



'Bridging the Gap - Quality of Education and Higher Education' Forum

TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER

31ST MAY 2023


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1. INTRODUCTION

On the 31st of May 2023, the Teaching & Learning Center at the Australian University organized its fourth Teaching and Learning Excellence Forum entitled “Bridging the Gap: ‘Quality of Education and Higher Education’, in partnership with the Kuwait Fund for the Advancement of Sciences and under the patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Education and Higher Education Mr. Hamad Al Adwani and in presence of Ms. Amanda McGregor from the Australian Embassy.

Quality of education in Kuwait has been under the light for a while; the objective of the forum was to develop a balanced set of objectives that allows the education system to be more economically productive and develop sustainable goals that contribute to the enhancement of individual and societal well-being in line with Kuwait Vision 2035 and under the umbrella of UNESCO’s international sustainable development goals.

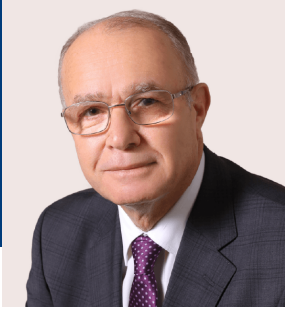


The Forum included 3 sections: Keynote Speeches; Panel Discussion: Tackling Quality of Education and Higher Education - Current Situation, Challenges and proposed Solutions; and Workshops tackling Game-Based Learning, Inclusivity and the effect of Psychology on students' progress.

The Forum concluded with set of recommendations to promote synergy between parents and educators, universities and employers and the need for government's decision and support to reform initiatives.

The forum was attended by professionals from various universities in Kuwait, schools, training centers and the ministry of education. The feedback on the forum was very positive from all participating entities and individuals.

2. SPEAKERS' PROFILE



Prof. Isam Zabalawi, the President of the Australian University, an experienced academic leader who holds Ph.D. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Leeds University of England. He was the President of The Arab Academy for Banking & Financial Sciences 2009 - 2016, founder of new universities in the region in Syria and German-Jordanian University in Jordan, the former Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research 2003-2005, Chancellor of the University of Sharjah from 1999-2003 and Since 2017, he has been the President of AU.



Prof. Tariq AlDowaisan holds a Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering (1990) from Arizona State University. He worked as a professor at Kuwait University from 1999 to 2017. Currently, he is the General Manager and founder of Global Lead Consultants (GLC) since 2005.



Ms. Nadia Habib is a Science instructor specializing in Geology. She also holds Master's degree in Curriculum and Teaching Methods from Kuwait University.



Ms. Farida Aboudan is the Programme Specialist for Education in the UNESCO Office for the Gulf Countries and Yemen, where she provides technical support to education programmes for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 in the region. Her work encompasses wide-sector engagement where she leads coordination efforts to advance transformative education agendas and international development in the Gulf States and Yemen. Farida has an interest in education in emergencies, issues of curriculum, certification and accreditation, global citizenship education and innovation in education.

Prior to joining UNESCO, Farida has worked with the Education Above All (EAA) Foundation in Qatar managing several projects in the Middle East, Asia and Africa and providing learning opportunities to some of the most vulnerable children in the globe. Serving for the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Office in Jordan, Farida has extensively worked on Education in Emergencies (EiE) programmes with a specific focus on the Syria crisis education response and the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative. Beside the education response to the Syrian crisis, Farida has also engaged with the education responses in countries in complex and protracted crises such as Palestine, Yemen and Libya working at the nexus between the humanitarian response and long-term development and planning. Farida has also extensively engaged with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and research institutions in the Middle East and North Africa. Farida holds a Master's Degree in International Education and Development from the University of Sussex, UK.



Dr. Pak Tee NG [National Institute of Education (NIE), Nanyang Technological University] is a Singaporean educator who is deeply involved in the development of school and teacher leaders. At the NIE, he previously served as Associate Dean Leadership Learning and Head of the Policy and Leadership Studies Academic Group. His main work is in educational change, policy and leadership.

Pak Tee has spoken at many global events, for example, Google Global Education Symposium, International Baccalaureate Global Conference, and Scottish Learning Festival. He is currently a member of Scotland's International Council of Education Advisers and a Life Member of Clare Hall, Cambridge University.

Internationally, government organisations, professional networks and media often seek his views or advice regarding educational change. Having retired from journal editorship, he now serves as honorary mentor to a few younger editors. He is an editorial board member of several other international refereed journals. He is the co-editor of the Routledge Leading Change book series and the author of the book "Learning from Singapore: The Power of Paradoxes".

Pak Tee encourages educators to walk a path not easily travelled, with love, courage and resilience. Although he is thankful for receiving a few awards during his career, his greater reward is a fraternity of students who are educational leaders themselves and who pay it forward through their educational leadership and commitment to education.

Panel Discussion

Tackling Quality of Education and Higher Education: Current Situation, Challenges, and Proposed Solutions



Dr. Ali AlKandari is Coauthor of the initiative “From here we shall set sail”. He holds PhD in Contemporary History from Exeter University, UK, Masters in Arabic Studies, Georgetown University, USA and Bachelor’s degree in history, specializing in supporting Arabic language, Kuwait University. He is also President of the Faculty Members Association, 2023 and Acting Head of the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Kuwait University, 2023.



Dr. Rania Al-Nakib is an Assistant Principal at the American School of Kuwait. Prior to this, she was Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Gulf University for Science and Technology in Kuwait. Her research focuses on human rights education and education for democratic citizenship in Kuwait. She is particularly interested in the impact of the hidden curriculum on Kuwaiti students’ citizenship activities and Kuwaiti female students’ gendered experiences of public education. Dr. Al-Nakib also does work with civil society groups and NGOs in matters relating to education and curriculum design, as well as issues surrounding human rights.



Dr. Duna Al Mashaan graduated from The College of William and Mary with a Ph.D. in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership—concentration in K-12 General Administration and Curriculum Leadership. Her research focus was the development of creativity in early childhood education.

She obtained her Master’s Degree from NYU in Early Childhood Education, specializing in Montessori Education. She received her Bachelor of Science in Architectural Engineering from The University of Colorado, Boulder.

Her work experiences at some of New York’s leading early childhood schools comprise head teacher responsibilities, curriculum development, school admissions, teacher education, professional development, and parent education.

Duna is co-founder of the advocacy group Education First, which was actively pursuing the return of in-person schooling during the pandemic. She is currently the Executive Chair at Argan Bedaya.



Mr. Mohammad AlSadani is an assistant School Principal at the Ministry of Education in the State of Kuwait, holds a BA in Arabic Language and Literature, and a Master's in Analyzing Linguistic Structures from the University of Sharjah, and a PhD student in Neurolinguistics at Sultan Qaboos University, specialized in the field of teaching Arabic, and a member of the Education Development Committee , building curricula and exams for several years, a media professional and journalist in several media outlets, a participant in several internal and external conferences, and a speaker at Kuwait TEDX.

WORKSHOPS



Ms. Rasha Shalabi is a holder of Master's in Business Administration (MBA) and a Bachelor's degree of Science in Information Technology and Computing. She has a bit over 10 years of experience providing training and consultancy services. She is currently a Lecturer in the Information Systems and Technology (IST) Department at Kuwait technical college (ktech). Enriched by triple: Computer Science background, MBA and being an instructor and trainer, Ms. Al-Shalabi has developed high knowledge and furthermore experience in interacting and achieving breakthroughs with her trainees.



Ms. Fajer M. Bin Rashed has a 13-year ESL teaching experience at the tertiary level in Kuwait. She is a PhD candidate at United Arab Emirates University, specializing in language and literacy studies. She has a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature and a master's degree in comparative literature and cultural studies. She is a published researcher and is currently an active reviewer for a multi- and interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal based on her expertise. Her research interests include literacy education, language teacher and learner identity, bilingualism, multiculturalism, and social emotional learning (SEL) in education.



Ms. Hana AlAmoudi is a Clinical psychologist, holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychological Counseling and Master's degree in Clinical Psychology - Jordan. 4 years of experience in the hospital and psychological clinics sector, in addition to working with battered women in Joran, and 3 years in Kuwait. Uses multiple treatment methods, including cognitive behavioral therapy and cognitive analytical therapy.

3. KEYNOTE SPEECHES

The keynote speeches started by the welcome note of Ms. Rola Mourdaa, Manager of the Teaching and Learning Center at the Australian University.

The President of the Australian University, Prof. Isam Zabalawi, presented 'Teaching & Learning and the Use of Artificial Intelligence to Augment Quality.' He explained the importance of AI and how AI should be incorporated into teaching and learning methodologies.

'Current Vision for Educational Reform' was the next topic presented by Dr. Triq AlDowaisan, the General Manager at the Global Lead Consultants and Former Professor of Kuwait University.

Ms. Nadia Habib from the Ministry of Education, continued with 'Education in Kuwait Between Challenges and Efforts to Address Them.'

Ms. Farida Aboudan, Educational Program Specialist from UNESCO, presented 'Transforming Education.'

The session conducted by Dr. Pak Tee NG from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore with the topic 'Learning in an Era of Uncertainty in Singapore: Diversity, Lifelong Learning, Inspiration and Paradigm Shift.'

4. PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion entitled 'Tackling Quality of Education and Higher Education: Current Situation, Challenges and Proposed Solutions'

The first speaker, Dr. Ali AlKandari, Associate Professor at Kuwait University, discussed **"From Here We Shall Set Sail" A National Initiative to Reform and Advance Education in Kuwait, an initiative sponsored by KFAS.**

Dr. Rania Al -Nakib, Assistant Principal at American School in Kuwait, continued the session by discussing **'Student Voice and Agency in Educational Reform'**

Dr. Duna AlMashaan, Executive Chair at Argan Bedaya, had her presentation on **'The "Cost" of Education'**. The Assistant Principal from Ministry of Education in Kuwait, Mr. Mohammad AlSadani, discussed **'Creative Human Capital Constraints and Aspirations'**

The panel discussion was moderated and lead by Dr. Omar AlHussainan, Assistant Professor at the Australian University. The discussion was ended by question/ answer from the audience, which opened the room for rich discussions.

5. WORKSHOPS

The 1st Workshop entitled '**Game-Based Learning and Gamification in the Classroom**', was presented by Ms. Rasha Shalabi from Kuwait Technical College. The workshop was very practical and demonstrated diverse game-based teaching strategies.

Ms. Fajer Bin Rashed presented '**Up Close and Personal with Teacher Bias: Pedagogical Implications for Inclusive Teaching**' discussing her research and findings, on teachers' influence on the mindset of students.

The last workshop presenter, Ms. Hana Al Amoudi, Psychologist at Dr. Mariam Mental Health Clinic, presented '**Psychology and Its role in Education and Higher Education**'

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The forum concluded with a set of valuable recommendations for the stakeholders of the education sector in Kuwait to better create an inclusive innovative effective learning environment that best serves the country. **The recommendations are categorized and listed in the below section:**

6.1 Research

- There is inadequate research about the job market needs and the skills required. Research should be undertaken to have continuous update and provide needed majors and follow the job changing trends,
- Collaboration between higher education institutions with the industry to set priority of research topics is highly recommended,
- People from the industry shed light on the gap students possess in regard to the practical readiness to the job market, therefore working on enhancing the employability of graduates shall be a priority.
- More in depth research on the effect of COVID on the quality of education in Kuwait is required to be able to come up with practical steps to bridge the gap created by COVID.
- Research reflecting the need for training of faculty to be able to absorb students with learning difficulties and psychological health issues.

6.2 Collaboration between Universities and Industry

- Internship and Job Shadows: More structure seemed necessary for the internship programs, which call for more collaboration between the universities and the industry,
- Career Centers to be supported and funded to perform their job effectively for the best benefit of students, universities' reputation, employers and the economy at large,
- Professors shall be encouraged to work as part timers in industry, as this will allow gaining practical experience that will definitely reflect on the teaching inside the class.
- Funding opportunities for practical research.

6.3 Government

- Speeding up approval processes and improve efficiency in paperwork,
- Implement strict supervisory role on schools (implement a system of ranking), assessments shall be tested on critical thinking rather than memorization as this will enhance the quality of education at the university level enabling them to produce employable graduates,
- Improving the education system by enhancing efficiency of public education, curriculum, developing skills of teachers, linkage with job market required skills, improving teachers' evaluation process, efficiency in budget allocation and education strategy,
- Support for innovative education.

6.4 Universities

- Aim for international rankings not just accreditation,
- Educators to consider a different mindset to best interact with the young minds and to provide tools for critical thinking, learning, and focus on STEM/STEAM,
- Employ professors with industrial knowledge,
- Allowing people from industry to lecture,
- Apply problem-based learning, team-based learning and AI approaches to teaching,
- Reconsider traditional way of assessing students,
- Provide orientation programs to introduce students to university life with what's expected from them in terms of dedication, maturity and responsibility – approach to learning,
- Emphasize on continuous and independent life-long learning, ,
- Help students to give and take constructive feedback,
- Building professional identity,
- Encourage interdisciplinary knowledge and projects,
- Create innovative learning environment,
- Open door for teaching methodology evaluation
- Exchange programs for both students and faculty,

6.5 Psychology

- Need to encourage competitions and diverse cultures within public schools,
- Change of Educational Models by focusing and accepting differences,
- Live the way they are living (update teaching approaches that address the new millennials),
- Bloom's Taxonomy (evaluate, analyze, not only focus on memorizing),
- Planning, giving higher quality of education and lowering quantity of information,
- Teachers shall understand differences among students, and learn differential teaching styles,
- Having student psychology support centers to raise up balanced personalities,
- To acknowledge the mental health issues of students and provide support mental health services,
- Develop prevention methods for mental health issues such as promoting healthy lifestyle, groups therapy, support groups, monitoring and following up),
- Integrity: to learn and apply values even if no one is watching or evaluating,
- Change traditional schooling – put students outside classrooms,
- Role of teacher: Move from teacher to facilitator.

6.6 Skills needed by industry that universities should enable students to have

- Interpersonal skills,
- Attitude towards work,
- Ability to think (critical thinking),
- Be able to plan and execute,
- Integrity, resilience and empathy,
- Business communication skills,
- Customer service skills,
- Basic knowledge of their field,
- Emotional Intelligence,
- Relations management – Teamwork,
- Self-motivation,

- Self-learning,
- General knowledge of what is going on not just major-focused,
- Writing skills,
- Productive,
- Time management,
- Coachable,
- Interdisciplinary knowledge.
- Sense of urgency required from them,
- Need to think for themselves,
- Patience,
- Creativity,
- Thinking out of the box,
- Evaluation and problem solving,
- Flexibility - Adaptable to change,
- Knowledge implementation.

7.0 Conclusion

It was agreed by all participants backed up by statistics that the educational situation requires attention and action. The situation is complex and requires efforts from different stakeholders. Out of our social responsibility as educators and our intention to help in facilitating the achievement of the wider national vision, we suggest forming a Task Force that can follow up on finding opportunities to help implement these recommendations within a time-framed plan.

8. APPENDIX

- 'Bridging the Gap - Quality of Education and Higher Education' Agenda



Bridging the Gap Quality of Education and Higher Education

Wednesday 31st May, 2023 | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM | AU Auditorium

Objective: Quality of education in Kuwait has been under the light for a while; this forum aims to develop a balanced set of objectives that allows the education system to be more economically productive and develop sustainable goals that contribute to the enhancement of individual and societal well-being.

Keynote Speeches

9:00 AM	Welcome Note Ms. Rola Mourdaa - Manager of Teaching and Learning Center, Australian University
9:15 AM	Teaching & Learning and the Use of Artificial Intelligence to Augment Quality Prof. Isam Zabalawi - President of the Australian University
9:35 AM	Current Vision for Educational Reform Prof. Tariq AlDowaisan - General Manager at Global Lead Consultants, Quality Consultant, Former Professor at Kuwait University
10:00 AM	Education in Kuwait Between Challenges and Efforts to Address Them Ms. Nadia Habib - Kuwait Ministry of Education
10:10 AM	Transforming Education Ms. Farida Aboudan - Education Program Specialist, UNESCO
10:20 AM	Learning in an Era of Uncertainty in Singapore: Diversity, Lifelong Learning, Inspiration and Paradigm Shift Dr. Pak Tee NG - Associate Professor, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Coffee Break 10:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Panel Discussion: 'Tackling Quality of Education and Higher Education: Current Situation, Challenges, and Proposed Solutions'

Moderator: Dr. Omar Al Hussainan - Assistant Professor, Management Department at AU

10:45 AM	"From Here We Shall Set Sail" A National Initiative to Reform and Advance Education in Kuwait Dr. Ali AlKandari – Associate Professor at History Department, Kuwait University
11:00 AM	Student Voice and Agency in Educational Reform Dr. Rania Al-Nakib – Assistant Principal at American School of Kuwait and Former Assistant Professor at GUST
11:15 AM	The "Cost" of Education Dr. Duna Al Mashaan - Executive Chair at Argan Bedaya

11:30 AM	Creative Human Capital Constraints and Aspirations Mr. Mohammad ALSadani – Assistant Principal, Kuwait Ministry of Education
11:45 AM	DISCUSSION
Coffee Break 12:10 PM – 12:30 PM	
Workshops Moderator: Ms. Fatima AlLougman - Instructor, Marketing Department at AU	
12:30 PM	Game-Based Learning and Gamification in the Classroom Ms. Rasha Shalabi – Lecturer, Information Systems and Technology, Kuwait Technical College
1:00 PM	Q & A
1:15 PM	Up Close and Personal with Teacher Bias: Pedagogical Implications for Inclusive Teaching Ms. Fajer M. Bin Rashed – PhD Candidate, United Arab Emirates University (UAEU)
1:45 PM	Q & A
2:00 PM	Psychology and Its role in Education and Higher Education Ms. Hana' Moustafa Al-Amoudi – Psychologist at Dr. Mariam Alawadhi Mental Health Clinic in Kuwait
2:30 PM	Q & A
Closing Remarks 2:45 PM	
Lunch 3:00 PM	



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