



**Gulf Research Centre Cambridge**  
Knowledge for All

## Workshop 7

# **Transforming Business Education in the GCC: Transitioning from Theoretical to Applied, and Applied to Impactful**

### Workshop Directors:

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*The business leaders who will succeed in the coming decade will be notable for their holistic thinking, global perspectives, international experience, multilingual capabilities, technological familiarity, entrepreneurial mindset, creativity, and ability to deal productively with complexity and chaos. Many corporations already say they cannot find the type of employees they need, so we must begin acting now to transform our business schools. It is our job as educators to produce graduates who can thrive in a radically changing world, and who can shape it in positive ways. We must educate a new generation of renaissance leaders.*

Johan Roos (HBR, July 2014)

## **Abstract**

The main objective of this workshop is to explore how the necessary pedagogical approaches and strategies for strengthened alliances and engagement are being adopted and implemented across institutions offering business (and related) programs in the GCC to meet the growing concerns of the region, namely an entrepreneurship ecosystem that is wanting and a shortage of employable next-generation leaders. The workshop will be informed by efforts in optimizing of ‘entrepreneurship ecosystems’ across the GCC countries. Challenges, but more importantly, success stories and opportunities will be explored and analyzed and recommendations will be identified for an engaged, collaborative, and multi-stakeholder approach to ensure that business education in the GCC countries truly transitions from theory to application, and even more pertinently, from application to impact, justifying the considerable efforts and financial commitments of the countries to education, empowerment, and training.

## **Description and Rationale**

The GCC countries have seen a flurry of activity in the ‘entrepreneurship’ space in the last few years, while economic diversification plans for the GCC economies, such as Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030, have focused squarely on encouraging youth towards ‘business activities.’ Partially as a means to lessen the pressure on the public sector to employ youth, and as a means to spur socio-economic development within the low– and –mid strata, the GCC has embraced ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘business’ as the means to end the heavy reliance on all manner of dependencies from government subsidies to government jobs.

Across the region, prizes<sup>1</sup>, mentor networks<sup>2</sup>, incubators<sup>3</sup>, business plan competitions, TV shows, conferences, SME funds, angel and entrepreneur networks, and all manner of initiatives<sup>4</sup>, have exponentially proliferated, and the social stigma associated with the uncertainty of business and risk-ridden entrepreneurial bravado has seen an erosion, in part thanks to the celebration of entrepreneurship and the star stature conferred on entrepreneurs – although even these combined efforts seem lacking from the perspective

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<sup>1</sup> Such as the Prince Abdulaziz International Prize for Entrepreneurship; EY’s Entrepreneur of the Year Award; Bahrain Award for Entrepreneurship; UAE’s Khalifa Fund Award for Entrepreneurship; Sharjah Startups SME Award; Riyadh Entrepreneurship Award in Oman; KIPCO and Tmkeen Young Entrepreneurs Award in Kuwait, amongst many others.

<sup>2</sup> Such as Endeavour, and several initiated by local Chambers of Commerce

<sup>3</sup> Such as KACST’s Badir, Qotouf Al Riyadhah, KAUST’s VentureLab, in Saudi Arabia, and TURN8 and i360accelerator in the UAE as well as the likes of Tenmou in Bahrain.

<sup>4</sup> Such as Injaz with patrons such as HRH Queen Rania of Jordan and Qatar-based Silatech with HRH Sheikha Mouza as patron, among others.

of the entrepreneurs – especially women entrepreneurs. Large scale projects and significant initiatives are now publicized in the media, though still few – and from a government or leadership perspective, just in 2016, Saudi Arabia has seen the announcement and publication of its Vision 2030 and National Transformation Plan, and the appointment of the Governor to the recently established SME Authority. However, the impact of all these efforts is still embryonic.

Amidst this urgency to transform, the institutions charged with preparing youth for the world beyond theory have faced increasing scrutiny and pressure to deliver high quality curricula and programs that do not just offer an applied education, but impact beyond the realm of the classroom.

Indeed, this mandate to be forward thinking is not just for the GCC institution, but the responsibility of all global institutions offering a business education. An AACSB blog published in January of 2016 announced that the AACSB had “identified five primary opportunities for business schools as Catalysts for Innovation, Co-Creators of Knowledge, Hubs of Lifelong Learning, Leaders on Leadership, and Enablers of Global Prosperity.”

This workshop will highlight the critical importance of addressing pedagogical changes that are either being implemented by forward thinking institutions or are necessary in order to ensure either the healthy absorption of youth into the labor market, or alternatively to ensure a vibrant community of entrepreneurs and thriving entrepreneurial activity across the region.

It will additionally explore the pertinent role of partnerships necessary across stakeholders, from private and public, across institutions (academic, financial, etc.), that must engage and collaborate with each other in order to ensure a healthy ecosystem for businesses to prosper, employees with entrepreneurial mindsets to develop and advance, and entrepreneurial ventures to flourish in the GCC. More importantly, it will explore the role of institutions in leveraging those collaborative partnerships for the students as beneficiaries.

It will further explore the role of research and policymaking in ensuring just and equitable economies in the GCC.

The workshop will finally address whether or not institutions in the GCC are, or should, emphasize the pivotal role of business schools in harnessing creative and philanthropic communities, thereby empowering and enabling them for innovation, sustainability, impact, and scale.

## Anticipated Participants

Against the background presented, this workshop welcomes papers that address the following questions:

- How effective are business schools in the GCC in delivering curricula that prepare students for ‘life beyond the university’?
- What opportunities lie in increased partnerships between institutions and industry, and what opportunities are leveraged or lost in the GCC?
- How are business schools addressing or ignoring leadership development? What role can they play in developing leaders for the public and private sectors?
- How are business schools in the GCC responding to the need for increased entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activity?
- How willing and prepared is the business community to mentor and develop the next generation of business leaders?
- What opportunities and challenges exist for business education through Public-Private Partnerships?
- What is the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the GCC and how can Public-Private partnerships be leveraged to enhance the ecosystem as it pertains to teaching entrepreneurship?
- How does/can ‘industry’ partnerships impact the entrepreneurship landscape in the GCC? What opportunities exist? How can governments in the GCC facilitate and encourage such collaboration?
- What lessons can be learnt from existing initiatives at colleges and universities through partnerships between academic and student affairs? What opportunities are untapped?
- How can business schools in the GCC distinguish themselves?
- What is the role of executive and continuing education at business schools in the GCC and how do business schools fare or fail in delivering on the mandate?
- What emphasis is being placed on community initiatives (CSR) by private sector organizations and to what end? What lessons can be learned or shared?

## Workshop Director Profiles

**Dr. Asma Siddiki** is the Founding Dean for Student Affairs, Outreach and Enrollment at MBSC of Business & Entrepreneurship in KAEC, Saudi Arabia. (MBSC was established in collaboration with Babson Global, a whole-owned subsidiary of Babson College, USA). She also serves as Senior Director for Special Projects for Emaar Economic City, at the King Abdullah Economic City in Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Siddiki has been involved in the education and higher education sectors in the region for the past twenty years. Most notably, she held leadership roles at corporate and academic institutions, in particular working with universities in their early stages of development focusing extensively on student services, institutional effectiveness, curriculum development, organizational development, and global institutional partnerships.

Prior to joining MBSC and EEC, Dr. Siddiki was a Higher Education Management Consultant as well as the Founder and CEO of Alpha1Education, an education company specialized in developing and delivering educational programs for youth. She is a Founder of Oxbridge Summers, a summer school hosted at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the UK. Previously, Dr. Siddiki was Director, Global Higher Education at Huron Consulting Group based in Dubai; Associate Dean for Development and Director of Degree Programs at the Dubai School of Government (in association with Harvard Kennedy School), and served at Effat University (then College) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia as Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs as well as Student Affairs. She was also a Senior Fulbright Scholar in 2004 at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst focusing on civic engagement as it relates to the student experience. She has also taught at the Oxford University, King Abdul Aziz University, Dar Al Fikr Schools and Effat University. Dr. Siddiki serves on the Saudi-British Society Committee, an initiative for cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. and She was selected for the Vital Voices VV Grow Fellowship for female entrepreneurs (2014) and was recently recognized for her professional achievements and contributions to society by the World Economic Forum, as a Young Global Leader (Class of 2014). Educated in England, Switzerland, and Saudi Arabia, she has a Doctoral degree (DPhil) as well as Master's (MSt) degree from the University of Oxford.

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