KSA Education Ecosystem - A Perspective Framework For Partnership With The Finnish Model

Consultative Workshop - Tuesday 22nd November 2011

AL-AGHAR GROUP

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KSA Education Ecosystem –A Perspective Framework for Partnership with the Finnish Model
Consultative Workshop Outcomes
Tuesday – 22nd Nov, 2011 (13:00 -16:00) – Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

1-Overview

- **Theme**: Success factors of Finland in education & KSA Education Ecosystem partnership perspective.
- **Workshop Objectives:**
  - To review key observations and conduct a comparative analysis/assessment between Saudi Education Ecosystem vis-a-vis Finnish Education Ecosystem.
  - To deliberate on partnership opportunities between KSA education ecosystem & Finnish model, while investigating options of operational effectiveness from policy to industry.
  - To explore opportunities to expand partnership with other OIC Member Countries in relation to the IDB E4E Program.
- **Key Speakers**: Three key speakers represented each group:
  1) Mr. Fahad Abualnasr, CEO – Al-Aghar Group
  2) Mr. Niko Lindholm , Project Coordinator - Future Learning Finland
  3) Mr. Rafee Yusoff, Director Group Strategic Planning Department - IDBG

  Five other panelists of the "Future Learning Finland" delegation formed a panel of experts in different educational fields in Finland. The experts highlighted key observations of their 4 day visit to a diverse set of Saudi Arabian educational institutions in both cities of Riyadh & Jeddah during 19th & 22nd of Nov, 2011. Insights and biographies are displayed in further parts of this context for the following Finnish representatives:
  4) Ms. Kaija Lind - Health Care Education Expert
  5) Mr. Vesa Parkkonen - Vocational Education and Training (VET) Expert
  6) Ms. Arja Virta - K-12 Expert
  7) Mr. Jari Poikonen - Policy & Education Infrastructure Expert
  8) Mr. Veli-Matti Virolainen - High Education University System Expert
- **Audience**: A diverse combination of senior executives and guests from both Al-Aghar Group and The Islamic Development Bank (IDB). In addition to overall 14 members of the "Future Learning Finland" Finnish delegation team of which 5 experts participated as key panelists in this consolidation workshop which was hosted and co-organized on 22nd Nov, 2011 in the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group head quarters in Jeddah,KSA.

2-Background

Al-Aghar Group for strategic thinking is an independent non-profit organization, with the objective of transforming Saudi Arabia to a knowledge society through providing decision makers strategic options in the areas of social, cultural and economic development. Al-Aghar Group, has published various initiatives to further accelerate the education eco-system for KSA to make it more competitive in the knowledge era. Also several published studies concerning the economic development of Saudi Arabia benchmarking Finland, Korea, Ireland and Malaysia as examples of knowledge based societies. [1]

[1] - Please visit Al-Aghar Group Website for our Knowledge Society Strategy & National Innovation Ecosystem Framework: www.al-aghar.org

For that purpose 5 yrs ago a small delegation of Al-Aghar Group was sent to Helsinki, Finland to meet some relevant institutes there, including the Finnish Ministry of Education. As stated by Mr. Fahad Abualnasr, the CEO of Al-Aghar Group: *"It was obvious for us during that time that no transformation to knowledge society or economy for that matter can take place without revisiting our educational system, thus our knowledge society strategy focused extensively on human development and carried within it several major initiatives to reshape the Saudi educational System."*

As a Saudi think tank Al-Aghar Group, has particular interest to get insights of what the future education will look like, at least from the Finnish perspective. Indeed the Finnish education system has achieved very favorable results in international comparisons and the world now became more interconnected technologically, economically and socially. In partnership with "Future Learning Finland", Al-Aghar Group organized an assessment tour in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, identified as having the most assertive and aggressive education transformation program within the region. As "Future Learning Finland" reflects, a Finnish government linked consortium mandated as the business arm for Finnish Education institution to expand internationally.

The Finnish team composed the entire spectrum of the education sector, with representatives from policy makers, K-12, Vocational and High Learning Institutions. The tour, therefore equally covered the entire spectrum of the education sector in KSA to provide a fair comparison and explore more definitive partnership and knowledge sharing opportunities. This workshop is the final module of the tour program with the aim to highlight the key observations of the Finnish team, as well as having an open discussion with Al-Aghar Group members to deliberate further potential partnership and knowledge sharing opportunities identified.

The workshop was co-organized by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group, a south-south multilateral development institution among the OIC member countries including KSA. Education is a strategic pillar for development which requires more innovative and aggressive approach, especially for the OIC member countries. As such the potential partnership of Finnish and KSA is being prospected as a model to draw lessons learnt and explore new education programming for the other member countries of the OIC. The latest IDBG initiative in education is its joint effort with the IFC i.e. The Education for Employment program (http://www.e4earabyouth.com).

3-Panel Member Discussions

This paper summarizes each of the 8 panelists key findings, observations, gaps, opportunities of cooperation and challenges of execution discussed during the workshop. The ultimate goal is to come up with consultation ideas which may result in structuring a future joint-program.

3-1: 1st Panelist: Mr. Fahad Abualnasr - CEO - Al-Aghar Group

Mr. Abualnasr, in the opening remarks highlighted that strong education ecosystem is key to building knowledge-based societies and economies. He emphasized that lots can be learnt from Finland's successful experience in the educational field since Finland has achieved highest standards in education globally.

3-2: 2nd Panelist: Mr. Niko Lindholm - Project Coordinator - "Future Learning Finland"

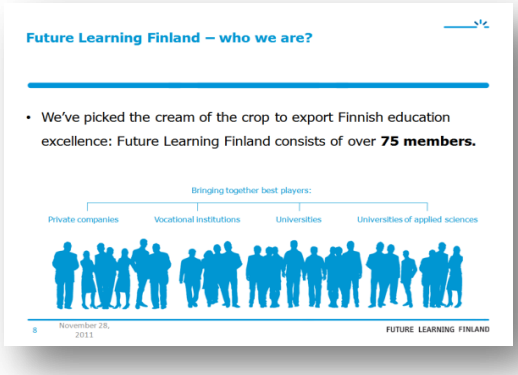
3-2-A) "Future Learning Finland" Structure

Mr. Lindholm, represented the governmental sector of the Finnish delegation and did a small presentation speaking about the "Future Learning Finland" project framework. Briefly stated the government in Finland has decided to support the educational specialists in Finland and the organizations producing the specialists. In result a program has been established called: "Future Learning Finland" which combines the sharing process of all the KNOW-HOWs in the field of education from Finland as **(Figure#1)** deomonstrates.

(Source of Figure#1: Future Learning Finland Program Presentation – *FLF_official)*

"Future Learning Finland", is run by a global expert network called "Finpro" established by the Finnish Government and companies together, with offices in 50 countries world wide, directly connected to commercial sections of Finnish embassies accordingly. However, eventhough the program is run by "Future Learning Finland", it still remains steered and governed by the Finnish government in the following aspects:

- Ministry of Education & Culture in Finland - Maintains the quality of the program.
- Ministry of Employment & the Economy in Finland – Funds the program.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland – Provides dimplomatic support & facilities.



(Source of Figure#2: Future Learning Finland Program Presentation – *FLF_official)*

Given Future Learning Finland's national task to promote the growth and competitiveness of Finnish companies through internationalization. "Future Learning Finland" has chosen the cream of the crop to export Finnish education excellence. "Future Learning Finland" consists of over **75 members**, bringing together best players as displayed in **(Figure#2)**:

- Private companies
- Vocational institutions
- Universities
- Universities of applied sciences

3-2-B) How "Future Learning Finland" Operates:

(Source of Figure#3: Future Learning Finland Program Presentation – *FLF_official)*

As (Figure#3) above suggests the "Future Learning Finland" method of operation is tailored to fit the local needs in order to maintain a unique long-term fruitful partnership solution for all parties.

3-2-C) Areas of Finnish Knowledge Exchange:

There are six possible areas of sharing Finland's educational expertise as briefly displayed in (Figure#4) below including the following:

1. ICT in learning.
2. Competence-based vocational training.
3. Public and private degree-based education – Meaning some unique certificates programs for students.
4. Teacher training – Considered the crown jewel of Finland and is acknowledged as one of the best systems worldwide.
5. Research based education – Meaning research universities which are willing to look at joint projects and share their KNOW-HOWs through research.
6. Learning environments (physical and virtual) – Physical environment is a key factor in Finland which covers school architecture /classroom design…etc. Virtual environment is meant to support the student learning process.

(Source of Figure#4: Future Learning Finland Program Presentation – *FLF_official)*

3-3: 3rd Panelist: Mr. Rafee Yusoff – Director Group Strategic Planning Department - IDBG

3-3-A) Introduction to IDBG

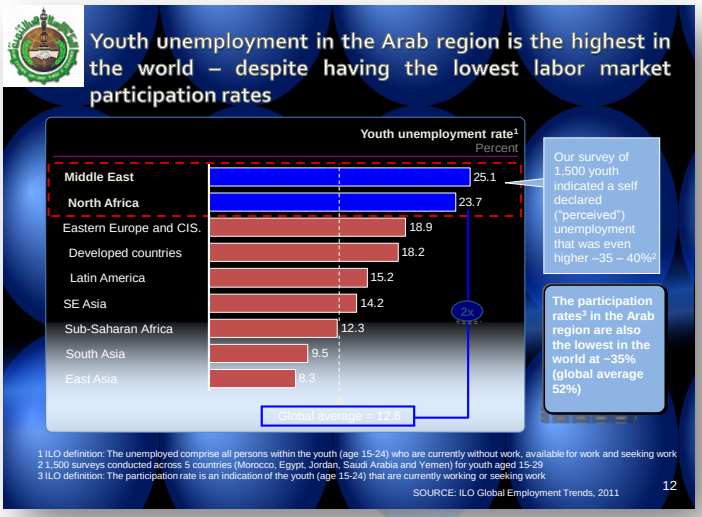
Mr. Rafee, presented an introduction about the Islamic Development Bank Group as multilateral development bank established in 1975 with the Governments of the Organization of Islamic Conference as its shareholders. The group consists of: The Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD), Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), Islamic Research and Training Center (IRTI) and The Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC).

The IDBG vision 1440H (2020G) is human development centric were education is one of its strategic pillars. The cumulative education sector projects approval as of December 2010 amounted at 8.6 % of the cumulative approvals of IDB.

3-3-B) Education for Employment (E4E):

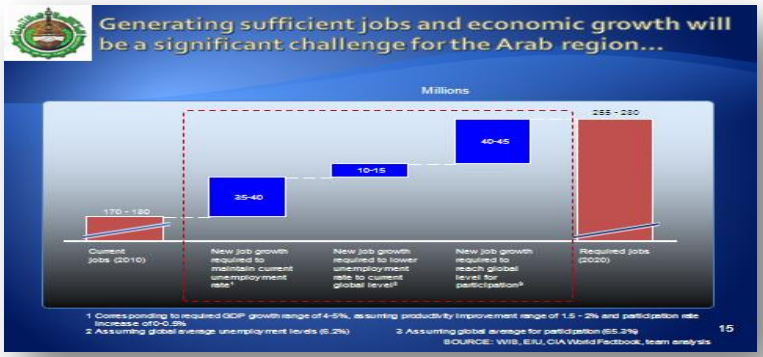
Mr. Rafee presented the education for employment report which is a recent initiative by IDB and IFC (International Finance Corporation - a member of the world bank group) that examine the unemployment issues of the MENA region. MENA region is experiencing youth population bulge over the next decades. The unemployment rate in MENA is the highest globally, currently recorded at 25% whereas, the world average is 12.6% as demonstrated in **(Figure#5)**.

The unemployment opportunity cost is estimated at USD$ 40-50 billion annually which exceeds the annual GDP of Tunisia or Lebanon. Moreover, social costs of unemployment are numerous; social unrest, crimes, pressure on families and lower education likelihood of children of such families.



(Source of Figure#5: IDB Presentation– *Finpro E4E Presentation*)

This challenge will be further compounded by the youth population bulge the region is currently experiencing. Currently about 30% of MENA population are aged 15-29 and another 30% are below 15 and for the region just to maintain the current unemployment rate, it needs to create about 40-50million jobs by the next decade. If the region wishes to reduce the unemployment rate and the participation rate to the global level by the next decade 255-280 million jobs are required to be created as shown in **(Figure#6)**.



(Source of Figure#6 IDB Presentation– *Finpro E4E Presentation*)

The report highlighted that tackling the unemployment challenge requires addressing both labor supply and demand and governments can't tackle the challenge on its own, private sector will add its unique solutions. The report identified three areas for the private sector to participate: *vocational training programs*, *improving the relevance of university education*, and *work readiness programs*. As displayed in **(Figure#7)**.

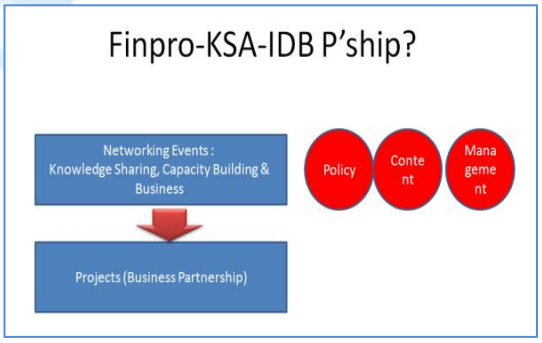
The report also identified important enabling factors such as; standards and independent quality assurance, introducing and expanding suitable financing mechanisms, and ensuring greater information transparency between young people, employers, and education providers.

(Source of Figure#7 IDB Presentation– *Finpro E4E Presentation*)

3-3-C) Proposed Tripartite Partnership:

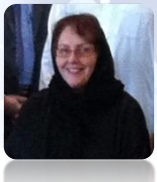
Mr. Rafee emphasized that education systems must be designed not for its own sake, but for the value creation effect. As such he proposed that education programs need to be reframed differently along with the stage of economic development for each society.

Lastly, Mr. Rafee proposed tripartite networking events between "Future Learning Finland"-KSA-IDB on knowledge sharing and capacity building with the focus on policy, content, and management that would lead to tripartite business partnerships, as demonstrated in **(Figure#8)**.



(Source of Figure#8: IDB Presentation– *Finpro E4E Presentation*)

3-4: 4th Panelist: Ms. Kaija Lind - Health Care Education - Finnish Delegation Expert



Ms. Lind for over 20 years has been responsible for developing and directing several health care degree programmes in vocational higher education at Turku University of Applied Sciences. Her working experience is long, both in Finland and abroad. She has also for a long time been involved in international cooperation increasing the international activities and networking on her special field.

3-4-A) Observation & Gap Highlights:

We have conducted visits to 4 Saudi education institutes, specialized in educating medical health personnel and the findings were interesting. The possibility of exchanging knowledge about some common projects, plans and resources is due to the fact that we discovered many similarities such as similar basics of health care professions education which are also applied globally. There are many interesting ideas implemented in KSA which we learnt from and we'd like to develop in Finland and vice-versa to offer our expertise to develop the Saudi Health Education System.

3-4-B) Comparison Between Finnish Vs. Saudi Health Education Systems:

- Overall Finnish education system is strong and especially in some areas such as "Health Care Education System", which we can bring to Saudi Arabia. In the sense that training and theoretical education is combined and how the working life is taken together in education (i.e. what the whole education system

is doing together with the working life of students). These areas are relatively strong in both Saudi Arabia and Finland.

- Both students & university professors in Saudi, were interested in career development and further education especially in health sector master programmes at universities of applied sciences.
- E-learning environments in Saudi Arabia is strong and Finland can learn from it.

3-4-C) Opportunities of Cooperation:

Amongst different levels of cooperation, some areas of collaboration stand out and may include the following areas to explore:

- "Nurse Education" between Saudi Institutions and Finnish Institutions.
- "Dentist Education" especially the dentist education model of "Turku University of Applied Sciences" in Finland, which is famous in Saudi Arabia.
- Exchange of experts between Finland and Saudi Arabia and vice-versa.
- Distance learning.
- Academic teachers education.
- Clinical training of health care personnel in different degree programs both at universities of applied sciences in Finland & Saudi existing educational models.

3-4-D) Challenges of Execution:

1. Culture: Differences between culture of Saudi Arabia and Finland. For example, Finland has stayed hundreds of years without foreign labor, just recently do we see in Finland foreign workers.
2. Resources: Funding and resources for educational institutes could be a challenge.

3-5: 5th Panelist: Mr. Vesa Parkkonen - Vocational Education and Training (VET) - Finnish Delegation Expert

Prior to his career in the field of professional teacher education and guidance counselor education, Mr. Parkkonen (M.Sc.) has been a senior lecturer and in charge of various international business degree programmes in higher education. He is a keen promoter of entrepreneurship and has expertise in designing teacher education programmes and curricula development in student counselor education and professional teacher education. In addition, he has been analyzing & evaluating teacher education systems abroad. Currently, his duties also include working as a Marketing Manager in international sales at HAMK University of Applied Sciences.

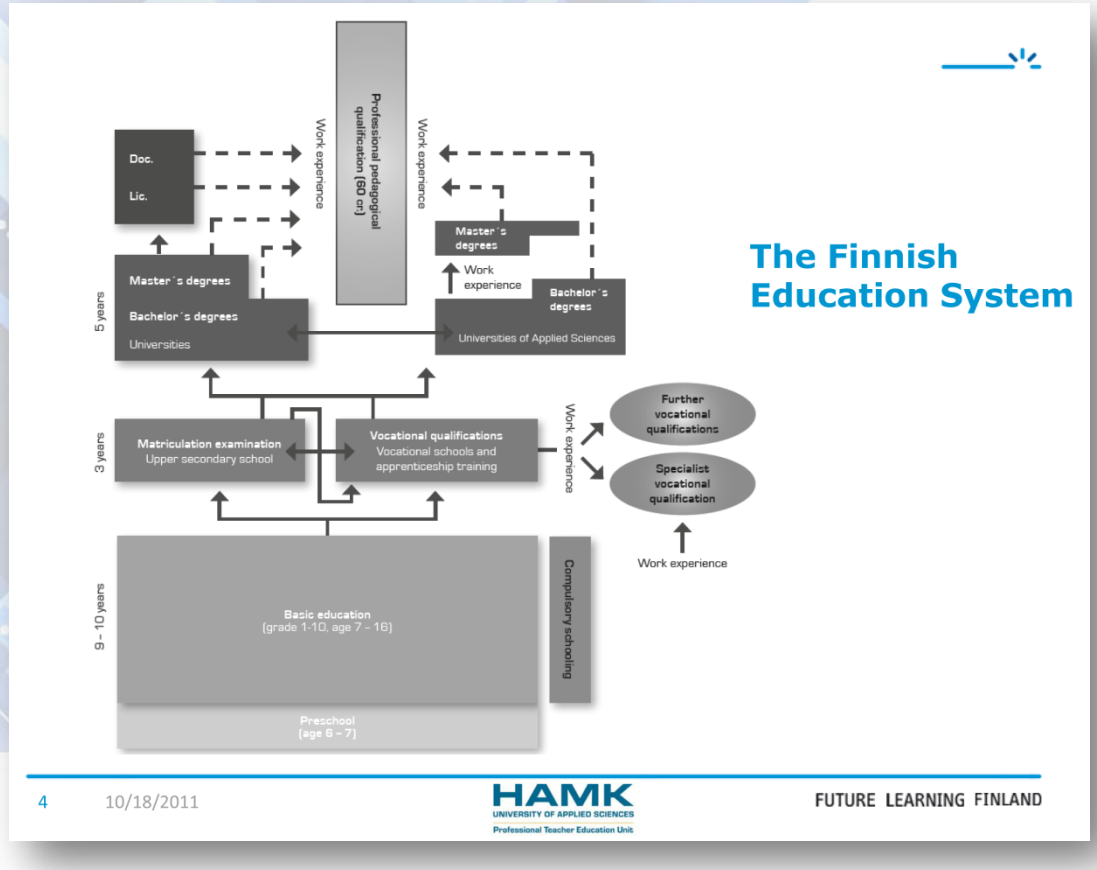
3-5-A) Observation & Gap Highlights:

- Saudi Arabia is currently on its way to become a knowledge society. On the contrary, it took Finland 20 years to become a knowledge society. Finland was an agricultural society during the 1950s &1960s, and began to build up towards a knowledge society in the 1970s, meaning it takes a long time to reach a knowledge based society. However the world and educational systems have changed rapidly and in order for a small nation like Finland to stay competitive in the market; we have to consistently put efforts in new innovations in education and provide high quality skills.
- To describe the Finnish path towards teacherhood I'll give an example about myself. I come from a business background where I started as a businessman then I became a business teacher, then a teacher educator & guidance counselor educator at teacher university. In other words becoming an educator in Finland is actually a career progress. Therefore, many businessmen in "Nokia" , good nurses and skilled personnel want to become vocational teachers in Finland. As well elementary school teaching

occupation is very attractive to the youngsters, because it's harder in university getting into the elementary school education than to enter law or medical school!

- Mr. Parkkonen stated: "*We believe in education, it is in our nature to be good in education*". That is the key successor in all parts of the world….. "*As our president Mrs. Tarja Halonen said: Three success stories about Finland is education, education and education*."
- The Education for Employment (E4E) program implemented by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) states elements already implemented in Finland such as:
  - Close cooperation with companies.
  - Working practice and application.
  - Educators and universities continuous knowledge building and staying in touch with global trend changes in order to stay competitive.

3-5-B) The Finnish Education System:



(Source of Figure#9: Mr. Vesa Parkkonen Presentation– *VET*)

(Figure#9) above demonstrates the Finnish Educational System which started in 1996, meaning it is considered to be relatively new. This system contains a continuous cooperation between universities of applied sciences, which put into practice the great innovation work done at research universities. In result, vocational institutes have become more attractive to young students. Nowadays people first want to have some kind of profession, but this does not become a dead end for these professionals because at the same time they can continue their education. For example if one studies to become an electrician he/she can continue to university or university of applied sciences in order to become an engineer and after that Masters degree is required. Moreover, Masters degree is required for both: teachers at elementary school

level and teachers at vocational institutes. In summary as stated by Mr. Vesa Parkkonen: *"… So they're very highly educated educators."*

3-5-C) Opportunities of Cooperation:

Enhancement of cooperation with different companies to exchange knowledge in different models between Saudi and Finland. Due to the fact that we are part of the global industry. More importantly, the market changes all the time and it is not productive to produce everything in China where their products are not cheap anymore.

3-5-D) Challenges of Execution:

1. Skills: When people go through their education, what kind of skills do they actually acquire through the process. It is vital that they stay competitive in the market and be able to customize their abilities according to the needs of the changing market. In Finland 1 graduate can adapt 2 or 3 different professions in their life time. The Finnish system supports continuous education for adult learning with easy access. It's quite normal to find Students in Finland of ages 40, 50 and 60 yrs old.
2. Entrepreneurship: Finnish entrepreneurs are old and retiring currently, for that reason we need and encourage more small enterprises in Finland; because that maintains the national employment rate. Thus, big companies such as Nokia can easily move to other countries unlike small enterprises which are developed to stay in Finland due to close connections.

3-6: 6th Panelist: Ms. Arja Virta - K-12 - Finnish Delegation Expert

Ms. Virta, is professor of didactics in history and social sciences education at the department of Teacher Education in the University of Turku. She has done extensive research in the areas of teacher training and professional development of teachers. Her specialty areas include e.g. teacher training in history and social sciences education, assessment of learning and teachers' professional identity. Ms. Virta is the vice dean of the Faculty of Education at the University.

3-6-A) Observation & Gap Highlights:

- The major similarity between Finland and Saudi Arabia is the fact that both have common interests in promoting learning opportunities and developing the society through education. However, there are major differences between both systems. During this visit, I didn't get the opportunity to observe live in classrooms nor the chance to discuss education in government schools. However, we have also seen excellent Saudi private schools that focus for example on talented children.
- The curriculum for basic education from grades (1-9) is common in all Finnish schools. This is according to the national core curricula for basic education and also common in upper secondary general education which are implemented in local schools in different phases. Meaning nowadays basic education is common for all generations, because up to the 1970s we had in-parallel school systems but after that we implemented the unified system for all age groups up to age 16 yrs old.
- In Finland education is seen one of the basic rights of citizens. Finland's system offers equal opportunities & common education to all regardless of their social class or geographic location, but of course differences are present and the development of segregation started especially in bigger cities.

3-6-B) Comparison Between Finnish Vs Saudi K-12 Education Systems:

Here in Saudi there are lots of private educational institutes, where as in Finland there are very few private schools. Accordingly, in Finland the majority of general education schools are administered by municipalities and financed by the government, also amongst them there are a number of highly prestigious municipal government schools.

3-6-C) Opportunities of Cooperation:

1) *Special Education*: In Finland we don't work so much with talented or gifted student education. There is some excellent work done but it isn't as systematic as it seems to be in Saudi Arabia. Instead in Finland we pay very much attention to special education for kids with learning difficulties and adjustment difficulties to schools life. This might be a future area of cooperation between Finland and Saudi Arabia. We have some distinguished research on special education, learning processes, learning environments and mathematical thinking in different universities and psychological departments.
2) *Culture of Society*: Nowadays Finland is considered a Multi-Culture education system, where as in the past Finland used to be a Mono-Cultural society. It is not an easy task to adjust our schools to this challenge. The interesting matter is that we have quite a large number of Muslim students and our schools offer religious education according to the student's religion. Therefore, if there is a minimum of 3 children in one municipality or school district the school is responsible to educate these children about their own religion. However, in Finland we are lacking competent teachers to cover those various languages and religions. This also is a good opportunity of cooperation between Finland and Saudi Arabia.
3) *Teacher Education*: High level of teacher education in Finland both in-service and re-service teacher education level, gives us a good advantage to export our expertise. Given the fact that in Finland, there are 2 lines of teacher education:
    a. **Research Universities**: Which offer teacher education for K-12 pre-school basic education teachers whom are class teachers (i.e. also known as primary or elementary teachers) up to the 6th grade. Then there are subject teachers grades 7-9 and in upper secondary level in general education. Accordingly, all these teachers have masters degrees; usually class teachers major in education, while subject teachers major in different subjects. Also, there is a well developed system of practical training for perspective teachers. High level of mentoring and supervision is offered to students aiming to become future teachers. Actually, primary school teacher educational programs are more competitive and receive 10% more applicants, in comparison to vocational teacher education programs.
    b. **Teachers as Researchers**: This is a university based education for teachers, in order for teacher students to get training in research as a systemic method. The ultimate goal is to enable teachers to contribute in enhancing the thinking method of their own students. Moreover, departments of teacher education do their own research in areas such as: (*Learning Difficulties* – *Learning Processes* – teaching & learning various school subjects known as "*Subject Depict*"). The purpose of these in-house research efforts are to contribute to the process of teacher education.

3-7: 7th Panelist: Mr. Jari Poikonen - Policy & Education Infrastructure - Finnish Delegation Expert

Mr. Poikonen is specialized in management and consulting in the education sector. He has long experience in international assignments having worked as a trainer for 5 years in countries of Asia, Latin America and Northern Africa and 16 years in various positions in education consulting business for World Bank, European Union, Asian Development Bank and numerous bilateral donors. Currently, at Cerion he is exporting one of the world-class Finnish education products, university management and administration system.

3-7-A) Observation & Gap Highlights:

- One of Finland strengths is it being a small country of consensus, with a population of over 5 million as of 2011. Any changes in the economy effects all sectors of the society. Therefore, the Finnish society can quickly take a decision about its important issues. For example, Finland's current overall unemployment rate is 8.4% (2010 est.), meaning around 180,000 people are unemployed at the moment and out of that youth unemployment is 16% (ages 15-24 yrs old) this is a horrifying fact for the Finnish people. In result, strong measures have been taken to find solutions, such as proposing to enforce a "Society Guarantee" law by 2012; indicating that every person under 24 or 30 yrs old and has just graduated & unemployed is entitled to be given by the government a job or an internship or rehabilitation program during the 3 months after they have become unemployed.
- Saudi universities somehow face the issue of "Silo thinking", in the sense that universities are disconnected from the surrounding society. Whereas, in Finland we strongly apply the "Triple Helix" formula model for Knowledge-Based Innovation systems. In other words we see: *Academia*, *University*, *Schools*, *Companies* and *Government* are all interlinked and there is a consistent dialogue connecting these entities.
- Incubators are strongly encouraged for the youth, in order to become entrepreneurs. This is due to the fact that small companies form a good employment capacity for the youngsters.
- Career counseling is important in Finland; where the involvement is strong between the industry and the student. This involvement starts at the basic education levels, where students in different grades are trained for different periods in companies. Also our career placement system is strong, in universities and other schools, for the purpose of decreasing the gap once students leave schools and enter the working life. All parties take part of this consensus model including: *Trade unions*, *Employers Unions*, *School Unions*, *Companies*, *Students* and the authorities such as the *Ministry of Industry & Labor*, *Ministry of Social & Welfare*….etc.

3-7-B) Opportunities of Cooperation:

1. Triple Helix & incubator models.
2. Innovation system related to universities in Finland.
3. Finnish career counseling system involving the ministries and different stakeholders.

3-7-C) Challenges of Execution:

In Finland we put very strong effort in research and it's a challenge for our universities to stay competitive and competent in their strongest areas. In the future we will see students competing globally, in terms of students, researchers and funding.

3-8: 8th Panelist: Mr. Veli-Matti Virolainen - High Education University System - Finnish Delegation Expert

Mr. Virolainen (D.Sc. (Tech.) is Professor of Supply Management at LUT, member of the scientific council of LUT School of Business and university's vice rector responsible for research. His fields of expertise include purchasing & supply management, logistics & strategic management. He published over 80 scientific publications in academic forums that include prestigious journals with high impact like International Journal of Production Economics, Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, International Journal of Production Research, and International Journal of Technology Management. He held various academic positions including: dean of department of Business Administration in LUT, Chairman of the LUT board of Research and member of the board of Finnish Forest Cluster.

3-8-A) Observation & Gap Highlights:

- Finnish higher education system consists of 2 complementary sectors:
    a. Universities of applied sciences.
    b. Research Universities: with a mission to conduct scientific research and provide graduate and post-graduate education based on high level research. In other words universities in Finland must cover 3 main tasks promoting : (1) free research (2) scientific education (3) interaction with the surrounding society to strengthen the social impact of research findings.
- Finnish university system is being developing as international competitive entities which are capable of reacting flexibly on both national and global basis. Freedom is a key word in our university system. A new law launched in 2010, declaring each university as an independent corporation under public law in Finland, accordingly funding is from the ministry of education and after that each university has freedom to do what it wishes with lots of responsibilities in hand. Most importantly, each university professor has the freedom to select a research arena.

3-8-B) Challenges of Execution:

1. In principal both KSA and Finland face the same challenges in higher education levels aiming to develop and improve the education level of Master studies and Doctoral training. Similar kind of initiatives have been taken in both countries such as: *sabbatical system for professors*, *improved quality of research publication in famous journals worldwide*, *hiring prominent international professors*, and finally creating good relations with *international partners*.
2. In Finland financing and resources are in short supply, unlike the situation in KSA.

4- Brainstorming Session

Recommendations in form of questions and answers addressed by the entire audience as follows:

Question#1: *During your visits you spoke about the learning environment. Can you tell us about your observation of the learning environments within the Saudi Health Care education facilities?*

Answer#1: In summary theoretical vs practical training elements. For example the number of students per groups are much bigger in Saudi for "Nursing Students" in comparison to Finland. Also in Saudi teaching is more in theoretical lessons, than the practical training 2-6 hrs per week. While in Finland nurses are educated by practical training all the time, within different educational models & possibilities for our students to achieve independently under the guidance of a tutor. Students in Finland have to show what they KNOW and what they can Do In Action.

Question#2: *How do you encourage entrepreneurship in education in Finland?*

Answer#2:

- Going back to teacher training where there is a certain path for vocational teachers to study and specialize in teacher entrepreneur path.
- Finland has flexible programs that encourage entrepreneurship in the vocational training or universities of applied sciences. Although the curricula is set for special parts, but isn't set for all special cases, therefore there are certain programs which can be tailor made. Meaning there are special things they can start up in their own companies. An example of people encouraged by such system is: *"Angry Birds"* by the Finnish computer game developer (Rovio Mobile), producing for Nokia and different smart phones. Finland has lots of young people with creative & innovative ideas who are encouraged to become entrepreneurs.
- Incubators in Finland are very close to universities and universities of applied sciences. Entrepreneurs are encouraged, given funding and small rooms in these incubators to start their business.
- Sharing knowledge & networking. Finland's philosophy is built on sharing and innovations come out of global networking.

Question#3: *One of the major problems encountered in the IDB member countries, is that after a level of basic education most students go towards the track of general education & face no employment prospects and only a few of them with less qualification go to the vocational educational stream which is suppose to supply the job market. So can you highlight what is the case in Finland in this regard?*

Answer#3: The trend mentioned above was quite typical to the Finnish case. However, things have changed because we created a second path for those who want to first have their professorial skills and then continue to universities or universities of applied sciences. There are lots of people who where technicians first then to engineers and continued all the way to the doctoral degrees. Also while they were studying they might have started their own businesses and enhanced their own skills. In conclusion these people are very skilled and have enough knowledge from the start until the scientific research level.

Question#4: *We have several studies to investigate the market and understand the gap between the outputs of the technical & vocational training and the market needs. Actually there is a big gap and one of the obstacles they are facing is the cultural barriers, because the community in Saudi Arabia doesn't see a career path in technical and vocational training. Did you face any of these problems in Finland? If so how did you overcome it in the 1970s?*

Answer#4:

- Much Finnish education is done in practice within companies. To get feedback there is consistent dialogue between companies with schools and universities. Companies do not want people whom can't do their business. Teachers should always be aware of: *skills required in the market*, *what the future trainers look like*, *what are the future innovations* and *how the trends are evolving*.
- Finnish teacher education is of such high quality which makes it a competitive field. Thus, people want to become teachers, of course not everyone can become teachers. It's a selective process and in Finland we have 3 times more applicants to become teachers than what we really need, this allows us to pick the best out of them. Requirements is that teachers should be skilled and worked at least 5 yrs in their field of expertise. In summary in Finland the profession of teaching is very much appreciated and it is considered a high ranked profession.

Question#5: *We understand that the crown jewel of the Finnish education system is the teachers themselves. It's in the culture of Finland to create unique teachers. Finnish teachers are promoted, adhered and given a career path. So how can the culture of high teachers' value be exported? Is there a specific successful case where this idea has taken place?*

Answer#5:

- Given the fact that everyone in Finland wants to become a teacher, starts with the environment and whole society appreciating teacherhood. For example 17 Swedish universities in 2010, had the problem of their status of teacher occupation going down slightly, which worried them. Although, they put lots of money to put back teaching as a prestigious occupation. It's not a matter of money, it's a matter of *working environment*, *challenages* that it offers and *success stories*.
- Both teachers and educational system in Finland is unique. For example you find especially in the K-12 level every teacher is a researcher as well as a teacher. Therefore, teachers can design their own way of teaching & do research at the same time and publish their findings.
- Continuous teacher training in Finland is a key factor. Most of teachers in Finland have worked 20-30 yrs as teachers, and their students are monitoring all the time to check if their teachers are up-to-date or not. There is a systematic structure in Finland to continuously educate teachers about the rapidly changing society & world trends such as: (*tools & skills of knowledge society* – *Internet & social networking* - *e-learning*).
- Structure of "Pedagogical" Studies education, which is part of the school class teacher in basic education covers 60 European Credit Transfer System(ECTS) and that's one full academic year. On top of that comes the subject related education, which includes lots of pedagogical teaching methods curricula related models. Actually, it is a very long Masters education level as a pre-service education, which is considered one corner stone of Finland's education system. It is believed this might be a long path cooperation opportunity between Saudi upper level colleges and Finland to create a customized model of both pedagogical curricula and educational culture.

Question#6: *In Saudi there is a perception that vocational training doesn't offer a prospective career path as the university or academic path. Did you face this perception issue in Finland about the vocational training path in comparison with the university or academic path?*

Answer#6: Yes, it is found that some occupations are more popular than others. For example if you have a program of chefs making food, so you find youngsters going for that path rather than other paths. However, the fluctuations in the economy does that too in the sense that if you have bad news about a certain sector of the economy, indeed you find the next year less applicants to that field.

Question#7: *We face a problem in Saudi that some teachers are demotivated, which naturally results in discouraging their students given we have over 5 million K-12 students around the kingdom. How can we overcome this dilemma?*

Answer#7:

- Saudi student motivation might not be at the best level currently. Additionally girls achieve higher than boys, which is also a global trend. It is true that the focus on students is very important, however to solve this dilemma the focus might be on the teachers more. Maybe the answer can be the Finnish teacher education system.
- If we compare between learning results of students from Finland and South Korea the results might me at the same level nowadays. However, the time consumed by the Finnish student to get those results is so much slower than the time consumed by the South Korean peer. This is a challenge we face in Finland to balance between focusing on learning and meeting requirements at the same time with less effort.
- Additionally, parent involvement is very important. In Finland every child is a researcher and parents are their first teachers.

Question#8: *Some Saudi educational entities operate as silos, where stakeholder entities are not communicating adequately with each other. If we look at education as an eco-system, it has to be integrated with each other. So in Finland is there a special entity or commission responsible for supervising or coordinating such efforts between educational stakeholders?*

Answer#8:

- For K-12 education in Finland there aren't any supervisors or inspectors. It's the assessment that counts and achieving the goals of the core curricula. Same thing applies for universities.
- Strong reaction of higher level decision makers. For example to solve the problem of unemployment in Finland, it was agreed that one ministry immediately creates a special working group to solve the situation. This group should come up with concrete proposals and would consist of different representatives of different ministries and stakeholders.
- All universities of applied sciences have a great autonomy board; They get to decide what to do with the money provided by the government.
- Teachers themselves are educated in a way that they also have a great autonomy.
- Trust & confidence is well implemented in the Finnish culture.

Question#9: *Facts reveal that overall Finland's unemployment rate is 8.4% (2010 est.), from that rate youth unemployment is 16% which is considered high in comparison to international average. Is it the problem of the education system which should be analyzed and corrected or is it caused by the economy not offering enough jobs for graduates?*

Answer#9:

- In Finland we have difficulties with drop-outs, which after completing basic education don't bother to go to secondary education. We don't think it's the cause of the education system, this is why we are researching to dig into the real reasons behind it.
- Additionally, Finland's unemployment benefits are in good level which might tempt some youngsters just to stay at home and enjoy the benefits.
- In Finland we believe that: "*People shouldn't end outside the society*." This is due to the fact that people who end outside of the society will cost Finland millions of Euros; either in crime or some other trouble. So we doubt it's the cause of the society.

Question#10: *How is it possible that in Finland educational entities have been given autonomy, while at the same time all entities are heading towards the same direction?*

Answer#10: Examples from universities of applied sciences include:

1. There is an agreement with the ministry of education to measure the outcomes of our universities all the time monitored elements include: (*How much percentage of registered students have graduated?* - *How much percentage of students are unemployed?* - *How many students are satisfied?*).
2. In every study program there are supervisors and there are members from outside the university and consistently they are posing elements such as: (*The most important things in working life?* - *How to enhance each study program?*).
3. Every teacher has their own network telling them the current trends in the market. So in Finland we don't have one big supervisors group, on the contrary we have several supervising groups.
4. Students voices are heard and they have the power to evaluate teachers.

Question#11: *What is the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model in Finland to solve the issue of Education 4 Employment ?*

Answer#11: PPP is quite a new concept in Finland and extensive research has been done in this field. The funding is research/project based so you'd find lots of projects going on in specific fields. Sources of funding come from: *public institutions*, *government*, *companies* and other *private* actors paying. Additionally, there is a tendency in Finland towards public sector reform. Public organizations have a responsibility to provide services, however these services can be out-sourced to the private sector as individual contracts.

5- Conclusions & Way Forward

Conclusions of this consolidation workshop have been formulated from the intake/lessons learnt from the attending audience about the KSA/Finnish educational ecosystem perspective as follows:

5-1-Summary:

- The knowledge factor is very important in Finland by focusing on: "**The Student Learning**" Not on "**The Teacher Teaching**". This can be a collaboration opportunity, especially that during the visits of the Finland delegation they found that Saudi educators are interested in taking the role of **" *Teachers As Knowledge Facilitators*"** instead of being just teachers.
- Finland has the system of research schools and is studying the idea of starting a Finnish research school abroad. For the purpose of transforming the Finnish knowledge to Saudi Arabia by creating a partner-school in Saudi Arabia under the supervision of Saudi Ministry of Education. This will enable both KSA & Finland to research the developments and report the progress in international journals.
- During the short visit if the Finnish delegation, part of their visits were to Saudi private schools, which they found impressive. Their observation findings was that the pre-service training for teachers in Saudi Arabia take place in college level and private schools have various types of in-service training to upgrade the skills of teachers. Whereas, in Finland there is a national wide system of pre-service training for teachers. In case a teacher for some reason lacked this general pre-service training, thus exceptional in-service training solutions can be accommodated to quick-fix the situation.
- The quality of teachers and teaching lies at the heart of Finland's educational success, and the factors responsible for producing that quality can be found at the intersection of culture and policy.
- Regarding the Education for Employment E4E, aspect the Public Private Partnership (PPP) has worked well in Finland and it is considered an important mean to improve the development of the economy and enhancing the quality of education, as well as the research and innovation systems.
- Some of the issues raised during this workshop are common for higher education in most countries. Malaysia faces the same issues when we speak about measuring acceptance rates, student's employability for 6 months, 1-2 yrs and so forth. There is a common misunderstanding that: *"if a student after graduation isn't employed within 6 months to 1 yrs, in result the university failed*," that is not true. The fact is that employment is a relative measurement and is tied to the financial and economic condition, we need to sometimes look at the overall long-term systemic viewpoint rather than from a short-term macro single side.
- Finland & Singapore are known by producing high quality students however, one common issue between both countries is their small population. Unlike the larger populations in both KSA and Malaysia, where usually in big populations the gap is wide between lower education and higher education in terms of numbers. Therefore, the problem of school education is compound by the population size which will make it a challenge to implement the Finnish education model in KSA without major modifications.

5-2- Suggested Seeding Initiatives:

1) To conduct a long-term Multi Year scholarship program where the Saudi ministry of education would give scholarships for Saudi students to go to Finland and study mainly education, especially: K-6, subject matters for grades 7-9 and guidance counseling. There are 33,000 schools in KSA, so if we say 6 per school then we have a total of 198,000 students as the addressable market. Also, Finland can benefit from Saudi students going there and vice versa.

2) One of the biggest challenges is looking at the market that students graduate to go into. Additionally, we have to look deeper in what we lack in the market such as: *diverse economy*, *innovation*, *jobs branching* into different sectors. This reflects on the education system and recruitment later on to the available jobs without any motivation. The solution might be teaching youngsters to be proactive and create options which might not exist at the time being.
3) Saudi has a large number of post-graduate students on scholarships aboard. It's very important for research institutions to fill the knowledge gap between the job market and learning institutions. If all these students on scholarships were required to do a research on KSA once they return. The important areas of research could be assigned by a committee of both local and international experts. The ultimate goal is to create a quick boom in research in many critical fields for KSA.
4) Saudi vocational training institutions to be accepted in Saudi universities.
5) To create a long-term structure for teachers pre-service training, in order for teachers to become more competent.
6) Creating a continuous assessment program with a framework tailored to suit the Saudi society. The objective is for students to assess teachers ……etc. in order to develop trust & confidence throughout the educational system, such as the Finland has succeeded in this field.
7) Another assessment program to continuously assess universities, through monitoring results in specific timeframes: (percentage of accepted & graduated students – percentage of graduated & employed students ……etc).
8) Factors to enhance the education system & speed the education transformation in KSA:
    - Introduce a new subject in schools, such as the education problem itself in order to engage the youth.
    - Continuous education for adult learning with easy access.
    - Encouraging multi-talents for people to enhance their skills and enable them to reposition careers at different stages.

5-3- Future Outlook:

5-3-A) Finnish Delegation Future Forecast of Finland Regarding Education

1. Finland has implemented the "Triple Helix Model", which symbolizes a union between government, businesses and universities. These present the key elements of innovation system in any country.
2. High quality of research universities reflect 2 dimensions and goals to be achieved: (1) Scientific (2) Practical relevance. These 2 key elements are strong basis of a sophisticated innovation system.
3. Focusing on creating a strong network of international partnerships and well defined collaboration strategies.
4. The dual system of research universities coming up with innovations, while universities of applied sciences consistently developing applications; enables Finland to commercialize these innovations and put them in practice.
5. Rethinking the concept of work & unemployment, due to the profound global changes creating an unclear horizon.

5-3-B) Education Strategy & Innovation Policy

1. Sending Finnish education teachers/consultants to worldwide countries for 1-3 yrs abroad, instead of sending thousands of students just to study in Finland.
2. Train the trainers to create a long-term sustainable education system. Based on the fact that teacher training has been the crown jewel of the Finnish education system. Therefore, a long-term research

plan needs to be developed in order for Finland to investigate the feasibility of exporting this concept and study it's functioning with different cultures worldwide.

"Event Pictures"

"End of Workshop Outcomes"