development: An Analytical Vision and Practical Solutions for Developing Education in the State of Kuwait"

The issue of educational reform has been at the center of the socio-political interests of Gulf countries since the 1950s. Initiatives for education policy formulation have been discussed in several conferences and symposia in the region. However, from the 1970s to the present, attempts at meaningful school education reform have produced minimal results in improving the quality of education delivered. Moreover, schools still lack internal and external competencies in preparing distinguished citizens for the future of our nation. The transformations that have accompanied the daily lives of our students demand a revolutionary approach to information and knowledge banks. Changes in the content of education and educational standards are inevitable in countries that aspire to positive educational outcomes (Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science, 2009). Investing in education has become an issue that is tied to national security, thereby requiring cooperation across all levels of political and administrative decision-making. Educational reform initiatives are a fundamental requisite for the full realization of a country's sustainable development programs. Therefore, education and development are interrelated, whereby humans become the primary axis of socio-economic development. A real renaissance in educational systems is critical in building productive workers and effective citizenship. This descriptive study aims to diagnose the reality of education in Kuwait by analyzing reports, mixed-methods studies, and best country practices. Imbalances within Kuwait's general education framework are evaluated. The study concludes by offering practical recommendations and proposing an education framework that builds on the country's national development strategy.



GCES 2021 Conference Schedule

Rethinking Educational Reform in the GCC: Reflecting on the Past to Inform the Future

Day 1: Sunday, March 21, 2021

Theme: *Bridging Past and Future Perspectives*

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| 9.15 – 11.00 AST | Workshop: Collective Impact: Systems Theory and Shifting Paradigms through Grassroots Community Engagement Eleanor Burton – en.v, Kuwait Layan Al Dabt – en.v, Kuwait | Zoom |
| 11.00 – 11.30 AST | Opening Remarks and Introduction to GCES Ahoud Al-Asfour , College of Basic Education, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Kuwait N'Dri Thérèse Assié-Lumumba , Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University, World Council of Comparative Education Societies | Zoom |
| 11.30 – 12.30 AST | Keynote 1: Learning to Live Futures through Re-Reading Pasts and Negotiating Presents Chair: Natasha Ridge Susan L. Robertson, Professor , University of Cambridge | Zoom |
| 12.30 – 13.30 AST | Lunch Break | |

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| 13.30 – 14.45 AST | <p>Panel 1: Addressing Student Performance in Literacy and Numeracy</p> <p>Chair: Abdullah Alajmi</p> <p><i>Perceptually Enhanced Textbooks for Early-Grade Reading: Why They Get Results</i></p> <p>Helen Abadzi, University of Texas at Arlington</p> <p><i>Exploring Attractor States that Impact Motivation Among L2 Learners of Arabic in the UAE</i></p> <p>Juwaeria Siddiqui, Carleton University</p> <p><i>The Effect of Home and School Characteristics on GCC Student Academic Achievement: Insights from TIMSS 2015 Data</i></p> <p>Abdulaziz Alenezi, Virginia Tech</p> <p>Ayeshah Alazmi, Kuwait University</p> <p><i>Measuring Quality of Privately-Owned Early Childhood Care and Education Centers in the United Arab Emirates: A Ras Al Khaimah Case Study</i></p> <p>Priti Verma, Higher Colleges of Technology</p> | Zoom |
| 14.45 – 15.45 AST | <p>Keynote 2: “Educational Cross-Currents” – A Recent Perspective</p> <p>Chair: Ahoud Al-Asfour</p> <p>Ahmed Al-Shahi, Research Fellow, University of Oxford</p> | Zoom |
| 15.45 – 16.00 AST | Coffee Break | |
| 16.00 – 17.00 AST | <p>Panel 2: Rethinking Leadership Frameworks in Educational Institutions</p> <p>Chair: Aisha Alharthi</p> | Zoom |



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| | <p><i>An Exploration of School Leadership in International Schools in Kuwait</i></p> <p>Mary Ellen Kelly, University of Toronto</p> <p><i>Investigating High School Students' Perceptions of Effective Leadership Practices in a Private School in Dubai, United Arab Emirates</i></p> <p>Azza Gamal El Din, The British University in Dubai</p> <p><i>Teacher Leadership in Qatari Government Schools: Opportunities and Challenges</i></p> <p>Rania Sawalhi, Qatar University</p> | |
| 17.00 – 17.05 AST | <p>End of Day 1 Remarks</p> <p>Max Eckert, Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research</p> <p>Ahoud Al-Asfour, College of Basic Education, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Kuwait</p> | Zoom |

GCES 2021 Conference Schedule

Rethinking Educational Reform in the GCC: Reflecting on the Past to Inform the Future

Day 2: Monday, March 22, 2021

Theme: Potential for Development and Educational Exchange

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| 9.10 – 9.15 AST | Announcements David Dingus , Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research | Zoom |
| 9.15 – 10.15 AST | Keynote 3: The Need for a National Teacher Framework in Kuwait: A Situation Analysis of a Hidden Project Chair: Esra Aleisa Fatimah Alhashem , Assistant Professor, Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) | Zoom |
| 10.15 – 11.30 AST | Panel 3: The Nexus Between Education and State-Led Development Chair: Ahoud Al-Asfour <i>Sustaining the Relationship between Education and Development: An Analytical Vision and Practical Solutions to Promote Educational Development in Kuwait (Arabic)</i> Salwa Al-Jassar , Kuwait University <i>Vocational Training Centers' Attempts to Achieve Sustainable Development in Oman in Accordance with National Education Strategy 2040 from the Perspective of Employees and Trainees in Such Centers (Arabic)</i> Amal Alharmali , Ministry of Education, Oman <i>Educational Development in Light of Children's Rights Laws: Taking the Child-Friendly Schools Initiative in Sultanate Oman as a Model (Arabic)</i> Omer Hashim Ismail , Sultan Qaboos University | Zoom |



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| | <p><i>The Role of Knowledge Economy in Building Development Plans of the State of Kuwait (Education as Case Study)</i></p> <p>Fawaz Al-Husainan, Georgetown University</p> | |
| <p>11.30 – 12.30</p> <p>AST</p> | <p>Panel 4: Regional and International Comparative Studies About the Teaching Profession</p> <p>Chair: Salwa Al-Jassar</p> <p><i>Learning From Japan and Finland: What GCC Education Systems Could Adopt to Attract Citizens to the Teaching Profession?</i></p> <p>Khalaf Al'Abri, Sultan Qaboos University</p> <p><i>The Intention to Leave the Teaching Profession among Teachers in the Arab Gulf States: A Comparative Study (Arabic)</i></p> <p>Yasser Al-Mahdy, Sultan Qaboos University, Ain Shams University</p> <p><i>The Social Status of Teachers in Arab Social Milieus: A Comparative, Descriptive and Analytical Study (Arabic)</i></p> <p>Ali Said Almatari, Ministry of Education, Oman</p> | Zoom |
| <p>12.30 – 13.30</p> <p>AST</p> | Lunch Break | |
| <p>13.30 – 14.30</p> <p>AST</p> | <p>Keynote 4: Learning From Failure: Drawing Lessons from Educational Reform in the Global North</p> <p>Chair: Marvin Erfurth</p> <p>Diego Santori, Senior Lecturer, King's College London</p> | Zoom |
| <p>14.30 – 15.45</p> <p>AST</p> | <p>Panel 5: Privatization and Collaborative Endeavors in Higher Education</p> <p>Chair: Khalaf Al-'Abri</p> <p><i>Role of Private Sector in Education: GCC Context</i></p> | Zoom |

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| | <p>Kameswari Peddada, Arab Open University, Kuwait</p> <p><i>Privatizing Higher Education in The Arab Gulf States: A Comparative Examination of the Higher Education Systems in Kuwait and Oman</i></p> <p>Ahoud Al-Asfour, College of Basic Education, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Kuwait</p> <p><i>Exploring the Rationales of Establishing a Bi-national 'Made in Germany' University in the Middle East</i></p> <p>Hayfa Jafar, University of Toronto</p> <p><i>A Proposed Mechanism to Enable Collaborative Research Partnerships Between Universities and Educational Departments in Saudi Arabia to Solve Educational Dilemmas in Light of Contemporary, Global Experiences (Arabic)</i></p> <p>Wafa Alahmadi, Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University</p> | |
| <p>15.45 – 16.00</p> <p>AST</p> | Coffee Break | |
| <p>16.00– 17.00</p> <p>AST</p> | <p>Panel 6: The Use of Education to Promote Inclusion, Emotional Intelligence, and Conflict Resolution</p> <p>Chair: Auhoud Albulushi</p> <p><i>Citizenship and Peace Learning in Muslim-Majority Contexts: Understandings of Lived Social Conflicts from Bangladeshi Schools</i></p> <p>Ahmed Kaderi, McMaster University</p> <p><i>Intersections Between School Culture, Curriculum, and Student Diversity: Making Sense of the Tolerance Discourse in UAE Schools</i></p> <p>Naved Bakali, American University in Dubai Mariam Alhashmi, Zayed University</p> <p><i>Strategies to Integrate Emotional Intelligence into Curricula (Arabic)</i></p> <p>Zainab AlAjmi, Ministry of Education, Oman</p> | Zoom |



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| 17.00 – 18.15 AST | <p>Panel 7: Teachers’ Experiences, Perceptions, and Educational Performance</p> <p>Chair: Fatimah Alhashem</p> <p><i>A Quantitative Approach to Assess the Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers and Their Instructors About TPACK Capabilities of Pre-Service Teachers: An Explanatory Study Among Selected UAE Universities</i></p> <p>Laila Mohebi, Zayed University</p> <p><i>Teachers’ Experiences of Marketization in the United Arab Emirates</i></p> <p>Emily Winchip, Zayed University</p> <p><i>General Education Pre-Service Teachers’ Perceptions and Knowledge of Inclusion and Students With Disabilities in Kuwait (Arabic)</i></p> <p>Bedoor Alazemi, Kuwait University</p> <p><i>Location as a Factor for Teacher Retention: Teacher Migration in K-12 Schools in the United Arab Emirates</i></p> <p>Tiffany Lachelle Smith, University of Minnesota</p> | Zoom |
| 18.15 – 18.20 AST | <p>End of Day 2 Remarks</p> <p>David Dingus, Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research</p> | Zoom |

GCES 2021 Conference Schedule

Rethinking Educational Reform in the GCC: Reflecting on the Past to Inform the Future

Day 3: Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Theme: *Moving Forward and Learning from COVID-19*

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| 9.10 – 9.15 AST | Welcome & Announcements Janaan Farhat , Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research | Zoom |
| 9.15 – 10.30 AST | Panel 8: Higher Education and Schooling in the Gulf: A Historical, Social, and Political Examination of Educational Policies in the Region Chair: Khalaf Al-'Abri <i>The Institutional Framework Behind Kuwait's Educational Development in the Pre-Independence Period</i> (Arabic) Talal Al-Rashoud , Kuwait University <i>From National to International University: How has Internationalization Affected Academic Diversity and Production of Knowledge at Qatar University?</i> (Arabic) Esraa Al-Muftah , University of British Columbia, Qatar University <i>The Silent Voice in the Reform: Teachers' Role in Educational Reforms in Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain</i> (Arabic) Ibrahim Alhouti , UCL Institute of Education <i>On the Genealogy of the Ideal Girl: Schools, Girls, and Nation-building in Bahrain</i> Sara J. Musaifer , University of Minnesota | Zoom |
| 10.30 – 11.30 AST | Panel 9: Learning from Teachers' Experiences Chair: Fatimah Alhashem <i>Voices Needed to be Heard: A Qualitative Exploration of Physical Education Teachers' Professional Learning Experiences in Post-Basic</i> | Zoom |



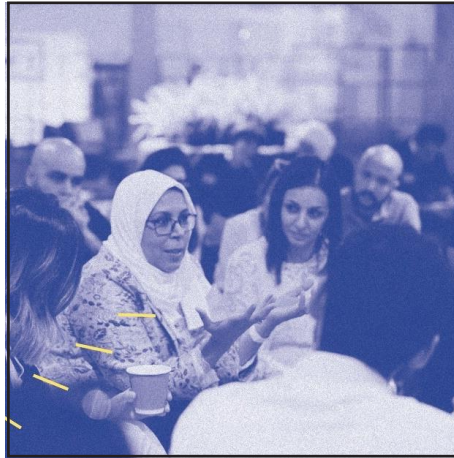
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| | <p><i>Schools in Muscat</i></p> <p>Durayra Al Maqbali, Sultan Qaboos University</p> <p><i>Empowering Teachers to Lead the Reform Toward Promoting Genuine Change</i></p> <p>Ayman Hefnawi, Ministry of Education, UAE</p> <p><i>Teacher Reflection as a Catalyst for Intercultural Pedagogical Transfer</i></p> <p>Emily Anderson, Florida International University</p> | |
| <p>11.30 – 12.30</p> <p>AST</p> | <p>Panel 10: The Need for Educational Reform in Curricula, Schools, and Universities</p> <p>Chair: Dr. Esra Aleisa</p> <p><i>Evidence-Based Curriculum Evaluation: The Much-Needed Link in Educational Reform Efforts</i></p> <p>Bechir Oueslati, Center for Excellence in Educational Development</p> <p><i>Comprehensive School Reform in Kuwait: Policy, Practice, and Performance</i></p> <p>Munirah AlAjmi, Kuwait University</p> <p><i>The Reality of Schools' Corruption and its Effects on Educational Reform in Kuwaiti Public Schools (Arabic)</i></p> <p>Meznah Saad Alazmi, Kuwait University</p> <p>Salma Faleh Alazmi, Kuwait University</p> | <p>Zoom</p> |
| <p>12.30 – 13.30</p> <p>AST</p> | <p>Lunch Break</p> | |
| <p>13.30 – 14.45</p> <p>AST</p> | <p>Panel 11: Tackling Challenges and Using Innovative Educational Practices</p> <p>Chair: Marvin Erfurth</p> <p><i>Impact of Peer Mentoring Role on Mentors' Personal Development and</i></p> | <p>Zoom</p> |

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| | <p><i>Leadership Practices: A Study Among Undergraduate Emirati Female Students at a Higher Education Institution in the United Arab Emirates</i></p> <p>Sandra Baroudi, Zayed University</p> <p><i>The Impacts of Collaborative Works on Developing Critical Thinking: A Study Among High School Students in Two Private Schools in Abu Dhabi</i></p> <p>Maryana AlRabadi, The British University in Dubai</p> <p><i>Exploring the Use of Digital Storytelling in the GCC Educational Context: Evidence from a Literature Review</i></p> <p>Nilofar Noor and Mana'al Syed, University of Toronto</p> <p><i>21st-Century Pedagogical Challenges in Higher Education: A Case Study of Dubai (UAE)</i></p> <p>Kanishka Bedi, Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society</p> | |
| <p>14.45 – 15.45</p> <p>AST</p> | <p>Panel 12: Educational Challenges During COVID-19</p> <p>Chair: Naif Daifullah Alsulami</p> <p><i>GCC Student Mothers' Challenges in Accessing Higher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic</i></p> <p>Martina Dickson, Emirates College for Advanced Education</p> <p><i>Learning Online During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Survey About Emirati Undergraduate Students' Perceptions and Difficulties</i></p> <p>Annalisa Pavan, University of Padua</p> <p><i>Schooling Challenges in the Sultanate of Oman During and After COVID-19 Pandemic: Resilience and Sustainability (Arabic)</i></p> <p>Bushra Al-Ghaithi, Ministry of Education, Oman</p> | Zoom |
| <p>15.45 – 16.00</p> <p>AST</p> | Coffee Break | |
| <p>16.00 – 17.00</p> | <p>Panel 13: Coping with the Pandemic: Students' Perceptions and Learning Mechanisms</p> | Zoom |



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| AST | <p>Chair: Janaan Farhat</p> <p><i>A Framework for Selecting and Assessing e-Learning Tools</i></p> <p>Rashita Puthiya, Middlesex University Dubai</p> <p><i>Higher Education Students' Experience of Distance Learning During COVID-19</i></p> <p>Olga Samsonova, Higher Colleges of Technology</p> <p><i>The Educational Impact of the UAE's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Student Approaches to Studying, and Perceptions of the Distance Learning Environment</i></p> <p>Philip Anderson, Middlesex University Dubai</p> <p>Dawn England, Middlesex University Dubai</p> | |
| 17.00 – 18.00 AST | <p>Panel 14: Lessons Learned From the Pandemic</p> <p>Chair: Auhoud Albulushi</p> <p><i>Positive Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Saudi Education System: My School Platform as a Model</i></p> <p>Naif Daifullah Alsulami, Umm Al-Qura University</p> <p><i>Prospects of Homeschooling in the UAE After the COVID-19 Pandemic</i></p> <p>Nafila Mahdi Al Ahbabi, Ministry of Education, UAE</p> <p><i>The Career Development of Educational Bodies in the Gulf States During the (COVID-19) Pandemic: Cause and Effect (Arabic)</i></p> <p>Amthal Al Oraifan, Ministry of Education, Kuwait</p> | Zoom |
| 18.00 – 18.20 AST | <p>End of Day 3 Remarks</p> <p>Ahoud Al-Asfour, College of Basic Education, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Kuwait</p> | Zoom |

March 21: Pre-Conference Workshop



Overview:

The organization “en.v” will conduct a participatory workshop using the ongoing pilot of the Collective Impact Coalition (CIC) for educational reform in Kuwait as a case study to introduce the collective impact approach and its application to target long-term paradigm shift through grassroots engagement and systems awareness. In this workshop, en.v will introduce the CIC’s model and invite participants to share their lived experience and knowledge using some tools of collective impact, with a focus on education in the GCC. Participants will be asked to consider the social constructs at play as they identify the challenges currently being faced in the education systems of the GCC and will also participate in a solution-driven feedback exercise. The presenters encourage genuine engagement within this process, which reflects the values that are intrinsic to the collective impact model: equity, inclusion of diverse lived experiences, critical thinking, and user-centric learning. Participants will also explore the efficacy of this approach within the local and regional context.

Structure:

As it stands now, the structure is as follows: The presenters will facilitate an icebreaker that will require the creation of small breakout rooms. Then, they will discuss a case study of the CIC that is currently being piloted in Kuwait, while further enabling a short Q&A session. Next, they will create two sets of breakout sessions for working groups with the participants, with a break between these sessions so that the working groups can report their outcomes. In the presentation, the presenters will share a slide show, and in the breakout rooms, they will paste prompts into the chats so that participants know what they have been tasked with.



About the Organizers:

Layan Al Dabt (Program Coordinator)

Over the past three years, Layan has taken responsibility for the creative vision of the en.v AWAKEN program, a community-building initiative aimed at engaging youth through a multi-arts platform that promotes dialogue and critical thinking as tools for tackling local issues. AWAKEN has been developed through data-driven mapping using diverse focus groups to identify community challenges and resources. Recently, AWAKEN has developed an extensive oral history project under Layan's direction, and the stories of marginalized communities are being used to create and deliver training in schools, universities, and local youth organizations to promote inclusion, empathy, and critical thinking. Layan is currently working with local educators to develop curricula promoting dialogue and participatory learning to use these narratives and is also collaborating with other platforms and partners in Kuwait to amplify these stories.

Layan holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations with a minor in English Literature from the American University of Kuwait. She co-founded Hikayitna, an oral history initiative that serves as a platform for storytellers of Palestinian heritage.

Eleanor Burton (Training & Partnerships Manager)

Eleanor Burton is the lead for en.v's multi-sectoral CIC for education reform and designs and facilitates training with youth on inclusion, privilege, and compassion as part of the AWAKEN program. Her training designs have supported the Educating for Sustainability project, Creative Minds for Social Good, and the women's leadership program, Empower Kuwaiti Women in Politics (EKWIP). Eleanor also worked on long-term strategic planning for capacity building within the civil society sector in the PACE initiative. Her role in en.v includes program development, project design, training, mentoring, and community engagement.

Eleanor has a B.A. in International Studies and Linguistics from Macalester College and a master's degree in International Non-Profit Administration from the School for International Training. She has worked in the U.S., Taiwan, Turkey, Kuwait, and throughout the GCC. She was the GCC Regional Educational Advising Consultant for AMIDEAST Kuwait and then worked in Turkey with the International Catholic Migration Commission, managing the Cultural Orientation Program for the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program covering Yemen, Kuwait, Lebanon, Turkey, UAE, India, and Nepal. Her team's experiential cultural orientation design was adopted as the USRP model worldwide. Returning to Kuwait, she directed the community outreach programs working with civil society for Fawzia Sultan Rehabilitation Institute, a local non-profit health center.

Speaker Abstracts and Panels

Day 1: Bridging Past and Future Perspectives

Panel 1: Addressing Student Performance in Literacy and Numeracy

Perceptually Enhanced Textbooks for Early-Grade Reading: Why They Get Results

Helen Abadzi, University of Texas at Arlington

As expert readers, we are habituated to small letters, variable fonts, and sketches around them. Beginners' reading books are inevitably formulated by expert readers and reflect these features. Reading methods focus on sounds of letters and words and assume that students instantly see letters. However, psychological research shows that there is an optimal size and spacing that maximizes speed at various reading levels. Fluency in reading that makes comprehension possible is a function of practice hours. These brain requirements mean that textbooks may disadvantage beginning readers. They have small letters, teach multiple shapes, mix graphics, and have too little text to enable automaticity. The disadvantage is greater for the poor, whose parents do not read with them.

Perceptually enhanced textbooks and methodologies have been applied to multiple languages and scripts. Pilots show results that are dramatically better than alternatives. The Al Qasimi Foundation has elaborated on such a textbook for Arabic and piloted a methodology. The presentation will show perceptually enhanced textbooks from other countries and discuss how to optimize the necessary perceptual functions.

Exploring Attractor States that Impact Motivation among L2 Learners of Arabic in the UAE

Juwaeriah Siddiqui, Carleton University

Arabic is taught as a mandatory second language (L2) to non-native Arabic speakers in primary and secondary schools in the UAE. Despite learning Arabic for several years, L2 learners' language production and comprehension abilities are steadily declining (Masudi, 2017). Since most Arabic learning happens at school, the educational system is continually under scrutiny, however, other variables that affect L2 motivation are rarely considered. Unlike previous research in second language acquisition, current studies have started recognizing the dynamic and interdependent nature of motivation as a complex system (De Bot et al., 2007). The present study combines concepts from Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System and Complexity Theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) to view motivation in second language development as a complex system. Emphasis is placed on the learning experience of the L2 learner in the UAE to obtain a holistic understanding of their immediate learning environment and how that impacts motivation to learn Arabic. Using a mixed-methods approach (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009), the study employs surveys and semi-structured interviews with parents of L2 Arabic learners to help identify attractor states i.e., the patterned outcomes the learner's motivation settles into (Dörnyei & MacIntyre, 2014) affect the learners' L2 motivation. The results provide insight into the motivational dynamics of the L2 learner, thereby providing suitable intervention points and may contribute significantly toward L2 motivation research of languages other than English in the region. This also calls for potential policy changes in how Arabic is incentivized to non-native speakers of it.



The Effect of Home and School Characteristics on GCC Student Academic Achievement: Insights from TIMSS 2015 Data

Abdulaziz Alenezi, Virginia Tech, and Ayesha Alazmi, Kuwait University

The education systems in countries of the GCC are facing many challenges. According to the international comparative assessment TIMSS 2015, all GCC countries are located in the lowest quartile of the mathematics and science scales. The purpose of the current study is to measure student math achievement variation between schools and to examine the effect of home resources, early literacy and numeracy, and teacher perceptions of school instructional leadership controlling for the school sector in GCC countries. For this purpose, multilevel analysis was conducted on TIMSS 2015 secondary dataset using a complete-case subsample of 38,279 students in 4th grade and 1,550 schools. The results found that 44% of math achievement lies between schools, and regardless of school sector (public vs. private), the existence of home resources and parents' practice of basic literacy and numeracy activities before school entry have a statistically significant and positive effect on student math achievement. Moreover, teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership have a statistically significant and positive effect on student math achievement. In conclusion, these results suggest that more attention should be paid to the influence of home and school characteristics on GCC student academic achievement in mathematics.

Measuring Quality of Privately-Owned Early Childhood Care and Education Centers in the United Arab Emirates: A Ras Al Khaimah Case Study

Priti Verma, Higher Colleges of Technology

Quality care and education in the first eight years of life play a critical role in young children's overall development. Young children with high-quality early childhood education (ECE) experiences have increased vocabularies; better language, math, and social skills; have more positive relationships with peers; and score higher on school-readiness tests (Tayler & Church, 2013).

More recently, the importance of ECE has become widely accepted in the UAE, the Arab Gulf region, and the broader Middle East in general. Yet, research studies related to ECE quality, and consequent child development outcomes in these contexts, have been difficult. However, not much research focuses on ECE quality, practices, and impacts. This case study focuses on Ras Al Khaimah's emirate in the UAE, investigating the quality of privately-owned early childhood care and education centers (ECECs). There were 39 licensed private ECECs operational in the UAE at the time of data collection between 2016 and mid-2018. Two widely used international scales, namely ECERS-R and CLASS, were used to examine structural and process quality indicators. Prior scheduling of a week-long appointment for data collection in ECECs may have allowed ECE managers to display the ECEC's best picture. This staging may have influenced our results, and it could be a limitation. Overall, the quality of ECECs varies considerably in Ras Al Khaimah. Average ECERS-R and CLASS scores were mid-range, suggesting ECE quality lower than good rating. ECE policy recommendations that can potentially be used by local and federal stakeholders will be presented based on critical findings.

Panel 2: Rethinking Leadership Frameworks in Educational Institutions

An Exploration of Leadership in International Schools in Kuwait

Mary Ellen Kelly, University of Toronto

The 21st century has been described as a century of rapid technological development and global communication, creating a growing knowledge economy that is driving the importance of education on a global scale. These global developments have created a growing demand for private international schools, which in turn has also created a demand for educational leaders to manage and lead these schools. What kind of school leadership is needed to respond to the learning needs of 21st century learners? How are educational leaders, many coming from national education systems, prepared for leadership in an international context? What are the challenges faced by school leaders working in market-led educational systems? The focus of my research is to provide some answers to these questions through a qualitative study of how school leaders transition from national school systems to private international school systems. Interview data was gathered through semi-structured interviews on the experiences of school leaders working in international schools in Kuwait. Seventeen participants were interviewed for this study. Generalizability or transferability of research findings may be limited due to the small scale of the study. Primary findings indicate that school leaders face many challenges related to the institutional settings of private schools, market-driven influences, and managing staff turnover. The purpose of my research is to add to the limited research on school leadership in private international schools. This research is particularly relevant to the GCC because of the rapidly growing private international school market in this area of the Middle East.

Investigating High School Students' Perceptions of Effective Leadership Practices in a Private School in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Azza Gamal El Din, Ministry of Education, UAE

One of the Ministry of Education's (MoE) strategic objectives is to achieve excellent leadership and educational proficiency. School principals play a major role that has evolved from educational management into educational leadership that impacts students' achievements, personal and academic development, teaching practices, and many other aspects required to provide quality education. The aim of the study is to investigate the way high school students perceive effective school principals' leadership practices. The current study primarily focused on understanding leadership practices from the viewpoints of transformational leadership. Connolly, Fertig and James (2017) confirm that there is a link between transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation, which provides people with inner reward when accomplishing a task. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: (a) What are the perceptions of female students on effective school principals' leadership practices? (b) What are the perceptions of male students on effective school principals' leadership practices? (c) How do the perceptions of female students compare and contrast to the perceptions of male students? A quantitative approach will be conducted to provide the researcher with further insight into the participants' perceptions through their lived experience at schools as students observing and dealing



with the school principal. Participants will include high school students from grades nine to ten, both males and females.

Teacher Leadership in Qatari Government Schools: Opportunities and Challenges

Rania Sawalhi, Qatar University

This study attempts to comprehend how teachers working in Qatari government schools understand the concept of teacher leadership. This topic has received little attention in the educational leadership literature. Teachers came to Qatar during and after its massive educational reform (2003–2017), mainly from countries in the Middle East and the North Africa region, and are employed in an advanced educational system. The MoE offers comprehensive professional development programs, and a licensing system guarantees uniformity in teachers' qualifications to ensure quality education. These opportunities have made it imperative to investigate how teachers perceive the concept of teacher leadership, examine the factors that influence these perceptions, and provide suggestions to foster teacher leadership in schools.

This mixed-methods study used a questionnaire based on the Teacher Leadership Inventory tool developed by Angelle and DeHart (2011) and semi-structured interviews to collect data regarding teacher leadership perceptions. The results of the study showed that teachers define teacher leadership in terms of formal leadership roles. However, teachers in Qatar practice many informal leadership roles to support other teachers socially and professionally. Contrary to previous research, school level was not a significant variable in the quantitative phase, although interviewees stated that school level affected teacher leadership practices. The qualitative phase results revealed many factors that support teacher leadership as well as factors that inhibit it. This study paved the path to conduct other studies related to student teachers' perspectives toward teacher leadership and implemented programs to enhance and promote teachers' leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Day 2: Potential for Development and Educational Exchange

Panel 3: The Nexus Between Education and State-Led Development

Sustaining the Relationship between Education and Development: An Analytical Vision and Practical Solutions to Promote Educational Development in Kuwait (Arabic)

Salwa Al-Jassar, Kuwait University

The issue of educational reform has been at the center of the socio-political interests of Gulf countries since the 1950s. Initiatives for education policy formulation have been discussed in several conferences and symposia in the region. However, from the 1970s to the present, attempts at meaningful school education reform have produced minimal results in improving the quality of education delivered. Moreover, schools still lack internal and external competencies in preparing distinguished citizens for the future of our nation. The transformations that have accompanied the daily lives of our students demand a revolutionary approach to information and knowledge banks. Changes in the content of education and educational standards are inevitable in countries that aspire to positive educational outcomes (Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science, 2009). Investing in education has become an issue that is tied to national security, thereby requiring cooperation across all levels of political and administrative decision-making. Educational reform initiatives are a fundamental requisite for the full realization of a country's sustainable development programs. Therefore, education and development are interrelated, whereby humans become the primary axis of socio-economic development. A real renaissance in educational systems is critical in building productive workers and effective citizenship. This descriptive study aims to diagnose the reality of education in Kuwait by analyzing reports, mixed-methods studies, and best country practices. Imbalances within Kuwait's general education framework are evaluated. The study concludes by offering practical recommendations and proposing an education framework that builds on the country's national development strategy.

Vocational Training Centers' Attempts to Achieve Sustainable Development in Oman in Accordance with National Education Strategy 2040 from the Perspective of Employees and Trainees in Such Centers (Arabic)

Amal Alharmali, Ministry of Education (MoE), Oman

This study assesses the role of vocational training centers affiliated with the MoE in achieving sustainable development in the Sultanate in light of the National Education Strategy 2040, and identifies the most prominent challenges facing achieving sustainable development through training centers. The researcher prepared two tools for the study using the analysis of the national strategy document. For education 2040, the study tools consisted of two questionnaires. The first targeted the reality of the role of the training centers from the viewpoint of the trainees, and the second from the viewpoint of the employees working in those centers. The average challenges facing training centers in achieving sustainable development from the employees' point of view reached a large degree with an average of (3.75). A few recommendations include: studying and meeting the needs of the local community, financing training centers with a budget that provides professional preparation for employees and



trainees, linking Omani training centers with a network of Gulf and international training centers, and making electronic training programs available to all segments of society.

Educational Development in Light of Children's Rights Laws: Taking the Child-Friendly Schools Initiative in Sultanate Oman as a Model (Arabic)

Omer Hashim Ismail, Sultan Qaboos University

The Sultanate of Oman exerts great efforts to ensure the quality of education and improve the school environment. The UNICEF Education Framework, or Child-Friendly Schools, serves as a multi-dimensional framework to improve quality and equality in education. Thus, the Omani MoE, in cooperation with UNICEF, sets quality standards and indicators through the six dimensions of promoting children's rights: health and safety, protection, effective learning, community participation, inclusion, and gender sensitivity. In light of the Omani Child Law for the year 2014, along with the commitment of the MoE and Continuing Education to work to improve the quality of education, this study reveals the impact of the Child-Friendly Schools initiative as a model aimed at improving the quality of education. The study used the descriptive approach, whereby questionnaires were distributed to a sample of school principals, teachers, and students. The study sample included all 24 schools that were included in the initiative, in addition to 24 other schools not affiliated with the initiative. The preliminary results of the study show a number of positive effects of the initiative, the most important of which is to raise awareness of child rights laws, as well as to intensify training courses on children's rights not only in education, but rather in protection, health, inclusion, and equality.

The Role of Knowledge Economy in Building Development Plans of the State of Kuwait (Education as a Case Study)

Fawaz Al-Husainan, Georgetown University

This research investigates the role of the knowledge economy in building the development plans of Kuwait Vision 2035, focusing on education as a case study. The research problem is centered on the Kuwaiti knowledge economy, considering education as a basis for development globally. The research is centered on the main question: "What is the role played by the knowledge economy in building development plans for Kuwait 2035?" The researcher has conducted a comparative analysis between Singapore's and Kuwaiti education, labor force efficiency, and unemployment rate.

The results showed that Singapore has managed to strengthen its labor force and reduce unemployment between 1996 and 2014 thanks to its educational cluster inputs and outputs. Statistics and analysis of Kuwait's ranking in the Global Competitiveness Index showed that Kuwait is still behind the tail of the ranking, especially at the level of higher education, where it holds 96th place. Also, statistics showed that the labor force in Kuwait does not cover the needed specialties despite the large number of employees. Besides, the study also presented numbers of needless jobs in Kuwait as well as jobs and specialties needed to cope with the requirements of the productive labor force locally, regionally, and internationally. Finally, this research can be an added value to the literature for Kuwait and GCC countries to focus education on development and economic uplifting. Further, studies can be conducted to compare Kuwait with other successful countries through education and draw more key factors of a strong knowledge economy based on education.

Panel 4: Regional and International Comparative Studies about the Teaching Profession

Learning from Japan and Finland: What GCC Education Systems Could Adopt to Attract Citizens to Teaching Profession?

Khalaf Al'Abri, Sultan Qaboos University, Ahmed AlAbdali, Sultan Qaboos University, and Bader AlKharousi, MoE, Oman


The education systems in the Arab Gulf countries have been faced with various challenges, and therefore education reforms have been present vividly in the last three decades. Surprisingly, it is noticeable that the GCC education systems have been jumping from one reform to another, searching for what best suits their systems and context. There is no doubt that teachers' quality, preparation, recruitment, practices, development, etc. have been central to the changes brought to the systems. The GCC government has been importing policies, programs, strategies, and improvement ideas from various developed education systems around the world. This paper presents a comparative study of GCC education systems to the Japanese and Finnish education systems in retaining qualified teachers.

The paper is based on two visits to Japan and Finland to learn about their education systems and how the successful elements of these two systems could be transferred to the GCC states. In these two countries, the research team visited and conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers, principals, university lecturers, and government officials were conducted. The findings show that contextualization is crucial to bring about the required changes. What suits Japan and Finland's education systems may not do so in the context of the GCC states. The paper argues that Japan and Finland have been successful in attracting their citizens to the teaching profession by adopting proper procedures such as preparing them well, valuing the profession and trusting teachers. The paper concludes with ideas and recommendations to learn from both experiences to help retain qualified teachers in the GCC countries.

The Intention to Leave the Teaching Profession among Teachers in the Arab Gulf States: A Comparative Study (Arabic)

Yasser Al-Mahdy, Sultan Qaboos University and Ain Shams University, and Ayesha Alazmi, Kuwait University

Education systems in most countries of the world are exposed to fundamental challenges related to how to retain qualified teachers; international reports and recent evidence indicate that the increasing teacher turnover rates and their intention to leave is currently a source of great concern to policy makers and human resource planners in the education sector. Based on the above, the current study sought to reveal the extent of teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession in the Arab Gulf States (AGS). The data of the study were collected using the survey method from a sample of 1494 teachers in four Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman). The findings showed that teachers in the Arab Gulf countries have an average desire to leave the teaching profession, and that most of them desire to leave the profession from Bahrain, followed by Oman, Saudi Arabia and finally Kuwait. The results indicated that male teachers are more willing to leave the profession than female teachers, and teachers in private schools are more willing to quit the profession than public school teachers. The results of the study were discussed and interpreted in light of the cultural context of the AGS. Finally, the study presented a set of recommendations and suggestions in the area of leaving the teaching profession in the AGS.



The Social Status of Teachers in Arab Social Milieus: A Comparative, Descriptive and Analytical Study (Arabic)

Ali Said Almatari, MoE, Oman

This comparative descriptive and analytical study aimed to identify the social status of teachers in Arab society. To achieve the goal, two questionnaires were designed for teachers and school administrators and another for community members. The results of the study showed that the sample estimates on the reality of the teacher's social standing came to a medium degree. There is no correlation between the perception of teachers and school administrators, the perception of teachers and members of society, and the perception of school administrators and community members on the reality of social standing. There are no statistically significant differences in the measure of the social standing dimensions of the answers of teachers and school administrators due to the variable of educational qualification, experience, stage of study, and place of residence, while there are statistically significant differences in the gender variable. There is no correlation between teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of the dimensions of the teacher's social standing in societal settings. The overall average of the various factors that lead to a (low / appreciating) society for the teacher's social standing, role, and responsibilities from the point of view of teachers and school administrators was high. The level of availability of fields that may help in developing the social position of the teacher from the point of view of teachers and school administrators was of a moderate degree, and the study recommended the need to establish and localize the sociology of the education and training profession as a research interface in the Department of Educational Sociology.

Panel 5: Privatization and Collaborative Endeavors in Higher Education

Role of Private Sector in Education: GCC Context

Kameswari Peddada, Arab Open University, Al Ardia Campus, Kuwait

People need education to know and utilize the opportunities for advancement in the present knowledge-based global economy. Universal, equitable, and quality education has become a priority for governments. The governments need not be the sole providers. Private sector involvement provides more finances for growing demand with efficiency, productivity, innovation, accountability, and transparency, if a strong regulatory framework is provided. If not, gaps remain between policy intent and implementation. Private involvement in higher education enhances investment and quality despite competition. The GCC countries are trying to transform from predominantly oil-dependent to diversified, knowledge-based economies. Despite improved literacy, realigning the workforce with the job market remains elusive. A recent study revealed some key drivers of growth and some key challenges. Declining oil prices have impacted government spending on education in some countries. The GCC private sector, despite huge strides, has not diversified and is complacent. The state-led GCC economic model is going to fail due to over-dependence on oil, a lack of workforce diversity and skills, a growing need for public services, and insufficient innovation. A holistic long-term plan of public-private participation is needed to transform the education sector. It would lower the state's fiscal burden and lead to a workforce with improved skills and employability. The present study is based on a review of the literature, is non-empirical, and is confined to GCC countries.

Privatizing Higher Education in the Arab Gulf States: A Comparative Examination of the Higher Education Systems in Kuwait and Oman

Ahoud Al-Asfour, College of Basic Education, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, Kuwait, and Khalaf Al'Abri, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

Higher education privatization has become a common policy choice for higher education reforms in most emerging systems due mostly to a lack of public resources. Over the past four decades, despite their wealth, all six GCC states have witnessed a version of higher education privatization. The emergence and production of private higher education and its policies have always been assigned contextual specificities that explain its introduction differently in different countries. Following a comparative approach, the authors will examine the emergence and introduction of the private higher education sector in two gulf states, namely Kuwait and Oman. The paper will present the nature of the sector in each country and its governance and structure. It will also examine the most critical factors and processes that led to the establishment of the private HE sectors and the policy production in each country. Policy document analysis and literature review will be used to achieve the aims of the paper. Examining higher education privatization illustrates how unique country-specific approaches and processes led to a common end. Moreover, the primary findings show that although the two states have somewhat similar imperatives for introducing higher education privatization, the policies, types of institutions and quality differ. The paper concludes with some recommendations to improve the GCC experience of higher education privatization.

Exploring the Rationales of Establishing a Bi-national 'Made in Germany' University in the Middle East

Hayfa Jafar, University of Toronto

The development of the German bi-national university model involves the establishment of a new institution through collaboration between higher education partners in two countries. Foreign-backed universities usually affiliate themselves to one or several institutions in other countries in order to receive assistance in their academic development. These 'mentoring universities' indicate their brand of education and signify quality and contribute to furthering the host country's development and capacity building. While this model is building its presence successfully in many parts of the world, it is not without challenges and risks. The study uses Policy Borrowing and the Educational Transfer model developed by Phillips and Ochs (2004) to explore the rationales for establishing a bi-national higher education institution in Jordan. Using this framework, the study seeks to understand why a bi-university is established and how it could contribute to the enhancement of the quality of HE in the host country relevant to the 'externalizing potential elements of the foreign system that are theoretically "borrowable"'. Using a qualitative approach, the analysis shows that the impulse that sparked the establishment of a bi-national university in Jordan is politically motivated by both countries Jordan and Germany to invest in collaborative projects of clear economic and social benefits. German engagement in such projects is intended to fulfill foreign, cultural, education, and development policy targets through education export. For Jordan, the imperative for this collaboration is linked to the need for an applied sciences university that can contribute to the country's development needs.

A Proposed Mechanism to Enable Collaborative Research Partnerships Between Universities and Educational Departments in Saudi Arabia to Solve Educational Dilemmas in Light of Contemporary, Global Experiences (Arabic)

Wafa Alahmadi, Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University

This study aims to arrive at a proposed mechanism to activate the research partnership between Saudi universities and public education departments by making use of contemporary global experiences. In order to achieve the research objectives, a descriptive and analytical approach was used, whereby information was collected and analyzed on the mechanisms of the research partnership between Stanford University, the San Francisco Unified School District Administration in California, and several other administrative bodies. The study reached several results, the most prominent of which are that international universities have worked to renew and organize the production of educational research and its application to solve educational problems by working in a sustainable official institutional framework between them and the Education Department in their region. By developing programs to facilitate educational research partnerships, coordinating research projects and following them up, and building organizational structures and stable positions that ensure the sustainability of the partnership between the two organizations. The funding bodies for partnerships between international universities vary between funding from a non-profit organization, the MoE, or from the universities themselves. The study also found that international universities are keen to strengthen ties between partners and joint ownership between them by opening communication channels through periodic meetings and internal and external conferences to present research results that have been completed during the year.

Panel 6: The Use of Education to Promote Inclusion, Emotional Intelligence, and Conflict Resolution

Citizenship and Peace Learning in Muslim-Majority Contexts: Understandings of Lived Social Conflicts from Bangladeshi Schools

Ahmed Kaderi, McMaster University

How many teachers and students in a Muslim-majority context experience and understand conflict, citizenship, and peace? By addressing—or ignoring—students’ lived concerns about social conflict as democratic citizenship learning opportunities, schools in Muslim-majority contexts, much as elsewhere (e.g., Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2005; Lall, 2008) may facilitate—or impede—the development of their skills and capacities for democratically building justice and peace. This paper qualitatively investigates how curriculum in four Bangladeshi schools, in comparable contexts of visible and less/non-visible violence, matches—or mismatches—with select grade 6-9 teachers’ and their students’ lived concerns and understandings about social conflicts. It discusses findings from an analysis of selected official curriculum and a series of focus group workshops with 36 students and their 16 teachers. Findings suggest that mandated and implemented curricula presented conflicts largely in simple terms, oversimplifying Islamic justice and moral values in blame language—powerful perpetrators of bad moral versus innocent victims of less power. Although students across contexts showed some complex understandings about how inequality, injustice, and unfair biases may cause and/or exacerbate social and political conflicts, their options for solution were rather limited to their relevant curriculum and lived social experiences. By ignoring such nuanced issues that help to damage or build justice—especially since citizens’ ways of acting in conflict shape (un)just (un)peace—these schools rather helped to develop citizens’ understandings that impede justice. Such curricula and understandings represent a key challenge to building democracy, justice, and peace in the context of Islamic justice and values.

Intersections Between School Culture, Curriculum, and Student Diversity: Making Sense of the Tolerance Discourse in UAE Schools

Naved Bakali, American University in Dubai, and Mariam Alhashmi, Zayed University

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a nation composed of more than 200 nationalities with various religious and ethnic communities. In light of this, promoting the values of mutual respect and acceptance of other cultures within an Islamic world view are essential for fostering a pluralistic and cohesive society. Muslim youth residing in the UAE are required to take Islamic education classes at every grade level throughout their primary and secondary schooling. As such, this program can profoundly impact and shape everyday Muslim youth identities in the country. This paper explores the intersection of school culture, school curriculum, and student diversity as drivers of pedagogies of tolerance, as well as the challenges and complexities that reflect these realities in UAE senior secondary Islamic education classes. Through a process of Arabic and English classroom observations, along with open-ended and semi-structured interviews, researchers were able to gain further insights into Muslim youth and teachers’ perceptions to inform their understanding of this field of inquiry. This exploration is



of relevance as the status of Islamic schools has been debated in relation to their possible influence on religious intolerance and the fueling of extremist views.

Strategies to Integrate Emotional Intelligence into Curricula (Arabic)

Zainab AlAjmi, MoE, Oman

The skills of emotional intelligence will enhance students' emotional experiences and direct them toward positive emotional and social behavior. This is one of the highest educational goals. It is scientifically proven that each curriculum has (knowledge, information, cause) in which the emotional, emotional, and social aspects are invested in its construction and development, and that each curriculum has a (skill / trend) in which communication and cooperation skills are invested to form and develop it. Emotional intelligence curriculum includes these skills: self-awareness, organization, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. They are crucial and requirements of the present labor market.

Emotional intelligence skills are some of the most important features of contemporary education because of the positive impact of the components of emotional intelligence on self-control and anger management (Al-Shehri, 2013; Bassiouni, 2012; Al-Ajami, 2012; Faraj, 2005) and in achieving emotional equilibrium (Abu Ghazaleh, 2012). In managing anger, achieving emotional balance, reducing aggressive behavior, such as the study of Matthews (2014), and in improving academic achievement, developing thinking skills, and achieving academic and social adjustment among students as studies (Muhammad, 2016; Muhammad, 2011; Abzakh, 2011; and Al-Abdallat, 2008), and the impact of the curriculum on developing emotional intelligence skills, such as my studies (Al-Ajami, 2019; and Said, 2006) in the topic of Islamic education, and my studies (Muhammad, 2010; Awad, 2008) in the topic of the Arabic language.

Panel 7: Teachers' Experiences, Perceptions, and Educational Performance

A Quantitative Approach to Assess the Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers and Their Instructors about TPACK Capabilities of Pre-Service Teachers: An Explanatory Study among Selected United Arab Emirates (UAE) Universities

Laila Mohebi, Zayed University, and Marlieke Helder, Zayed University

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perspectives of pre-service teachers and their instructors in the UAE regarding the preparedness of pre-service teachers to utilize technology for classroom activities. The framework chosen for this purpose was the TPACK model. Three universities were approached to collect the quantitative data via a survey that was mainly based on Schmidt et al.'s (2009) TPACK survey. The findings indicated that pre-service teachers have confidence regarding their TPACK skills in general, with the highest mean score of $M=4.12$ for Content Knowledge and the lowest mean score of $M= 3.68$ for Models of TPACK. The one-way ANOVA outcome revealed that specialization affects the TPACK of pre-service teachers. In addition, it was found that the most important factor affecting the Information and Communication Technology integration skills in the classroom is practical experience in schools.

Teachers' Experiences of Marketization in the United Arab Emirates

Emily Winchip, Zayed University

The compulsory education sector of the UAE provides insight into the effects of the marketization of education. Quality assurance by UAE government agencies has required international comparative testing, the results of which have highlighted the uniqueness of the school system in the UAE and the need for investigation into teachers' experiences. This study was part of a mixed-methods investigation of teachers' experiences in marketized systems. Teachers working in for-profit international schools were interviewed. Items were developed based on themes of the initial findings of marketization, control, buffering, and fulfillment. Then, teachers in the UAE were surveyed to find quantitative patterns in their experiences. The findings from the quantitative study show that across types of schools, teachers in the UAE experience the direct effects of a marketized school system and the indirect effects that influence interactions at their workplaces. While the direct effects demonstrate how teachers' work is modified to be more business oriented, the indirect effects reveal the threats teachers feel regarding their professional judgment, hierarchical relationships, and social pressures due to the marketization of schools. Future research should investigate a broader range of schools for how teachers are affected by the marketization of their schools.

General Education Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions and Knowledge of Inclusion and Students with Disabilities in Kuwait (Arabic)

Bedor Alazemi, Kuwait University

The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings has been a major topic of discussion for many years. However, studies that investigated perceptions toward inclusion, precisely studies that examine Kuwaiti pre-service teachers' attitudes and perceptions, were limited. Therefore, a qualitative research design was conducted to explore the perceptions and knowledge of 30 general education pre-service teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. Semi-structured



interviews were administered to collect in-depth data. Four major themes were generated: 1) perception toward inclusion, 2) perceptions toward students with disabilities, 3) difficulties and obstacles hindering the implementation of inclusion, and 4) the necessary components to achieve inclusion. The findings indicated that the majority of pre-service teachers hold negative perceptions toward inclusion and students with disabilities. Participants defined inclusion as educating students with disabilities in isolated classrooms within general schools. Also, results found that the type and/or severity of the disability were important keys in determining perceptions toward inclusion. Mild disabilities and categories such as physical and/or learning disabilities were the most accepted disabilities by the participants. In addition, the majority of the participants reported that the lack of skills and knowledge and limited resources and support were the main obstacles confronting the implementation of inclusion in Kuwait. All findings were discussed in terms of pre-service teacher training programs, and suggestions were provided to educate and train future teachers to work with students with disabilities in general education settings.

Location as a Factor for Teacher Retention: Teacher Migration in K-12 Schools in the United Arab Emirates

Tiffany Lachelle Smith, University of Minnesota

Researchers examining teacher turnover link school environment (Moore, 2012), satisfaction (Ibrahim & Al-Taneiji, 2019), and school leadership (Mancuso et al., 2010) as factors contributing to teacher departure. Yet teacher attrition, teachers who leave the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2003), is one component of turnover. Teacher migration, those who remain in the profession but migrate between schools (Ingersoll, 2003), is another component seldom addressed in international educational studies about turnover. Ranked as the top ten countries for English-medium international schools (ISC, 2018), the UAE is noted for attracting Western educators to teach in K-12 private and government schools. Yet recruitment of educators appears to be affective, whereas retention appears to be an issue. Elaborating on a policy paper published with the Al Qasimi Foundation, this presentation discusses teacher migration through the perspectives of 13 African American (AA) educators who left the U.S. PK-12 profession for teaching opportunities in the UAE.

Deriving from a larger study examining the decision for some AA educators to leave the US PK-12 profession for the UAE, evidence suggests that racialized practices, lack of involvement in school decision-making, integrity of school leadership, and relational components are factors contributing to teacher migration. With participants averaging five years of teaching in the UAE and migrating between multiple schools, I argue that although they migrate between schools, for various reasons, they still remain in the UAE. Contributing to studies that suggest no link between location satisfaction and retention (Chandler, 2010), location should be considered a variable for teacher retention.

Day 3: Moving Forward and Learning from COVID-19

Panel 8: Higher Education and Schooling in the Gulf: A Historical, Social, and Political Examination of Educational Policies in the Region

The Institutional Framework Behind Kuwait's Educational Development in the Pre-Independence Period (Arabic)

Talal Al-Rashoud, Kuwait University

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Kuwait witnessed a series of educational developments that made a quantum leap in the level of education in the country. The period witnessed a huge jump in the numbers of students and schools. Despite the importance of this stage in establishing the foundations of the modern educational system in Kuwait, the features of the institution that produced this renaissance—the Department of Knowledge—are still vague to many researchers. The department supervised the education process in Kuwait from its establishment in 1937 until its transformation into the MoE in 1962 after independence. The department was characterized as being one of the most effective and professional governmental institutions based on the testimony of British documents and Arabic sources. First, the department of Knowledge enjoyed a great deal of independence in light of the weak political centralization in Kuwait at the time. Second, starting in the early fifties, the department had a highly qualified administration and a progressive and Arab intellectual commitment led by the Director of Knowledge Abdulaziz Hussein and other educated Kuwaiti youth, as the department was the first destination for scholarship graduates abroad. Third, the department relied on an elite group of Arab employees seconded from the Egyptian government or personally contracted with them. This study aims to provide specialists with the necessary historical background to study the development of educational institutions in Kuwait and compare their features in different periods.

From National to International University: How Has Internationalization Affected Academic Diversity and Production of Knowledge at Qatar University? (Arabic)

Esraa Al-Muftah, University of British Columbia, Qatar University

The development of education has always required the exchange and transfer of knowledge and academics across borders. This phenomenon of knowledge transfer and what it produces is not new to the education system in the Arab Gulf region, which requires educational cadres from various Arab and non-Arab countries to establish its national schools, curricula, and universities. Since the early 2000s, higher education institutions have witnessed a change in public discourse about these phenomena, as they changed from an organic movement and mobility to a more organized and directed movement. Universities began to legalize this internationalization and compete on the international level to highlight their "internationalization," which led to the adoption of the so-called "internationalization of education" policies—that is, attracting academics with international certificates, in addition to publishing research and articles, scientific cooperation at an international level, and attracting students from around the world. This paper reviews the opinions of academics working at Qatar University about this shift from Qatar University being a national university to a university that was ranked as one of the



most internationalized universities in 2016 (Times Higher Education 2016). This presentation raises a question about who benefits from these changes, especially with regard to the university's discourse on internationalization and who has been marginalized. It also reviewed the implications of the shifts in the formation and dissemination of knowledge in the context of Qatar University to understand the position of higher education today and where the production of knowledge is heading in the region in general.

The Silent Voice in the Reform: Teachers' Role in Educational Reforms in Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain (Arabic)

Ibrahim Alhouti, UCL Institute of Education

The AGS have invested heavily in reforming their education system to improve its quality. Despite this investment, the AGS is still struggling with its quality of education and has not achieved its reforms' goals. The question is why these states have not achieved what they are aiming for 'a highly-skilled nation that is capable of competing globally'. Scholars have placed significant emphasis on the role of teachers and their unions in improving the education system and implementing education reforms. The study investigates the involvement of teachers in Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain in the reform process and the role they have played. This research is approached through policymaking theory, namely, the Multiple Streams Theory (Kingdon, 2003). The main pivot of this research is to study the players in the reform process to identify who was involved and what their role was. I have applied the qualitative comparative approach by analyzing key policy documents and reports in the three countries to gather relevant data. Among many similarities that these three countries share in reforming their education systems, the study finds that teachers were not involved in the process of policy production. My argument is twofold: First, in all three countries, teachers are not considered a primary stakeholder mainly due to the absence of powerful teacher unions in the region. Second, the lack of involvement of teachers in the reform process may be one reason why these countries are not moving forward, as teachers' role is passive and not active.

On the Genealogy of the Ideal Girl: Schools, Girls, and Nation-building in Bahrain

Sara J. Musaifer, University of Minnesota

In response to Abu Lughod's (1989) and Inhorn's (2013) calls to broaden the Middle East anthropological discipline's focus on narrow "geographical prestige zones" and limited "conceptual zones of theory", this presentation brings attention to history and power relations taking shape in the Arab Gulf by understanding formal schools as critical sites from which to theorize the interplay of gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, and the state. In particular, I build on data collected from transnational archives—the British colonial archives (1920s–1960s), the Reformed Church in America archives (1890s–1960s) and local archives in Bahrain (1940s–2010s)—to offer a genealogical analysis, tracing the meanings of the "ideal girl" figure across spaces and times. In doing so, I explore the ways in which contesting discourses of modernity and evolving logics of coloniality form and transform the politics of national education reform as well as international development agendas unfolding in Bahrain. My data suggests that "education for girls" in Bahrain is not merely a question of access to school. Rather, "education for girls" in Bahrain is a question of constituting an ideal girl citizen-subject with particular relationships to patriarchal systems, class, religion, race/ethnicity and the state. This presentation is part of a larger dissertation project that braids historical and cultural analyses with the lived experiences of adolescent girls in Bahrain's schools to: a) underscore how girls become certain types of national subjects, b) highlight the malleability of categories of difference inherently contingent to particular times, places, and encounters.

Panel 9: Learning from Teachers' Experiences

Voices Needed to be Heard: A Qualitative Exploration of Physical Education Teachers' Professional Learning Experiences in Post-Basic Schools in Muscat

Durayra Al Maqbali, Sultan Qaboos University

There is no doubt that improving the quality of education is priority internationally; and teachers are expected to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) programs to improve their practices. Research into teachers' CPD, i.e., what works well and what needs to change to maximize teacher learning is therefore an important field of inquiry.

In the context of Oman, investment in education, including teachers' CPD, has increased substantially since the 1970s. Although research on teachers' CPD is increasing, there is no research on PE teachers. Questions thus remain about the nature and effectiveness of CPD provision for PE teachers. The aim of this study was to examine teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding the nature, quality and effectiveness of the current professional program in Oman. A semi-structured interview was implemented to examine the experiences and perceptions of 11 PE teachers working in post-basic schools in Muscat. The overall finding of this paper is that there are limited opportunities available for PE teachers in Oman. The formal, government-funded opportunities are not always appropriately targeted and are repetitive in nature. Although teachers reported engaging in some informal learning, this was neither supported nor encouraged in their school.

Empowering Teachers to Lead the Reform Toward Promoting Genuine Change

Ayman Hefnawi, MoE, UAE

This paper investigates how teachers' capacity can be developed toward achieving the goals of the UAE educational reform plans. Despite the UAE's remarkable educational achievements, the government considers developing teachers toward delivering high-quality instruction a major challenge (McKnight et al., 2016). The paper reviews the findings of an empirical study that investigated the challenges of the UAE educational system reform; the study highlights two interrelated issues. First, change should be imposed on teachers without involving them in the planning process. Warner (2018) recommends an emphasis on teachers' role in the current UAE educational reform to ensure that they are adequately qualified to implement its plans. Warner's recommendations correspond to the 'Fourth Way' of Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) that considers teachers' professional capacity and collaboration key to attaining school improvement. Second, there is a lack of initial teacher training that meets the change requirements. The UAE reform achieved notable improvements in the implementation of professional development programs for teachers. Among these improvements is the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs) across schools, though evidence of their impact on students' learning is still needed. Harris, Jones and Huffman (2017) suggest an increased impact of PLCs by evolving toward inquiry learning networks (ILNs) that focus on improving students' learning. Consequently, the UAE reform policy should consider teachers as a 'professional capital' (OECD, 2014) through involvement in the reform planning process. To this end, teachers should be empowered to lead the change and be supported to form effective ILNs that prioritize students' learning.



Engaging Comparison as a Sensemaking Practice in Teachers' International Professional Development Experiences

Emily Anderson, Florida International University

The UAE's education policy agenda is focused on a singular goal: to be one of the top 20 countries in PISA 2022. In fact, the focus on PISA has become so robust in the UAE that it is now a central component of teachers' professional development. This presentation explores how Emirati teachers contextualize dominant education policy discourses through their experience in a short-term international professional development program in Vietnam, a country whose 2015 PISA performance both "shocked" (Ertl, 2006; Takayama, 2010) and inspired education policy reform in the UAE. The findings presented in this presentation highlight the ways in which comparison is primed as a sensemaking practice during teachers' international professional development experiences, and highlight the importance of contextualization to support practice transfer. This presentation concludes with recommendations for future research on how policy discourses inform, and are informed by, teachers through international professional development experiences.

Panel 10: The Need for Educational Reform in Curricula, Schools, and Universities

Evidence-Based Curriculum Evaluation: The Much-Needed Link in Educational Reform Efforts

Bechir Oueslati, Center for Excellence in Educational Development

Advances in cognitive psychology and brain research, as well as the mounting pressure to improve reading performance, placed literacy at the heart of policy makers' educational reform efforts. Curriculum evaluation is a key step in improving textbook quality and student performance. Indeed, ensuring curriculum quality offers the highest return on investment compared to other reform options. As a result, Western educational authorities and non-governmental organizations paid serious attention to the importance of using high-quality discipline-specific curriculum evaluation tools instead of general tools. In the Arab world, literacy performance in PIRLS remains below the international average in part because of the absence of precise and reading-specific curriculum evaluation tools.

Our comparative textbook analysis project seeks to assess the quality of reading instruction in grade 1 textbooks. Phonological awareness is considered a key prerequisite skill to reading development and reducing reading difficulties. Following a review of available curriculum evaluation tools used by some ministries, a specific tool was designed and validated with reading specialists to capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects of phonological awareness instruction. This paper will present preliminary findings of a comparison of grade 1 Arabic textbooks in Qatar, KSA, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Tunisia. Results indicate that the new curriculum evaluation tool offers much more precise quantitative and qualitative data likely to contribute positively to reform efforts by pointing out strengths and key areas for improvement. Future research directions in collaboration with interested institutions will be discussed briefly with regard to evaluating phonics and fluency instruction.

Comprehensive School Reform in Kuwait: Policy, Practice and Performance

Munirah AlAjmi, Kuwait University

The Kuwaiti government has continued to invest heavily in reforms in order to enhance educational standards in the country. Reviewing past reforms showed that importing Western ideas would not be effective in the Kuwaiti context. Recently, the MoE implemented a comprehensive school reform aimed at increasing the quality of education in Kuwait. This study investigates two important questions: Why did past reforms fail? What should be done to ensure success in current educational reform?

After in-depth study of past school reforms, the researcher has found many factors that could have caused previous school reforms to fail. First, all previous educational reforms in Kuwait have been based on Western policies. Second, most reform projects were aborted in the early stages. Third, previous reforms did not have support from all stakeholders. School principals and teachers were fairly isolated. It is hard for them to implement new changes when they are not enrolled in the planning process. Failing to involve all stakeholders in reform efforts has created steadfast opposition to change in Kuwaiti schools over time. Last but not least, past reforms were planned to be comprehensive, yet were implemented as isolated programs with no connections among different initiatives. As for the second question, many precious lessons could be learned from past reforms. Imposing Western ideas in a totally different cultural environment will never work. Any reform initiative should modify its programs to fit Kuwaiti culture. All initiatives should be implemented under one umbrella program in order to be compressive.



The Reality of Schools' Corruption and its Effects on Educational Reform in Kuwaiti Public Schools (Arabic)

Meznah Saad Alazmi, Kuwait University, and Salma Faleh Alazmi, Kuwait University

This study aimed to investigate the school corruption level and its impact on educational reform in Kuwaiti government schools by adopting a descriptive analytical approach. To achieve this goal, two questionnaires were used. The first concerns school corruption and consists of (28) items distributed in five domains: school administration, teacher, students, parents, specialists, and educational supervisors. The second questionnaire concerns educational reform and consists of (39) items distributed in five domains: school administration, teacher, students, curriculum, and financial resources. It will be applied to a random sample ($n = 382$) of teachers. In light of the results, a number of recommendations and suggestions were provided that would be useful in developing and reforming the educational process in the state of Kuwait.

Panel 11: Tackling Challenges and Using Innovative Educational Practices

Impact of Peer Mentoring Role on Mentors' Personal Development and Leadership Practices: A Study Among Undergraduate Emirati Female Students at a Higher Education Institution in the United Arab Emirates


Sandra Baroudi, Zayed University

Many leadership programs have been initiated to increase female leadership and reduce gender barriers in most developed and developing countries. Among these programs, a great emphasis was put on the mentoring role due to the benefits it holds on developing females' self-confidence and leadership skills. This study adopted a mixed-methods research design to explore the impact of the peer mentoring role on mentors' personal development and examine the most exemplary leadership practices that the mentoring role nurtures in Emirati female undergraduate student mentors in one university in the UAE. One-on-one interviews with 22 mentors provided the study with an in-depth understanding of the peer mentoring role and its impact on mentors' academic, personal development, and career-related skills. Quantitative data was collected from 94 mentors and 142 mentees through the Student Leadership Practices Inventory Survey self-and-observer versions. Results from the quantitative analysis provided evidence for the association of the peer mentoring role with the development of one's leadership skills and practices. This study implies that curriculum developers in undergraduate programs should create curricula containing an array of peer teaching/mentoring experiences. Faculty roles should be integrated and defined when designing the structure and roles of the peer mentoring program. Further research is recommended to explore the impact of peer mentoring programs with a wider sample and with students from different backgrounds.

The Impacts of Collaborative Works on Developing Critical Thinking: A Study Among High School Students in Two Private Schools in Abu Dhabi

Maryana AlRabadi, The British University in Dubai

Schools in the UAE shifted from following traditional teaching systems to using technologically advanced classrooms. Subsequently, by the time the students start their new learning experiences, they need to adapt different forms of learning processes, such as adapting a higher educational learning system and sharpening their thinking skills. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand how collaborative works develop students' critical thinking skills among high school students in two private schools in Abu Dhabi. In addition, students' thinking skills need to be sharpened early by providing them with learning strategies, which promote them to think why and how, instead of only asking what. This thinking process helps the students to think critically and acquire knowledge meaningfully when they encounter it in real-life situations. The study will contribute to increasing the abilities of students who would use their critical thinking skills effectively through collaborative work in the future and promoting shared responsibilities within students and teachers by developing effective communication skills. Additionally, the study concludes that students need to acquire 21st century thinking skills integrated with technology as they enter the working life of society. Finally, it is recommended that collaborative learning should be applied in all schools of the UAE, at early stages of education, at educational levels, as well as teachers need to be supported by real advisors with real solutions to their problems in applying collaborative work.



Exploring the Use of Digital Storytelling in the GCC Educational Context: Evidence from a Literature Review

Nilofar Noor, University of Toronto, and Manaal Syed, University of Toronto

This presentation is based on the GCES Conference theme of ‘21st-century challenges in education in the GCC.’ It discusses a fast-emerging educational technique, digital storytelling (DST), which can effectively promote 21st century learning skills in the Gulf region. DST has been called a “web passport to success in the 21st Century” (Malita & Martin, 2010, p. 3064). It is a teaching tool with promising potential to facilitate and strengthen students’ multimodal learning experiences. Used in formal and non-formal education settings, DST encourages learners to showcase their story or personal learning experiences using multimedia communication methods. This educational tool is particularly timely during the COVID-19 pandemic when various formal and non-formal education settings are reconsidering their curricula, updating their reliance on technology-based pedagogical approaches, looking for innovative ways to impart education and stay fully operational despite global lockdown constraints. Storytelling can be especially pertinent to help students contextualize their unique life challenges during the global pandemic lockdowns, be able to express their ideas and feelings, and generate mutual strength through collaboration with each other. In this presentation, we will present a literature review that synthesizes the current evidence on DST implementation in educational settings. Using this discussion as a backdrop, we will explore the current considerations necessary for implementing DST in the Gulf educational context. Findings from this literature review and discussion will shed light on how GCC educational contexts are, and can continue to harness the power of new media, digital and creative learning for educational reform.

21st-Century Pedagogical Challenges in Higher Education: A Case Study of Dubai (UAE)

Kanishka Bedi, Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society

The purpose of this study is to identify 21st century challenges in the adoption of leading-edge online pedagogies at a university in Dubai (UAE), despite its self-proclaimed mission to be the harbinger of innovation in the GCC. The research question addressed here is: Why does a technology-led online institution in Dubai continue to engage primitive lecture-based pedagogy? There is scant contribution in the existing literature in this regard. This research spanning 2008 to 2019 uses the case study method propounded by Yin (1994) and deploys triangulation of data. The limitation of this study is that it considers a single online institution in Dubai. The primary findings of this study are that the ministry in Dubai follows a common criterion for accrediting conventional as well as online institutions; secondly, the faculty and senior academic administrators themselves come from conventional pedagogical backgrounds; last but not least, this online institution aspires to get accredited by international bodies, which accredit institutions using traditional pedagogies. The ministry in Dubai as well as international accreditation agencies ought to modify their accreditation systems to allow for institutions to adapt to modern online pedagogies while instituting a change management program to train the faculty in wholeheartedly embracing this transformation. Future studies with a larger sample are anticipated. As Dubai is emerging as an educational hub attracting students from all over the GCC, this study is in line with the excellence, happiness and ‘smart’ initiatives of its leadership.

Panel 12: Educational Challenges During COVID-19

GCC Student Mothers' Challenges in Accessing Higher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Martina Dickson, Emirates College for Advanced Education

GCC student mothers have been shown, in previous research by the author, to engage in an intense juggling act of combining domestic life, caregiving and academic responsibilities. The pressures can be immense, and many student mothers have reported completing their studies under challenging circumstances. Those studies utilized mainly narrative methodology to explore the student mothers' experiences of keeping up with their studies while simultaneously caring for children and engaging in a myriad of domestic tasks. However, student attendance at the physical campus has provided an important practical and psychological demarcation between home and university life. The current COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented situation with student mothers often studying online from home and losing the quiet space and the additional face-to-face support that on campus learning can provide. They are also dealing with an oft-distracting home environment during online classes and supporting children with home learning. Research (by the author) has indicated that university faculty, however well-meaning, are often not perceived to provide the kinds of support that student mothers actually want and need. The current study uses this body of previous research as a theoretical framework to hypothesize about the ways in which the current pandemic may be impacting student mothers' mental health and wellbeing, and their ability to access education. Implications for educational practice and policy are described, and suggestions are made as to how higher education institutions in the GCC can respond in order to retain and support this important student demographic during the pandemic.

Learning Online During the Covid19 Pandemic: A Survey About Emirati Undergraduate Students' Perceptions and Difficulties

Annalisa Pavan, University of Padua

This study presents the results of an online survey that was conducted in November 2020 on a sample of 119 Emirati undergraduate students at eight Emirati universities. Data were gathered during an 8-week online internship program jointly organized for the first time by an Emirati university and an Italian university. The decision to use the quantitative method (the questionnaire consisted of 20 close-ended questions, including personal information and comments) was based on the limited amount of time the assistant researcher, an Emirati female graduate, was assigned. Questions were aimed at analyzing the academic, psychological and social impact of online learning on undergraduate Emirati students, where the respondents were for the most females. After collecting the questionnaire from the Emirati students and analyzing their answers, an adapted version of the same questionnaire was submitted to a sample of 163 Italian graduate students in order to explore the academic, psychological, and social impact of online learning in a different cultural context. Despite the limitations of the research—the comparison was conducted between a smaller and a larger cohort of respectively undergraduate and graduate students belonging to different social and cultural contexts—this study concludes that while the psychological impact of online learning does not differ among Emirati and Italian students, some specific academic and social issues emerged from the Emirati respondents that deserve to be addressed by Emirati university leaders and policy makers.



Schooling Challenges in the Sultanate of Oman During and After COVID-19 Pandemic: Resilience and Sustainability (Arabic)

Bushra Al-Ghaithi, MoE, Oman, and Khalaf Al-'Abri, Sultan Qaboos University

In light of the COVID pandemic, this study aims to identify the effects of the COVID pandemic on the educational system in the Sultanate of Oman, starting with the suspension of studies in March 2020, and how the MoE deals with the effects of the pandemic on student learning in Omani schools, and the subsequent efforts to ensure the continuation of the process. Education and trying to cope with the challenges of not being able to reopen schools with the beginning of the 2020–2021 academic year in light of the ongoing pandemic. This paper also seeks to explore the future of school education in the Sultanate of Oman after the COVID pandemic by surveying the opinions of decision makers and stakeholders. To determine the desired future roles of the educational system, the promising future of learning and the patterns of quality education.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the qualitative approach will be used through analyzing the policies, programs and activities adopted by the MoE in the Sultanate of Oman to confront and deal with the effects of the COVID pandemic, in addition to interviews with a number of decision makers and stakeholders to learn how to reach a flexible educational system capable of adaptation and sustainability in the face of any future hindrance. The preliminary results indicate that the MoE has worked hard to ensure the continuity of the learning process by broadcasting educational programs on Omani TV and launching digital educational platforms.

Panel 13: Coping with the Pandemic: Students' Perceptions and Learning Mechanisms

A Framework for Selecting and Assessing e-Learning Tools

Rashita Puthiya, Middlesex University Dubai

The COVID 19 lockdown has triggered an unprecedented shift from traditional classroom teaching to online and blended modes. Amidst the pandemic, the teachers have been scrambling to integrate technology into their pedagogical methods. The informal feedback from stakeholders has shown mixed results on the effectiveness of online learning. An existing lesson plan executed via an online platform may not excite the students in the same manner as taught in traditional classrooms. The online mode brings new challenges, such as internet snags, lack of non-verbal feedback, minimal peer interaction, etc., that teachers need to be mindful of and should seek to address in their lesson plans.

My project aims to provide a step-by-step guide for selecting and assessing e-learning tools using Reuben Puentedura's (2006) SAMR model. Terada (2020) opined that good technology integration into lesson plans requires awareness of a range of tools and picking the right strategies. Mapping tools to learning activities as per the SAMR model brings in a new insight that tools facilitate learning at varying levels but do not replace learning theories and pedagogies (Winkleman, 2020). The principles of constructive alignment, lesson planning, and best practices will provide the rationale for selecting tools in the proposed framework. The effectiveness of the tools will be assessed through student engagement, student feedback, and an instructor's self-reflection of teaching efficacy. Understanding the hierarchy of the SAMR framework will encourage educators to continuously reflect and improve their teaching practice.

Higher Education Students' Experience of Distance Learning During COVID-19

Olga Samsonova, Higher Colleges of Technology

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all schools, colleges, and universities in the UAE were closed and transferred into the distance learning mode. Eighteen female undergraduate students at an Abu Dhabi Federal college enrolled in an educational summer class were the study participants. This study aims to find students' readiness, perceptions, and feelings toward distance learning (DL) utilizing a mixed-method research approach by examining students' reflective journals and their responses to the questionnaire, which consisted of qualitative and quantitative questions. Multiple categories emerged from the study: advantages and disadvantages of DL, assessment description, Blackboard set up, communication with the instructor, Collaborate Ultra, Nearpod, Padlet, classroom discussions, group work, and media resources. The study's notable findings showed that college was ready and students were very well prepared for the DL. They always feel supported by the administration and staff. Future research on DL and findings implementation were discussed in the study.

The Educational Impact of the UAE's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Student Approaches to Studying and Perceptions of the Distance Learning Environment

Philip Anderson, Middlesex University Dubai, and Dawn England, Middlesex University Dubai

At the beginning of March 2020, the MoE closed all schools and universities in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. All lessons had to be delivered online via video conferencing software. This mixed-methods case study explores responses to this change of learning environment from BA Education and



Early Childhood Studies students at a British university in Dubai. Quantitative data was collected via questionnaires adapted from Noel Entwistle's (2003) research on student perceptions of learning environments. The questionnaires were given before and after the four-week period of research, allowing students the opportunity to reflect on whether their approaches to or perceptions of the environment had changed. Weekly focus groups were held to triangulate with the surveys, find out what pedagogical approaches could be adopted in the future, and also gain insight into perceived feelings of connectedness to the university. The data found that most students favored a deep approach to learning, which did not change over the four-week period. Interestingly, there was a strong preference for the traditional didactic lecture format, as opposed to modern pedagogical approaches like 'Flipped Learning'. This suggests a connectedness to the physical classroom environment and a desire for the previous norms associated with it. This paper demonstrates the adaptability of the Education students to the new environment, and while lessons continue to be delivered via e-learning, it highlights the need to establish online communities and foster a sense of belongingness.

Panel 14: Lessons Learned from the Pandemic

Positive Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Saudi Education System: My School Platform as a Model

Naif Daifullah Alsulami, Umm Al-Qura University

In consideration of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Saudi Arabia MoE created an electronic environment for teaching and learning. This school platform is one of the positive responses by the Saudi government to this crisis. The platform has so far been able to establish a new culture and non-traditional educational model through e-learning and distance education. It is a national project for general education that allows users to engage with technology on a daily basis, enabling students to attend their classes and easily do homework remotely. The platform has the ability to reach more than six million students and more than 500,000 teachers, in addition to parents. By analyzing the official documents produced by the MoE, this paper demonstrates that the platform has contributed to the success of the educational process in the first semester of this year 1442 A.H. The platform provided more than 62,000 diverse educational resources and interactive experiences that support simultaneous and non-simultaneous learning, as well as tools for educational planning and design that take into account individual differences between students and tools for measuring and evaluating educational and cognitive achievement through which nearly 2.5 million test samples were created and sent to students during the first semester. Consequently, it is expected that this platform will continue to operate as a hybrid education model for students even after the return of a normal school structure.

Prospects of Homeschooling in the UAE After the COVID-19 Pandemic

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In most developed countries, homeschooling is a legal alternative to public and private schools; however, in the majority of developing countries, homeschooling remains illegal or restricted to specific conditions. In the UAE, the homeschooling option is still not a regulated choice. Their desire to educate their children according to certain systems that suit the individual abilities and talents of each child, and anxiety or dissatisfaction with the school environment surrounding them in addition to They want to benefit from the long time children spend in school in favor of other activities such as sports activities or the development of technical skills.

Therefore, this study examines the factors that push parents in the UAE to prefer homeschooling as an alternative educational-school option alongside other options, such as traditional and distance education. The results of the survey showed that the current school education pathways are very limited and restrained. Participants encouraged other educational learning pathways, such as homeschooling or home education. Therefore, a high portion of parents see that the learning process during the virus crisis in the physical school setting is very difficult (85%). However, the option of online learning during the Corona pandemic is an excellent solution (91.3%). Yet, they suggested school's cycle from grades 1–4 as the best stage for homeschooling by 66%. The interview results also identified four major reasons for homeschooling: lack of academic rigor, lack of individualized attention, negative social environment, and the desire to promote authentic moral, religious, and customs in public and private schools.



The Career Development of Educational Bodies in the Gulf States During the (COVID-19) Pandemic: Cause and Effect (Arabic)

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This study aimed to clarify the relationship between the professional development of the educational body in different educational institutions' vocational readiness and the challenges of teaching and learning processes under the pandemic (COVID-19), the most important of which is the technological challenge in the emergency education system, and the impact on educational outcomes in the educational system of educational institutions, by reviewing experiences and studies in the field of study, the researcher used the method of descriptive method solved following the collection of information and facts that promote the study to reach its goal, the study reached several conclusions, including that emergency education under a pandemic differs from the concept of distance education, educational bodies possess the learning ability in order to overcome the crisis, the high capacity in educational decision-making processes in the Ministries of Education Gulf, and reached several recommendations, including strengthening the capacities of school administrations with technological skills, providing the means of emergency education and the uses of distance education (network – computers – appropriate educational environment – technical support 24 hours a day).

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