



United Arab Emirates

Dr. Hanif Hassan
Minister of Education



Dr. Hanif Hassan Al Qassimi, was appointed Minister of Education of the United Arab Emirates in February 2006. In this position, he has over-all responsibility for the education of more than 270,000 kindergarten through grade 12 students and 24,000 educators in more than 700 schools across the UAE with a budget of 7 billion dirham. He also over-see the development and implementation of by-laws for a robust system of private education across the nation. Prior to his appointment as Minister, Dr. Hanif served as the Vice President of Zayed University from 1998 until 2005. One of the national universities and the only public higher education institution solely committed to the education of Emirati women, Zayed University experienced rapid growth and expansion during Dr. Hanif's tenure there. Dr. Hanif also served as the Associate Dean of the

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the United Arab Emirates University and was also the Chair of the Committee for Degree Equivalency at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in the UAE. He received his Doctorate and a master's degree in Islamic Studies from Umm Al Qura University and his B.A. from United Arab Emirates University majoring in Islamic Studies. Dr. Hanif was also a visiting scholar at Harvard School of Law in the United States. He has served in leadership roles on a number of important boards and councils in the UAE, most notably, the Board of Trustees of the Al Maktoum Foundation, the UAE Emiratization Council and as Director General of the Abu Dhabi Education Council. Dr. Hanif has been active in professional associations and he represented the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research on external missions to Ireland and the United Kingdom. He has lectured on Islamic Thought throughout the UAE, has been a regular contributor to "Viewpoints" in the Arabic newspaper Al Ittihad and has been a guest on Emirates Television. Since coming to the Ministry of Education, Dr. Hanif has embarked upon a major reform of education in the government schools. He has led a significant re-organization of the Ministry, has moved ahead with the development of new curricular and assessment standards, and is promoting a certification process for teachers and school leaders in the UAE. He has focused educators on improving student performance and ensuring that all students leave high school with the skills and knowledge to successfully move on to higher education or to enter the workforce.

Inclusive Education: Systems, Links, and Transitions in the UAE

The United Arab Emirates became a nation in December of 1971 when the seven Emirates were united as a country. Many public schools were built and from the beginning, education has been a top priority for the country. Equal opportunity for boys and girls was an early statute for education.

The Ministry of Education provides a continuum of educational services from early childhood to primary education, secondary education, and adult education. Plans are being developed at the Ministry and Council levels to reform high schools leading to higher levels of student engagement and lower levels of student drop outs. Alternative pathways including vocational/technical education will be provided.

In the 1980's some programs for special needs students were created. Then in 2006 the Federal Law No. 29 on the Rights of People with Special Needs guaranteed "the person with special needs access to equal opportunities of education within all educational institutions". Inclusion is the aim in Article 13 of the same law which states: "The Ministry of Education ... shall be committed to

**International Conference on Education,
48th session, 25-28 November 2008
“Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”**



take the necessary measures ... to provide an environment facilitating the processes, and all other necessary means to secure the complete participation of students having special needs.”

The Ministry of Education is writing Special Education Standards to ensure non-discrimination, physical accessibility, economic accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability in education. These standards will be publicized in an awareness campaign for the schools and community.

To smooth the way for inclusion, the Ministry is training administrators, teachers, and parents about inclusion in regular schools. Acceptance of students with special needs is a priority. Differentiation training has been taking place in schools to assist teachers in meeting the needs of all students, from low to high achievers and also there has been Assistive Technology implementation and training.

Enrichment programs are being developed to increase all students’ interest in learning and to challenge high achieving students. This will help to engage students, thus lowering the drop-out rate and raising achievement levels in the schools.

Effective inclusion programs take place in conjunction with a planned system of training and supports. The Ministry of Education in the United Arab Emirates is carefully planning to provide the training and supports necessary so that full inclusion will be successful.