



The Role of Education: Trends of Reforms and EU-GCC Understanding

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Contents

Abstract

I. General Introduction

II. Higher Education at the GCC States...

III. Common Factors on Reforms and Trends

IV. EU- GCC Projects on Education

V. Conclusion

Abstract

GCC states have put education reforms and development at the top of their priorities. The GCC supreme council has endorsed many initiatives for this purpose and individual states have taken various actions to improve their education systems.

In this paper, we briefly review the major development of education sector in general and higher education in particular, at the GCC states. Trends for joint work and strategies of individual states are exposed, in short.

Existing EU-GCC cooperation initiatives and programs in education and culture are indicated. Further, future options of EU-GCC cooperation are proposed. It is hoped that this paper participates in scenario-building of deeper and wider EU-GCC cooperation

I. General Introduction

At present, of the globalized world, there is strong inclination, especially in developing countries, towards losing national, cultural and educational identities. This trend is motivated by the amalgamation of cultures, cross-border education and active educational mobility. One may refer the present trends to the growing impact of western's culture, education and practices on other parts of the world. One must admit that globalization influence has its pros and cons impacts on education..

The European Union (EU) countries and the Gulf cooperation Council for the Arab (GCC) states have given importance to the role of education and culture to enhance and harmonize the unification of many aspects at their respective regions.

The role of education and intercultural dialogue have indispensable contributions in improving relation between nations, countries and regions and provinces within the same state, see Abouammoh (2009a, 2009b), and references there in.

In fact, Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) was established, in 1975, many years before the formation of the GCC. The ABEGS is governed by the general conference whose members are the ministers of education in the GCC states. The ABEGS has the Arab Center for Educational Training for the Gulf States in Qatar, Arab Gulf States Education Research Center GASERC (2009) in Kuwait and Arabian Gulf University, AGU (2009), in Bahrain. One of the main joint initiatives is the ABEGS-GASERC and the International Bureau of Education (IBE)-UNESCO joint curriculum projects for the development of the GCC schools curriculum, AGIU (2001).

The GCC states have taken many different actions to preserve their cultural and education identity in the growing globalized world. Education, in all its levels, and higher and university education in particular is acknowledged by the GCC states to play a significant role at the national and regional cultural development. GCC states among many individual countries and regional groups of countries in the world have emphasized the importance of cooperation, increasing participation and enhancing quality of their education, UNESCO (1998).

In fact, the GCC Supreme Council, whose members are heads of the six states, has considered various issues and recommended some practical actions of common interest on education in many, of its yearly, meetings. Some of these issues are the outcomes of the regular meeting of Minister of Higher Education (HE) of the GCC states and other are due to individual initiatives of heads of the states, GCCGS (2004).

At the GCC supreme Council, yearly formal session in December and mid-of-the-year consultative meeting have discussed various education related issues. The major issues discussed since 1985 are presented in Table 1. This presents the year of the meeting, session serial number of the meeting and the action or recommendation on education reforms or development. One notes that the GCC supreme council has almost shown its concern on education development and education joint work in every meeting since 1985.

In the other hand, all GCC states have very high growth rate for pre-university and university education in terms of the number of schools, number of students and number of teaching staff.

Table 2 presents the growth rates of students at pre-university schools. The student's body at GCC schools is estimated by about 8.8 millions students by 2007/2008. Whereas the growth rate of student body at schools is 3.0% but for female students is 4.1% in 2004/2005. Female students form on average about 48.23% of the school students at the GCC states. This is a very good indicators for the gender equity in pre=university education at the GCC states.

Table 1: Educational issues at the GCC Supreme Council with action or recommendation

Session & year	Place of meeting	Action or recommendation
6, Dec 1985	Masqat, Oman	Equity of GCC pre-university students as national.
6, Dec 1985	Masqat, Oman	Objectivs and means for effective role of education on developments plans and integration
8, Dec. 1987	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Further support the Gulf university as a GCC joint work
8, Dec. 1987	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Equity of GCC HE students as national.
16, Dec 1995	Masqat, Oman	Allow GCC citizen to practice economic activities in education field
19, Dec 1998	Abu Dhabi, UAE	Development of pre-university curriculum
20, Dec 1999	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	
20, Dec 1999	Manamah, Bahrain	
22, Dec 2001	Masqat, Oman	Approving the recommnedation of Cunsultative Committee on education and research
23, Dec 2002	Doha, Qatar	Development of pre-university curriculum
23, Dec 2002	Doha, Qatar	Educational part of the deocument of views by HRH P Abdullah bin Abdulaziz
26, Dec 2005	Abu Dhabi, UAE	Development of Islamic Study curriculum
27, Dec 2005	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	Educational dimension of the Kuwait paper
28, Dec 2007	Doha, Qatar	Common procedures and Standards for equivalence of foreing degrees

*Source: GCC GS (2008)

This high growth rates have put a lot of strain on the education administration and planning and have resulted on weaker education performance. In fact, the performance of almost all the GCC states in mathematics and science for grades 4 and 8 at the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) for 2003 and 2007, was unsatisfactory for their respective education authorities. The result of TIMSS on the pre-university education, for the GCC states involved in this competition, see table 3, have scored in both parts for the fourth and eight grade much below

average. This low performance has support the view, put by educationists and academicians of the region, for the urgent need for reforms and development on schools and at university education as well. One may deduce that TIMSS results for two consecutive sessions and other local indicators, such university entrance tests, might be the major persuasive elements for GCC Supreme Council to consider education issues at many of its past sessions.

Table 2. Size of enrollment at pre-university schools at GCC states, growth ratios and female percentage

GCC State	2002/2003		2003/2004		2004/2005		2007/2008	
	Total	FP+	Total	FP+	Total	FP+	Total*	FP+
<i>Bahrain</i>	148,318	49.53%	151,810	49.40%	154,335	49.34%	164,592	49.10%
<i>Kuwait</i>	398,739	49.71%	415,836	49.42%	422,017	49.76%	780,392	48.89%
<i>Oman</i>	593,366	48.30%	592,623	48.27%	648,540	52.15%	1,080,032	51.14%
<i>Qatar</i>	117,694	49.09%	118,711	48.90%	146,585	48.62%	274,732	48.28%
<i>KSA</i>	4,291,685	47.55%	4,355,658	47.62%	4,443,699	47.75%	4,898,271	47.39%
<i>UAE</i>	517,254	49.14%	536,614	48.91%	543,724	48.96%	584,408	48.77%
Total	6,067,056	47.98%	6,171,252	47.98%	6,358,900	48.49%	7,782,428	48.23%
Yearly Growth	-	-	1.7%	1.7%	3.0%	4.1%	4.4%	4.4%

Source : GCCGS (2009): +: Female percentage, *: Estimated values

United Arab Emirates has arrived to the need of improving its schools through other indicators. One may, in this context, refer to the recent findings of the second batch of Dubai school inspection results that is published on the website of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), see KHDA (2009). It was found that out of 80 public schools, 32 good,; 43 acceptable, 5 unsatisfactory there were no outstanding public schools and out of 109 private schools outstanding, 4; good, 34; acceptable, 54; and unsatisfactory 17. This type of self evaluation and transparency of findings may have impact on other GCC practices of schools inspection.

The higher Education has also received significant support by all GCC states and private higher education institutions are now functioning in parallel to the public universities. Note that the number of universities has almost doubled, in 2008 compared to their number in 2002, see table 4. Also joint programs, twining, research activities of public and private GCC universities with their European and American counterparts are an apparent trends in the region.

Table 3: TIMSS Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

Country	2003		2007			
	M G8	S G8	M G4	M G8	SG4	SG(

	<i>R</i>	<i>SC</i>										
Bahrain	37	401	33	438			35	398				
Kuwait	-	-	-	-	35	316	44	354	31	348	38	418
Oman	-	-	--	---			41	372			36	423
Qatar	-	-	-	-	34	296	48	307	34	294	47	319
KSA	43	332	39	398	-	-	46	329	-	-	44	403
UAE	-	-	-	-				-	-	-	-	-
average	-	466	-	473	-	500	-	500	-	-	-	-
No of States	45		45			36	48		35		48	

G: grade, M: mathematics, S: Science, R: rank. SC: score

Table 5 presents the growth rates of university and higher education students at the GCC states. In fact, the estimated number of higher education students for the year 2008/ 2009 is 865,769 students. Female students form about 60.13% of the student's body. The earlier higher growth rates might be due to the labor market influence for higher qualifications for work, the public demand for higher participation and the awareness of the role of higher education in the advancement of individual citizens and the community development. Further, the estimated yearly growth rate has decreased at the last three years and it is about 2.7% for 2008/2009, which seems to be comparable with the estimated growth ratio of population.

Table 4: Number of universities in GCC countries for four academic years

<i>Country</i>	<i>2001/2002</i>	<i>2002/2003</i>	<i>2003/2004</i>	<i>2007/2008</i>
Bahrain	8	9	10	15*
Kuwait	6	6	6	6
Oman	4	4	4	5
Qatar	3	4	5	7**
Saudi Arabia	8	8	11	25
UAE	8	8	8	15
Total	37	39	44	73
Growth wrt 2002	-	5.4%	18.9%	97.3%

Source: GCCGS, Information Center, Statistical Department, Statistical Bulletin v15, 2006, Websites of MoE or MoHE at GCC countries, Mukerji and Jammel (2008). *Education Report for Bahrain for the IBE, 2008, **QF Website

It is noted that the high growth rates of institutions and students has not been met by the same growth rate for the number of teaching staff. This has happened since most expansion was at the undergraduate level, most institutions are too recent to provide graduate programs and the scholarships for postgraduate studies (master and doctoral) abroad were very limited before five years ago. This limitation was due to the low oil revenues, the availability of expatriate teaching staff from other Arab countries, rapid changes in economy workforce and insufficient planning.

Table 5. Students enrollment on HE, female ratio and yearly growth								
Country	2001/2002		2003/2004		2005/2006		2008/2009	
	<i>Total</i>	<i>FP++</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>FP+</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>FP+</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>FP+</i>

Bahrain	41,997	60.80%	41,997	60.80%	33,660	59.47%	41,997*	60.80%
Kuwait	19,318	71.41%	19,318	71.41%	18,835	69.83%	19,318*	71.41%
Oman	22,104	53.65%	22,104	53.65%	21,568	52.54%	22,104*	53.65%
Qatar	7,819	74.89%	7,819	74.89%	7,857	72.97%	7,819*	74.89%
KSA	699,076	59.12%	699,076	59.12%	636445	57.88%	699,076	59.12%
UAE	75,455	66.60%	75,455	66.60%	72,715	65.22%	75,455*	66.60%
Total	865,769	60.13%	865,769	60.13%	791,080	58.91%	865,769	60.13%
Growth	2.7%		2.7%		5.1%		2.7%*	

Source: GCC Secretariat General Information Center-Statistical Department, *Statistical Bulletin v15, 2006, Saudi Arabia MoHE*, +: female percent, *: Estimated value.

On January 2004 the GCC general secretariat (GCCGS) has published a document entitled "**The Comprehensive Development of Education at the GCC States**", see GCCGS (2004). This document is the outcome of study by a team of experts regarding the implementation of the directions raised on the GCC Supreme Council resolutions on the 23rd session, December 2002. SWOT analysis is performed in this study, by a group of experts. In particular, diagnostic review of the GCC education systems was considered, challenges are highlighted, direction of the supreme council are spelled out and trends for comprehensive development are proposed.

The diagnostic reviews of education at the GCC states have indicated that the main challenges facing the region education systems are:

- Low performance on international status.
- Non-integration of education processes and curriculum.
- Absence of cultural dimension in the educational process.
- Shortage of preparation and qualifying education leadership.
- Low efficiency and effectiveness of graduates.
- Limited partnership of educational institutions and community.

II. HE at the GCC States

In fact, there is more investment in university and higher education colleges in the last three years, especially in the private sector. It is noted, few years back University of Bahrain, United Arab Emirates University, University of Kuwait, Sultan Qaboos University, University of Qatar are the Only national university at their respective countries. These universities used to be the only provider of university education in these countries. At present, and in spite of the many private universities at these GCC states, the national universities enroll most of the higher education students. Similarly, in Saudi Arabia King Saud University and King Abdulaziz University used to be the comprehensive national universities in Saudi Arabia. The public universities, in most of the GCC states, enroll a great deal, up to 90% of the higher education students, in spite of the many private universities and higher education colleges. Other than in Saudi Arabia most of the high growth rate of the number of universities and higher education institutions at the GCC states is due to licensing of private higher education institutions. The number of public Saudi universities has ris-

en from 8 at 1998 to 21 by 2009 in addition to 6 private universities and about 17 private colleges.

It is worth noting that, for economic infeasibility reasons, some branches of foreign universities in some GCC states are either closing or consider to reduce their size. The growth of private higher education institutions has increased along with the expansion of public higher education. It is expected that the economic downturn of world economy will downsize, at least, the quantity growth rates in the public and private institutions, for the next two to three years.

Using Table 5, one can state that the number of students at the higher education institution is expected to exceed one million students in the next five years. This is mainly due to the continuous building of university capacity for additional enrollment of students. The average yearly growth rate of higher education students is 2.7% for the 2008/2009. The female student's percentage ranges from about 54% in Oman till about 75% in Qatar and the average percentage of the total number, at the GCC states, is about 60%. Further and for some family, social and cultural reasons, male students ratio is far much greater than female in most scholarship for studying abroad, in almost all the GCC states. For example female students hold about 20% of the Saudi scholarships abroad, in 2008. Also, enrollment at military colleges and institutes are almost restricted to male students. In addition, most of vocational, two-year's technical education and training institutes enroll male students only. Further male students have better chance to be employed in industry with high school certificates than females. Therefore, most of the growth rate in higher education students is due to the increase of female student's participation. As a matter-of-fact, regardless of the quantity growth rate of female students in higher education, the scope of disciplines available for females have been extremely increased. GCC states, without exception, are making more opportunities for female in almost all sectors of their economy but these efforts are still slow for some social and cultural reasons.

In Spite of the fact that there is a significance growth rate of the number of teaching staff at higher education compared to the growth rate of students but data reveals that the staff-student (SS) ratio is not improving significantly. Some GCC states published data of overall ratios and numbers regardless of gender, since in most of the states, male staff can teach female students. It must be also noted that the majority of the staff in all GCC states higher education institutions are expatriate.

Also the GCC higher education institutions are watching the result of Times Higher Education (THE-QS) university ranking, the Academic Ranking of World Class Universities (WCU) of Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) and even the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities (WEBOMETRICS), see TIMMS (2009), THE (2009), SJTU (2009) and WEBOMETRICS (2009). The GCC higher education institutions are either absent on these rankings or hold very low positions. Some institutions have initiated programs for inclusion in these international academic ranking. The failure of the GCC universities to be included or to score high ranks at the international classification of world class universities was strong incentive to compel some of these universities to give more emphasize to classification factors such as excellence in research and quality education.

It is known that the Webometrics Ranking was to promote Web publication, not to rank institutions. Its aim is to supporting open access initiatives, electronic access to scientific publications and to other academic material. Table 6 presents the rank of the first ten universities at the GCC states, where the list include 6000 higher education institutions in the world. Other GCC states higher education universities have either scored ranks more than 3500 or have not been included. At the THE-QS world university ranking, which is more academically reliable ranking than the Webometrics, one and only GCC university that is King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) has scored for the first time 338 out of the top 500 university in the world. THE-QS (2009).

At present, GCC states education officials are placing more emphasize on quality and world class university competition. Ministries of Education or higher education at the GCC states either have concluded or are working on strategic plans for the development of their education systems. In addition, some individual universities have initiated their own strategic plan for achieving better education, international competitive research and greater impact on community.

Table 6: Ranks of the first 10 GCC states higher education universities at the Webometrics University Ranking

GCC Rank	UNIVERSITY	COUNTRY	WORLD RANK
1	King Saud University	KSA	197
2	King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals	KSA	303
3	Imam Muhammad bin Saud University	KSA	636
4	King Faisal University	KSA	993
5	King Abdulaziz University	KSA	1,072
6	King Khalid University	KSA	1,268
7	United Arab Emirates University	UAE	1,646
8	Umm Al-Qura University	KSA	1,968
9	Kuwait University	Kuwait	1,978
10	Sultan Qaboos University	Oman	2,621

Source: http://www.webometrics.info/top100_continent.asp?cont=aw sited at July 25, 2009

At the regional level, two major initiatives have put to the GCC supreme Council by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 2002 and 2006, respectively. The "**Document of Thoughts**" proposed by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz for the development of education sector at all levels, in the GCC states. This document goes back to 2002 when King Abdullah was the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. This document has stressed the importance of, collective GCC development of the education sector and it has intended for a comprehensive development of education in the region. The fundamental axes of this document are:

1. Build technical and scientific background for the region.
2. Achieve compatibility between education outputs and the development requirements.
3. Developing education and training curricula.
4. Enhance coordination and integration between educational institutions of the GCC states.

5. Stress the importance of common activities on education.

King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia has held an international workshop, on 31 January and 1 February of 2005, to study these thoughts in order to provide strategies and mechanism for implementation of the document.

Few years later Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad AlSabah, Amir of Kuwait, has proposed what is known by "**The Kuwait Paper for Development**". The "**Educational Dimension of the Kuwait Paper**" was passed on to a group of education experts to draw the guidelines for implementation procedures for the four proposed programs in the paper. These four programs, of the Kuwaiti paper, are summarized in the following:

1. Emphasize education for citizenship.
2. Enhance moderate views and remove extremism.
3. Achieve excellence in research.
4. Build models for knowledge management. .

Furthermore, most of the Ministries of education or HE at the GCC states have made or are making strategic plans for enhancing higher education capacity. Higher participation, equity, quality, external efficiency, financing, better management and responsive governance, excellence in research and internationalization are clearly addressed in almost all proposed future action, strategic plans, reforms or development programs in higher education. To be specific the major common objectives of these plans and reforms are:

1. Address the demand of the labour market,
2. Increase number of graduates in highly demanded disciplines,
3. Support higher social participation,
4. Enhance quality assurance in management and delivery,
5. Adopt variety funding schemes education, and
6. Give room for private, for profit or non-profit, support and management of education institutions.

In fact, there are many projects being implemented at the GCC states are either the results or quick wins of the planning processes and reforms of education or outcomes or intended research projects of various aspects of higher education.

It is worth mentioning in brief that the GCC higher education systems have faced many challenges as many other systems, throughout the world, do. These main challenges are: political challenges, economical challenges, socio-cultural challenges, quality challenge and technology challenge. These challenges are happening in the context of globalization, knowledge explosion and regional economic entities.

To respond to these challenges the GCC Supreme Council has adopted development direction that can be briefly stated as:

- Curriculum and education processes.
- Development of teachers.
- Governance and management.
- Integrating resources and exchange of experience.
- Improving standards and assuring quality.

At the individuals, GCC states level; there are very many reforms, development, restructuring activities, modernization and initiative for enhancing quality and quantity of higher education institutes and systems. It is hoped that we review and evaluate the impact of these activities elsewhere.

III. Common Direction of Reforms and Trends

Since the formulation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), of the United Nation 2001, where most of these goals are related to education many countries including the GCC States have exerted some efforts to develop their education systems. In spite of the fact that the GCC states are mainly concerned with the overall objective of these goals but they joined many regional initiatives or introduced their own on education development and education reforms. The main regional initiatives have been listed on Table 1. The strategic objective for the comprehensive development of education at the GCC States has a wide range of objectives where their main ones can be summarized in the following:

1. Upgrading the education processes and integrating the education, learning and evaluation.
2. Professionalizing education by requiring standard for qualifying practitioners, regulating its practices and its ethics.
3. Providing necessary manpower and support and making all possible governance that enhance the renewal of education processes
4. Preparing high level output with necessary skills and knowledge to participate efficiently at all development sectors.
5. Support the partnership of education institutions with society, business and public sector.

In fact joint project are proposed to achieve these objectives and hence implement the comprehensive and integrated development process of education. These projects are presented in five major sections as follows:

1. Joint view for professionalizing education.
2. Quality assurance for management and governance of education institutions.
3. E-schools and E-university.
5. Education-society partnership.

A GCC team of experts has premeditated detailed objectives of every project and proposed relevant executive program. Efforts are continuing for joint or individual implementation of these programs and running their project for the implementation of comprehensive development for the GCC education systems.

There are yearly meetings for various policy and decision makers such as ministers of higher education and ministers of educations, presidents of the GCC universities, and chairmen of foreign degrees accreditation cores.

Mainly the GCCGS Sector of Human and environment proposes the agenda for these regular meeting and introduces various possible joint work or coordination. As an example, on the 2nd of March 2009, this department has held a workshop en-

titled "**Private Higher Education at the GCC States: Challenges and Opportunities**". Outcomes of this workshop are to be part of the agenda for the meeting of presidents of the GCC States universities on Oman on October 27, 2009. The present author has been asked to give presentation on 'The Higher Education at The GCC States; Public versus Private', Abouammoh (2009c). Short analysis of the case of foreign universities at the GCC, as a part of the report entitled "The status of foreign universities in some part of the world", was the objective of presentation for the meeting of the GCC Foreign Degree Equivalence Committees, at the GCCGS office in Riyadh on March 2007. Joint meeting of counterpart officials of the GCC States education administrators and managers have shown to be more efficient to draw common directions for further cooperation and integration of the higher education systems at the region.

IV. EU- GCC Projects on Education

In this context, one may refer to the activities of EU on higher education where different common and joint programs are initiated for better integration and cooperation within the EU countries. For example, the Bologna process, the Erasmus Program the European Credit and Transfer System (ECTS) the diploma supplement (DS), European qualification framework (EQF) and Tempus Program are meant for enhancing the EU goals for better economy, further integration of the union and promote European citizenship. Consecutive meetings that lead to Paris declaration, 1998, Bologna declaration 1999. Prague declaration 2001, Berlin declaration 2003. Bergen declaration 2005 and London declaration 2007 have played a very significant role in forming European higher education area (EHEA), Zgaga (2006).

The European pre-university schools, such as British, French, and German and for other European countries provide education in many major cities at the GCC States. These schools are mainly for their respective nationals but some of them enroll students who are citizens of the hosting states and other foreign nationalities. Some of this school provides classes for Arabic language, history of the region and cultural education of the GCC respective state.

At the higher education level there have been efforts to encourage further EU-GCC cooperation. The EU international programs such as Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Jean Monnet Program (modules, chairs and centers of European studies) in cooperation with non-EU higher education institution.

An EU-GCC possible agreement on higher education is slowly but firmly progressing. The last meeting, was at 7 October 2008 in Brussels and the next one was Scheduled on April 2009, in Riyadh, and then postponed to sometimes later.

At the university level, GCC States host many branches of European universities or European university campuses. Some GCC higher education institutes have MOU or cooperation agreements of their counterpart EU ones.

One of the major EU-GCC projects is the UK Open University (UKOU) and the Arab Open University (AOU). In fact, AOU is non-profit private university founded, in 2002 in Kuwait, Jordan, and Lebanon. One year later it opened in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt and soon in Oman. The AOU is funded by the Arab

Gulf Fund for United Nation Development Programs (AGFUND). The AOU is affiliated with the UKOU through agreements that covers licensing of materials, consultancies, accreditation, and validation...

The British Council Offices in Saudi Arabia and other GCC States are supporting many individual joint program at university or graduate levels, twining agreements between institutions, and technical education equivalence and accreditation.

King Saud University and University of Leeds have agreed to offer a joint master program on teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) i.e. for non-English native speaker. Similar agreements between various universities to teach other European or Arabic languages at European universities can motivate more inter-cultural interaction.

In addition and since the present workshop, is being held at University Lund, Sweden, one has to mention that KSU (2009) indicated that a MoU agreement is being discussed between King Saud University and the Royal Swedish Academy of Science on further research cooperation? The University has already signed agreement with SAAB, the Swedish company, on advanced technology research. King Saud University has already made an agreement with Linköping University, of Sweden, to develop its business program. Also, Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia and Malmo Foundation of Sweden has signed agreement on cultural exchange program known by "**Riyadh calls Malmo: are you with us?**" where children from both countries participate jointly on various cultural activities and exhibitions.

Bahrain has founded in 2004 the medical University of Bahrain (MUB) in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). The program is known by (RCSI-Bahrain. Students from Bahrain, India, Italy, Kuwait, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United States of America and Yemen were admitted to the inaugural foundation year. It is noted that since 2005, RCSI has run postgraduate training facilities in Dubai Health City to help train medical practitioners. RCSI also provides medical training and education to institutions in Kuwait and Jordan, and is currently in discussions with a university in Saudi Arabia to recommence its 25-year association of medical training in the Kingdom, see RCSI-Bahrain (2009). At present MUB has two schools namely the school of medicine and the school of Nursing and midwifery and has 421 students 13% of them are Saudi, see HEEC (2009) Report.

The British University in Dubai (BUiD) was established in 2004 in Dubai, UAE. BUiD aspires for recognized British standards through its partnerships with the University of Edinburgh, the University of Manchester, the University of Birmingham, Cardiff University and the Cass Business School of City University, London

According to news at Bangor Website, the first British University to be formed in Kuwait is being established with the help of staff and academics from Bangor University. The Bangor Business School will be the lead academic group at Bangor with-in this initiative. The 'British University in Kuwait' is a private institution offers de-

grees mainly in the areas of business and management and is supposed to have opened for degree courses in 2008, see Bangor (2009).

An official of EU commission for the Gulf States in Riyadh, in personal communication, has informed that two million Euros have been allocated by the EU to boost up further cooperation on education and mainly on higher education EU-GCC exchange programs.

Many GCC students are studying on their own expenses or their own government scholarship at different EU universities. Statistics shows that most of the GCC students in Europe are mainly in Britain, France, Germany and then other EU states universities, in decreasing order.

King Abdullah Scholarship program is one of the new initiatives that are managed by Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in Saudi Arabia, for Saudi students to study for bachelor, master, doctorate and medical residency and fellowship programs. The June 2008 statistics of King Abdullah Scholarship program states that there are almost 60 thousands students studying abroad on this program, 21% of them females. Some of these programs are run through joint MOU between MoHE in Saudi Arabia and the counterpart department and higher education institutions in the EU countries. In fact 22.02 % of King Abdullah scholarship holders are studying in EU Countries and 26.41 % of them are females.

There are other joint EU-GCC joint cultural and educational activities but that are skipped at this stage for the purpose of shorter presentation and they might be reviewed in other future occasions

V. Conclusion

Higher education has played a very significant role on various aspects of life and it is core for any sustainable and comprehensive development. Legislators and governments of the GCC States have supported the MDG's especially since its impact on other aspects of social development. Eliminating gender and social disparity at all level of education was one apparent objective in various reforms and development programs of education. The size of proposed joint programs and initiatives, other national and regional activities on education and collective meetings for GCC political and education policy makers assure that education and higher education in particular has very high priority at these states.

Similar importance is given to education by EU countries through Bologna process and its other related consecutive declarations in order to enhance European economy, have better impact internationally and consolidate European citizenship. They have also given emphasize on the task that education do through educational mobility on intercultural understanding, by introducing Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Jean Monnet programs.

Many educational, research cooperation and cultural programs, inter-institutional agreements, MoU's etc. are being signed between individuals EU countries and GCC states or their respective cultural and education institutions. These inter-regional activities can be studied in order to be improved, enhanced and upgraded

further... The EU Countries and the GCC states have their own cross-border or international initiative and programs for education and culture. It is of great importance to this workshop to disseminate information about successful stories of cooperation at the EU-EU, GCC-GCC and EU-GCC levels and explore further possible ones. It is hoped that presentations including this one participate in scenario building of deeper and wider EU-GCC cooperation.

It must be noted here that GCC citizen's participation of various EU higher education initiatives is very insignificant. In spite of the willingness, of EU officials, to move forward formal and informal cooperation, the response of the GCC part needs some additional efforts for upgrading coordination and joint viewpoint to pick up on various initiatives.

At present, there are private and official cooperation programs, activities and efforts to enhance additional interrelation between the EU and the GCC countries. In fact, regardless of the progress on the intr-GCC political, economical and social relations, there are not much unified policies, integrated strategies or collective practical programs for the cooperation on the development of education and higher education on the GCC level.

It is hoped that prior or in parallel to advance relation with EU countries, the GCC may adopt further inter-state educational mobility that enhance more understanding, extra homogeneity, unified framework of integration on education and social arena. Programs similar to Erasmus, the GCC credit transfer system for university education, resembles the ECTS, are needed. In addition, an agreement for leveling the differences on the education systems especially on higher education regarding the education mobility, academic and information recognition or a mechanism similar to Bologna process for the higher education can participate in enhancing the education and hence social inter-GCC states cooperation.

This workshop and a series of workshops for leaders and scholars of GCC and EU-GCC higher education institution can have better impact on boosting better inter-educational cooperation and inter-cultural dialogue and understanding.

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