

REPORT ON THE SECOND WORKSHOP TO BUILD A SAUDI ARABIA- UNITED STATES PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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Abstract

In April 2015, Taibah University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed a partnership agreement with George Washington University (GWU) in the United States (U.S.) to develop a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in Educational Administration Leadership. The agreement stipulated that a first workshop would be held in Saudi Arabia and it took place in December 2015. The second planned workshop took place on 24 October-03 November 2016. This article presents the structure and outcomes of that second workshop. The workshop demonstrated that many of the goals of the partnership agreement and the first workshop had been achieved. In addition, the team discussed the differences in KSA and USA students, language, culture and approaches to public K-12 and higher education and how to identify and overcome potential barriers resulting from these differences. Potential challenges were discussed around the introduction of blended learning, using Blackboard and synchronous online teaching and the type of support students would need in this environment. Instructor evaluation and ensuring high-quality research from students in both countries were also important topics. Through discussions and site visits, plans were drafted to overcome the issues identified, which are presented in the article.

Keywords: Cultural differences in education, blended learning, international education partnership, educational administration leadership, education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

Today Saudi Arabia's leadership is developing resources needed to address the needs of all sectors. The new Saudi Vision 2030, that aims primarily to reduce the country's dependence on oil is supports the development of a diverse economy by improving other important service sectors such as education, health, infrastructure, tourism, and recreation.

In the education sector, various efforts are underway at different levels. Saudi Arabia has expanded educational partnerships globally over the past 20 years. The majority of universities in Saudi Arabia today are involved in some type of partnership. To achieve its mission, Taibah University in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah (Taibah U) believes that such partnerships are useful in creating high quality postgraduate programs. In this respect, Taibah U partnered with George Washington University (GWU) in Washington D.C. to develop a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Educational Administration Leadership. The Service Agreement was executed in Riyadh as part of the 5th International Exhibition & Conference on Higher Education held on 15-18 April 2015.

The Service Agreement includes a partnership between Taibah U and GWU) to design the Educational Administration Leadership doctoral program and for GWU to deliver a Post-Master Certificate Taibah U students. A joint team designed this program to consist of faculty from GWU's Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GSEHD) and Taibah U's Department of Educational Administration, College of Education. GWU delivered the Post Master Certificate ("PMC") as the first part of the Program (18 credits)

through a Blended Learning System, while Taibah U will implement the other part of the curriculum for the doctoral certificate. In this regard, GWU will play the role of Quality Reviewer.

The partnership program will be implemented in several phases to ensure success. The first phase entailed holding workshops at both universities. The First Workshop was held in the Conference Hall at Taibah U on 6-10 December 2015 in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah. A detailed report about this workshop was provided to the Ministry of Education via a letter to the Deputy Minister of Educational Affairs (No. 143739278 Dated 07.04.1437 AH). This article provides a report on the challenges and next steps identified from the second workshop.

METHODS

The Second Workshop was held in GWU in USA during the period from 24 October - 03 November 2016); The objectives were to:

- Review the Post-Master Certificate Program description and Doctoral Certificate curriculum by joint teams working together.
- Inform Taibah U faculty about GWU educational methods to assist Taibah U in implementing its program.
- Define GWU's Administration of Academic Programs approaches from student admission requirements to registering students to courses and negotiating research topics with instructors.
- Identify GWU's student educational facilities and services (i.e. library, IT and telecommunication services).
- Define relevant rights and responsibilities of GWU students, and school policies and requirements.
- Review the educational and leadership field in American public schools to facilitate comparison of such schools with Kingdom schools regarding program content.
- Provide a detailed plan on program implementation, identifying potential challenges and mitigation strategies.
- Identify the GWU Education School faculty's skills and experience for future cooperation in academic research and publishing.
- Promote respectful relationships and friendships between to two faculties to facilitate communication and in preparation for solving any challenges that may arise during project implementation.

Table 1: Second Workshop Activities

Detailed agenda of the 12-day Second Workshop organised by GSEHD.

Day	Time	Activity	Participants
Day 1		The arrival of Taibah U Team from Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah to Washington DC	Taibah U Team
Day 2	10:00-1:00	Introductory meeting and discussion with Taibah U GWU's GSEHD leadership and faculty. Topics included general characteristics of students attending the two schools, curriculum development and delivery methods, as well as the differences between the educational systems in both countries. It was determined that cooperation, patience and flexibility within and between both faculty and leadership teams will be needed to ensure success. Taibah U's Dean of the College of Education, U, Dr N, indicated that the program is unique in its development because of support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's (KSA) Ministry of Education. Another professor shared their experience with the cultural challenges identified while creating a partnership with a Pakistani university	Taibah U & GWU Teams

	2:00-3:00	The two teams met to discuss Workshop objectives and prepare the agenda.	Taibah U & GWU Teams
	3:00-4:00		Taibah U & GWU Teams
	5:00-6:30	The Dean hosted a dinner and discussion about cultural differences, such as food, drink, dress, hosting, and other social traditions.	Taibah U & GWU Teams
Day 3	10:00 -12:30	The teams visited Patriot High School and met with the Principal, who delivered a detailed presentation about the school. Two students gave a presentation on school activities and student leadership roles on these activities. - The teams toured the school, visited some and learned about curriculum development for classes in history, Spanish, the arts, and mathematics.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
Day 4	9:20-1:30	The team visited the U.S. Capitol, where it viewed a film about how the U.S. has developed from its birth through today. They toured the Houses of the Congress and Senate with guides offering brief descriptions of various historical monuments and famous historical figures and the laws intending to achieve justice for citizens.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
	2:00-1:30	The team visited GWU's Gelman Library for a tour of its facilities and a meeting with the Dean of Libraries and Academic Affairs, who identified student services including guidance on academic writing and statistical analysis and information services.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
	5:00-7:00	The team attended a lecture on developing a quantitative research curriculum for PhDs In advanced statistics. The discussed balancing different statistical, mathematical and technical approaches with applied educational approaches.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
	7:10-8:30	The team attended a lecture on qualitative research methods for PhDs. The lecturer addressed a number of qualitative research methods. This subject was a novel by an Arab author and the lecture included the students' analysis of the novel in terms of academic research issues such as generalisation, objectivity and other quantitative research issues.	Taibah U Team
	8:00-4:00	They had a tour lead by students who described the school, its pros and cons and recommendations for improvement. They attended some classes and discussed differences between the educational system of KSA and the USA regarding curricula, teaching methods and instructor preparation	GWU Team & Taibah U Team

Day 5	5:00-7:00	The team had a discussion with the faculty of GSEHD, Hampton Branch, as well as with some doctoral students of the Branch about sponsoring fellows. They also discussed Workshop 1, as well as the future partnership between the universities as well as educational issues in USA and KSA and the reasons some states' educational systems have progressed in comparison to other states.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
	9:00-12:00	The team visited Christopher Newport University for a public tour around with a guide, then had a discussion with the Dean of the College of Education and a female student on the teacher preparation program, a unique feature of CNU. The teacher is prepared through (MA in elementary education or MA in secondary education) a one-year program following the bachelor's degree. Field training procedures and student assessment in the teacher preparation MA program were also discussed.	
Day 6	12:30- 2:00	The team visited Page Middle School for a general trip around the school facilities and discussion on of the school's unique programs and facilities	GWU Team & TaibahU Taibah U Team
Day 7	10:00	Return to Washington, D.C.	Taibah U Team
Day 8	10:00-4:00	The team visited the Mount Vernon Museum located at the farm and house of George Washington, the first president of the United States. The Museum encompasses a distinguished U.S. history learning centre of the.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
Day 9	10:00-2:00	The team visited the African American Museum that describes slavery in the US history and the movements of liberations led by some African politicians and others.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
Day 10	10:00-12:00	The team met to discuss details of the program partnership including: - Number of credits, noting course timing in the two countries - Agreed on an effective teaching methods - Nature and how to use field training curricula focusing on the student from the curriculum designer's perspective.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
Day 11	10:00-2:00	The Dean of GWU's Graduate School welcomed Taibah U Team, which - Taibah U Team delivered a lecture on the theme: Opening the Door of Excellence – GWU and Taibah U Partnership. - Dean of GWU Graduate School delivered souvenirs to Taibah U Team. - Dean of Taibah U College of Education Dr N expressed gratitude and delivered presents to GWU teaching staff for their effort and time in the Workshop.	All teaching staff at GWU Graduate School of Education and Human Development + GWU Team & Taibah U Team
	2:00-4:00	The team attend a training course on the use of Blackboard and discussed how this program would serve the	GWU Team & Taibah U Team

		partnership agreement between the two universities in respect to teaching and communication with students.	
Day 12	10:00- 2:00	The team attended a lecture on the planning and writing basics of theses at GWU, including approaches for improving student research output	
	2:30-4:00	Education Policy Center (CEP) Visit CEP members presented the nature of their operation and role in handling and suggesting and presenting solutions for the educational problems to decision-makers.	GWU Team & Taibah U Team
	4:14 – 6:00	The Two Universities Team Meeting Discussing the output of Workshop 2 and further steps to be performed by the Two Teams for implementing the steps of the agreement and preparing for inauguration of the PhD program on a timely basis. The points discussed and agreed upon at this meeting were as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reformulating curricula as per the changes that have been agreed upon by the two universities' teaching staff, including the particulars of curricula, distribution of credit weeks, and change in some proposed policies to be in line with the nature of TaibahU. - Reviewing academic accreditation criteria and the requirements for conformity to such criteria. - Adding to the program description, such as adding a thesis writing guide. - Drafting a detailed report after the program implementation to identify the strengths and weaknesses of such a new program for future improvement. - Setting a date for the TaibahU teaching staff for finalizing the translation of curriculum description. - Developing the program vision and mission - Setting accurate criteria for selecting a good sample of students for admission to the first class of Summer 2017. - Facilitating and finalizing electronic means of communication at the two universities in Spring 2017. - Finalizing the translation of the whole program into Arabic for presentation to the accreditation entity at TaibahU. - Finalizing the means of communicating with schools and universities for implementation of field training curricula in the sphere of public and higher education. - Cooperating between TaibahU Team and GWU Team to create a scientific paper on the partnership project. - Introducing a timetable for future meetings of the Two Teams to ensure proper progress of the project steps. 	GWU Team & TU Team

DISCUSSION

The first meeting entailed introduction of the various members of the design team from KSA to the Dean, associate deans, and faculty of GWU. The teams from both sides discussed the challenges as well as the lessons learnt from the partnership. The various members from both teams indicated that their success in international partnership was due to the commitment, passion, and flexibility of the team. The dean indicated that the program had attracted the interest of various stakeholders in KSA, including the education ministry. The program is expected to serve as a pilot program within Taibah University and other higher learning institutions in KSA.

Discussions on the structure of the program using the structure of a Post Master's Certificate (PMC), which at the moment does not exist in Saudi Arabia, noted that, originally, the development and implementation of the PMC course was to be done with the PhD course design developed during the implementation of the PMC. However, changes in the plan were made because of the requirements of the complete program that was needed before any implementation could be made. Obstacles that the process faced included the

differences in learning models between Taibah U and GWU and the need to hold the classes at the same time given the difference in time zones. The dean also held a discussion on having two internships in the PMC, which is not common in PhD programs offered in KSA. The internship was shown to be beneficial in linking theory to practice.

One GWU professor inquired whether the program was to be curriculum or instruction based or was focused on institutional leadership. The team clarified that KSA had a national curriculum with the participants from the Taibah U considering prospective students' future plans once they had completed the new PhD program, information from this could be useful to those designing the curriculum as they form the basis for the determination of the most useful materials and skills that could be integrated into the course to meet those expectations.

In the meeting, questions on the commitment of students after graduation, the full-time or part-time mode of study, willingness of employers to allow employees to pursue higher education, and the funding of education by the government were also raised. The KSA design team indicated that students do not necessarily need to return to their previous jobs after taking the course and that the government required them to work in the public service for the number of years equal to the time in which they pursued their education.

When the team from KSA asked the GWU team what lessons that they could offer on international partnerships, GWU responded that they had developed a partnership with a Pakistani institution. Differences between the academics and the cultures of the two countries complicated the partnership but both institutions coordinate on a number of additional steps to make things work more smoothly.

During a meeting with GWU Vice President for Research, the team discussed research that the partnership could generate. The results of the TIMSS data from the time KSA started participating were mentioned by the dean. The data indicated that there was some room for improvement of academics in the KSA. The less common use of assessment in KSA compared to the U.S. was also mentioned, suggesting that certain elements of the education in KSA remain unknown.

The team visited three K12 institutions, which included a 3-8 gifted education centre, a comprehensive high school, and a new middle school. The visits to these schools led to discussions about K-12 education from the first levels to matriculation.

The team also visited various learning resource centres to see the physical and online resources, underwent training on the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and on Blackboard (Bb), attended GW Educational Leadership student classes, and undertook a trip to the Center on Education Policy (CEP). The process of submitting research through GW was covered in the IRB training. The team also visited the writing centre and learned how it supports students.

The class visits were fundamental, giving direct knowledge into instructional procedures utilized in showing research technique courses, and a visit to the CEP presented a case of an association that is not subsidized by the college or the legislature. The exchange at this visit focused on performing research that is impartial or impacted by other advanced education establishments and associations. KSA faculty learned that most undergraduate students, even those in master's level college, are full time, which is altogether different in the USA, where most are working all day while they seek after their alumni work.

Discourse at that point advanced to the significant contrasts in the utilization of evaluations for K12 instruction. In KSA schools, educators are not consistently evaluated, while in the USA educators frequently feel over-evaluated. Senior member noted how they longed to achieve a balanced approach to evaluation. It was noted that in the U.S. K-12 classes are more interactive than those in KSA. Discussion was also had about global qualifications for educators around the globe with both countries' members agreeing that recruitment could be improved to determine who can and should become an educator.

One gathering was for the course designers or topic specialists (SMEs) from Educational Administration and one for those from Higher Education and Research to strategize on coordinating web-based learning and how this will be completed by the deadline. Discourse additionally incorporated the quantity of hours important for up close and personal contact between undergraduates and instructors, and the number of hours per week every teacher will be accessible. Educating in synchronized online conditions is a new experience for the majority of GW instructors, who either teach entirely in the classroom or non-concurrently on the web. The courses comprising the PMC were reconsidered to have the six classes finished in two semesters. The extra pressure for the Saudi undergraduates learning in English was also discussed; there were proposals of pre-learning exercises that could prepare them for the meticulousness of the courses.

Close to the end of the visit, the DT from Saudi gave a presentation to the GSEHD team faculty. It was well

received and gave an exhaustive review of instruction in the KSA and the association with GW.

RESULTS

On the last day of the workshop, the team discussed the outputs of Workshop II and identified steps to be performed by the two teams in the following stages, to prepare to begin the PhD program on time.

- Reformulating some curricula as per the changes that have been agreed upon by the two universities' teaching staff, including the particulars of curricula, distribution of credit weeks, and change of some proposed policies to go in line with the nature of Taibah U Taibah U.
- Reviewing academic accreditation criteria and the requirements for conformity to such criteria.
- Adding to the program description, such as adding a thesis writing guide.
- Drafting a detailed report after the program implementation to identify the strengths and weaknesses of such a new program for future improvement.
- Setting a date for the Taibah U Taibah U teaching staff for finalizing the translation of the curriculum description.
- Developing the program vision and mission
- Setting accurate criteria for selecting a good sample of students for the admission of the first class of Summer 2017.
- Facilitating and finalizing electronic means of communication at the two universities in Spring 2017.
- Finalizing the translation of the whole program in Arabic for presentation to the accreditation entity at Taibah U Taibah U.
- The way of communicating with schools and universities for implementation of field training curricula in the fields of public and higher education.
- Cooperation between Taibah U Taibah U Team and GWU Team to create a scientific paper on the partnership project.
- Introducing a timetable for next meetings of the Two Teams to ensure proper progress of the project steps.

The Two Universities Team Meeting

Discussing Workshop 2 output and the subsequent steps to be performed by the Two Teams for implementing the steps of the agreement and preparing for inauguration of the PhD program on a timely basis. The points discussed and agreed upon at this meeting included the following:

- Reformulating curricula as per the changes that have been agreed upon by the two universities' teaching staff, including the particulars of curricula, distribution of credit weeks, and change in proposed policies to go in line with the nature of Taibah U.
- Reviewing academic accreditation criteria and the requirements for conformity to such criteria.
- Adding some points to the program description such as adding a thesis writing guide.
- Drafting a detailed report after the program implementation to identify the strengths and weaknesses of such a new program for future improvement.
- Fixing a date for Taibah U teaching staff for finalization of the translation of curriculum description.
- Developing the program vision and mission
- Setting accurate criteria for picking a good sample of students as soon as possible in preparation for the admission of the first class in Summer 2017.
- Facilitating and finalizing electronic means of communication at the two universities in Spring 2017.
- Finalizing the translation of the whole program into Arabic for presentation to the accreditation entity at Taibah U.
- The method of communicating with schools and universities for implementation of field training curricula

in the sphere of public and higher education.

- Cooperation between Taibah U Team and GWU Team to create a scientific paper on the partnership project.
- Introducing a timetable for next meetings of the Two Teams to ensure proper progress of the project steps.

The Following Steps Were Identified in Discussions at the Workshop

1. Course Design Syllabi work: Work to finish and clean the PMC and PhD courses. To accomplish this object, GSEHD's DT will send all course-related reports (schedules, course portrayals, proposed perusing materials, ELCC/CAEP gauges for key evaluations, and so forth.) to Taibah U's DT and will get criticism.

2. Review of CAEP and NCAAA standards.

3. Admission criteria and program commencement dates: As the execution of the SC starts in Fall 2017, the principal accomplice of the PMC understudies must be enrolled and admitted to the program in Summer 2017. The DT needs to build up the affirmation criteria to choose qualified contenders to the program. This work has to start immediately, because of the need for confirmation from the two colleges.

4. Technology prerequisites for the half-breed display: Although GWU leads completely online courses in different controls (incorporating into Educational Administration), the cross-breed nature of the PMC program requires a noteworthy preparation to guarantee that the instructional innovation embraced in the two colleges is good. The rundown of necessities incorporate protecting educators at the two establishments are prepared and prepared in utilizing Blackboard Collaborate to instruct in the half breed program, and significantly more. This work must be finished by end of Spring 2017.

5. Translators: According to the SC, Taibah U's DT will distinguish, train, and allocate personnel/staff, who will interpret key course materials from English into Arabic. The DT of the two colleges will screen intently and facilitate the interpretation work with the course advancement through Summer 2017.

6. Internship courses and organizations with schools and advanced education establishments: Taibah U is relied upon to create associations with K12 schools and advanced education foundations before the execution of SC. Understudies advantage the most from the entry level position involvement, when accomplice schools know about the program and take an interest in its advancement. Taibah U will share the k-12 accomplice schools and advanced education establishments with GWU's DT proceeding fall 2017. In like manner, GWU's DT will recognize schools Taibah U's group will visit amid the Summer Institute Program in August 2017

7. Research Partnerships: The SC gives chances to coordinated effort and organization in research among employees of the two colleges. The exploration organization will expand on the work the DT has started through progressive meeting introductions at ISEP gatherings, yet a recharged intrigue and vitality is required to use the structure and execution of the mixture show into an examination venture. This requires the DT of the two colleges build up a proposition and present an IRB application to start the work. Finishing understudies and staff the principal companion additionally exhibits a subject of research that is basic to the achievement of this and potential organizations. The DT additionally will examine and distinguish subsidizing sources to direct this exploration.

8. DT Meetings: The DT of the two colleges ought to coordinate work calendars and meeting dates to guarantee that the need regions depicted in this record are viably executed. We will identify and finalize future meeting dates at the end of the December meeting.

Assessment of Public and Higher Education

Public Education:

- The organizational hierarchy of the visited schools covers academic aspects, not only administrative. There is a leader for curricula, and another for school building-related aspects. Further, in every school, there are cooperative consultants to support different aspects of the school.
- The schools have gone beyond the mere theoretical aspect to linking theory to thorough application in order to prepare the students to effectively engage in the labour market by training them in leadership or introducing some subjects of manual nature in the secondary stage.
- The schools have been provided with all needed potentials and facilities to achieve a student-motivating

educational environment, such as:

- Provision of security and safety means.
- Choice of the suitable location of the school in terms of large areas and farness from crowded areas.
- Attention to interior and exterior design of the school and provision of entertainment means out of the belief in their impact on the students' performance and keenness to learn.
- The engagement of all students in school activities, especially middle and secondary stages, and appointment of leaders from among students to administer these activities in order to exploit student energies for their as well as the school's benefit in these two sensitive stages.
- A noticeable participation of all school members, in particular students and teachers, in implementing the vision and mission of the school.
- Effective use of modern technology in classrooms and all school facilities.
- Attention to the subjects concerned with arts and their role in refinement of spirits and perceiving the beauty around students.
- Integration and consistency between all education sectors for serving the school and participation of parents and the community in such effort.
- Teaching different languages to students in modern ways through which the students can explore other cultures to expand their intellectual potentials, including Arabic, Spanish, French and German.
- Establishing communication channels among students by putting signs in the corridors in which the students record their interests and hobbies to set up common objectives-based groups.
- Encouraging students from the beginning of the academic year to prepare projects in all curricula for participation in competitions that are held at a specific date at the level of all US states.

Higher Education:

- The college-representing committees do not operate apart from the members. Rather, they periodically view detailed slides of their operations to all members chaired by the Dean, discuss them and then vote.
- Paying more attention to the applied aspect of postgraduate students than mere theoretical aspect.
- Providing of all services in the University Public Library, including an office for research consultancy that helps students complete their research and avail themselves of graduate experience.
- Some university departments prepare MA students for teaching according to a thorough instrument role improvement program such as Christopher Newport University (CNU).
- Diversified teaching and coping up with improvement of postgraduate student skills in qualitative and quantitative scientific research.
- Opening discussion, exchanging ideas among postgraduate students and motivating them to read, apply critical thinking and continuous self-learning.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of Workshop 2, the two universities have met their targets and have had important discussions on subjects related to public and higher education such as teacher preparation inputs, postgraduate admission policy, postgraduate program management and linking development initiatives to the environment and state conditions. Also, perspectives were exchanged on general aspects of life, differences between cultures of people, as well as visits to public and historical facilities that added information and diverse knowledge to the members. Through this comprehensive view of culture in general, education in particular, the Team could identify some expected difficulties in the implementation of the agreement including potential barriers in terms of language, culture, and means of effective communication and the nature of students in terms of sharing knowledge and the way students are assessed after delivering this knowledge.

The Two Teams suggested some solutions to avoid the difficulties expected to affect the progress of the program, including the requirement that admitted students be proficient in English to overcome language barriers, meeting with students after admission for orientation to the program and to GWU faculty. Taibah U

Department of Educational Management faculty plan to coordinate closely to ensure the students feel supported. The Taibah U faculty pointed out to the GWU Team the importance of noting cultural and individual differences among students and effective communication at the outset on Blackboard. Finally, the outcome research determining whether the partnership is fulfilling its objective will be a critical aspect of the program three of them pointed as one of the top well achieved students in GWU in 2018.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have been able to complete this research without the aid and support of countless people. First, I am extremely grateful to my colleagues in TaibahU and GWU who worked hard to achieve the goal of the partnership between the two universities. I offer my sincerest gratitude to those who providing language help, proof reading the article, (Elsevier Language Editing Services).

Funding sources

This research did not receive any specific grant, it is self-funding.