

Executive Summary

Education Reform for Knowledge Economy (ERFKE 1) Program

2003 - 2008

THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
EDUCATION REFORM FOR KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY
(ERFKE 1) PROGRAM

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This Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERFKE 1) Program, represents a landmark step in the progress of change in education in Jordan. The program sets out in detail the intentions for reform of early, basic and secondary schooling within an extensive and inclusive framework. Four major intersecting and interdependent components of reform have been determined and developed for sustained effort over the best five years, commencing on July 1, 2003

The impetus for change comes from the desires which have been expressed by His Majesty, King Abdullah 11, to make Jordan the "hub" of modern commerce in the region through an aggressive plan to thoroughly modernize the economy and society through the application of information and communications technology in all areas of learning and work, The direction for change comes from the recent 'Vision Forum for the Future of Education in Jordan' held in September 2002 This important event generated a series of priorities and related intentions for educational change that cover all areas of education and training from early childhood to higher education and advanced vocational and professional training. The plan for change (with respect to early childhood, basic and secondary education) is represented in the program.

The four broad nation initiatives that have been developed as the reform agenda by the Forum are:

- Lifelong Learning
- Responsiveness to the Economy
- Access to Information and Communications Technology.
- Quality Learning.

All four initiatives have specific importance, add exert enormous impact, upon any consideration of reform for basic and secondary education. A relevant and responsive quality education system is the bridge to the achievement of these goals. The need for, and value of, citizens who become increasingly highly educated, broadly skilled, adaptable, and motivated has been recognized and validated. These will be the people who will have the knowledge and skills to make Jordan's economy competitive in the global marketplace and maintain and extend the security and stability of Jordanian society Also, because the social and economic environment is rapidly changing, it may be that some specific skills and areas of content will have a relatively short life-span. Therefore, the knowledge economy will require lifelong learners who can readily acquire new skill sets and access, create, adapt and share knowledge throughout their lives

Component 1: Reorientation of Education Policy Objectives and Strategy through Governance and Administrative Reform.

This Component of the (ERFKF, 1) Program is designed to provide the redefinition of the vision and associated policy objectives of the education system that will enable the required transformation to meet the emerging need of the knowledge economy. Component 1 supports the development and implementation of policies and strategies to reorient and enable effective management of the education system to serve the needs of the individual learner and society at large.

Five sub-sections have been identified as reform elements in this component. The final subsection that is included within this component deals directly and specifically with matters of management and leadership to assure quality throughout the implementation process (1.5 below)

- 1.1 Redefined Vision and Integrated Strategy.
- 1.2 Governance, Management and Decision-making Mechanisms
- 1.3 Integrated Educational Decision Support Systems.
- 1.4 Education, Research, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Policy Development
- 1.5 Effective Management and Coordination of educational Reform Investments.

Component 2: Transform Education Programs and Practices to Achieve Learning Outcomes Relevant to the Knowledge Economy.

This Component confronts the central issue of educational reform it deals with the nature of, and expectations for, learning and teaching within the context of a new curriculum that is designed to prepare students for life and work in the knowledge economy. In support of Component 2, the other components of the (ERfKE1) program have crucial importance in enabling essential changes and improvements for the future, and also increasing the potential for sustained success for all students as they move through basic and secondary education towards graduation

The sub-components of Component 2 are:

- 2.1 Curriculum and Learning Assessment Development.
- 2.2 Professional Development and Training.
- 2.3 Resources to Support Effective Learning.

Component 3: Support Provision of Quality Physical Learning Environments

Jordan has made very significant progress in improving levels of access to formal schooling over the past decade, yet there are still formidable barriers to be overcome. Rapid population growth of a young population places a burden upon the availability of places and school spaces and new schools are urgently required in some directorates. A large percentage of the schools in Jordan are small, based on total enrolment, yet many operate over capacity in urban areas and under capacity in rural areas

Also, and this is perhaps the most urgent issue, some public schools are not only overcrowded, but unsafe, in need of urgent heavy maintenance to remedy current deficiencies, and lack appropriate and necessary learning areas (such as science and computer labs) and other resource facilities. Further, there are the issues that relate specifically to rented and double-shift schools: the Ministry is concerned about the lack of learning resources in rented schools, some serious social repercussions of the operational structure of double-shift schools, and for both types there are concerns about the quality of the learning environment and performance

The purpose of this component is to describe and explain the goals and activities that have been determined as the most effective ways in which to improve the quality of education by improving the physical quality of the learning environment in public schools. Substantially, this involves the priorities of the alleviation of overcrowding, the replacement of unsafe buildings and the upgrading of facilities to support the education reform initiatives for transformations in learning for the knowledge economy.

The sub-components of Component 3 are

- 3.1 Replace Structurally Unsafe and Seriously Overcrowded Schools.
- 3.2 Upgrade Existing Schools to Support Learning.
- 3.3 School Building for Population Growth.

Component 4: Promote Learning Readiness through Early Childhood Education

The promotion of targeted approaches to improve the availability of early childhood education has been recognized as a high priority by the Government of Jordan and the Ministry of Education for some time. Building on a series of important events and initiatives in the recent past, some of which have enjoyed significant impact, Jordan wishes to make further inroads into the challenge of quality early childhood learning opportunities for all families and their children' over the next five years. The ERfKE I Program will directly assist the Government of Jordan, specifically through the Ministry of Education, in partnership with a wide range of international and local funding Organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, in the implementation of a comprehensive approach to improving the scope and quality of essential early childhood services.

Currently, the private sector is still the major provider of kindergarten (KG) education in Jordan About 28.6% of the KG-age population is enrolled in private establishments and only a further 0 8% are enrolled in public schools The MOE carries out its mandate, under law, to license and supervise all kindergartens, and is anxious to follow through upon its broader mandate (again under law) to provide kindergarten education 'within its capacity'. Through the ERFKE I Program there is a desire to broaden and deepen that capacity to the fullest extent possible so that Jordan can move in the direction of a comprehensive framework of appropriate services and support at a very important stage of children's lives. There is conclusive evidence from many research studies, all over the world, that support the powerful impact of a 'head

start' readiness for learning, resulting in improved success of learners from an early age and throughout basic and secondary education.

This component has been subdivided into four main areas of activity and intended outcomes. These areas cover a series of extremely important themes, and success in each of them over the next five years will make significant inroads into overall national concerns about, and objectives for, opportunity, support, and achievement of 4-6 year old children in Jordan. The subcomponents are

- 4.1 Increase Institutional Capacity.
- 4.2 Professional Development of Kindergarten Teachers.
- 4.3 Expansion of Kindergartens for the Poor.
- 4.4 Public Awareness and Understanding