



World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

VII Ed. 2010/11



Qatar

Updated version, August 2011.

Principles and general objectives of education

Education needs to be developed qualitatively to maintain an interaction between Qatar's cultural heritage, values and beliefs on the one hand, and openness to scientific achievements and technological innovations on the other. Traditionally, the main principles of education in Qatar have been the following:

- bringing up learned generations believing in God, committed to Islam, and adhering to its principles, values and morals;
- bringing up generations proud of their homeland and loyal to the Arab nation, and committed to their nation's values and ideals and the preservation of the society's traditions and cultural heritage;
- developing the physical, mental, spiritual and social aspects of the students' personalities and helping them to become good citizens;
- providing the students with access to knowledge and science according to their age and aptitudes, and enabling them to apply, adapt and develop scientific and technological achievements;
- promoting the love and acquisition of knowledge, and encouraging self-learning in order to build an ever-learning society;
- achieving the full physical development of the students and acquainting them with balanced nutrition and principles of general and mental health, prevention, cure and safety;
- eradicating illiteracy by developing adult education programmes;
- developing students' social skills, the practice of their liberties within limits, their ability to think critically, their respect of other views and opinions, and their positive interaction with the society;
- developing and protecting talents and aptitudes, linking them with the society's needs and interests, and directing students to productive work in addition to training them in innovative skills and advanced technologies to help satisfy the requirements of national development;
- creating open-mindedness in the students towards other cultures, experiences and human achievements; encouraging mutual dialogue and interaction while remaining committed to Arab-Islamic cultural identity, legacy and values to shape cultural awareness.

The Qatar's *National Vision 2030* rests on four pillars: human, social, economic and environmental development. Future economic success will increasingly depend on the ability of the Qatari people to deal with a new international order that is knowledge-based and extremely competitive. Qatar aims to build a modern world-class education system that provides students with a first-rate education, comparable to that offered anywhere in the world. The system will provide citizens with excellent training and opportunities to develop to their full potential, preparing them for success in a changing world with increasingly complex technical requirements. The system will also encourage analytical and critical thinking, as well as creativity and



innovation. It will promote social cohesion and respect for Qatari society's values and heritage, and will advocate for constructive interaction with other nations. (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008).

The National Vision 2030 articulates several education and training goals, namely: a world-class education system that enables citizens to achieve their aspirations and that meets Qatar's needs; a national network of formal and non-formal education programmes that equips Qatari children and youth with the skills and motivation to contribute to society; well developed, independent, self-managing and accountable education institutions operating under centrally determined guidelines; an effective system for funding scientific research shared by the public and private sectors and conducted in cooperation with international organizations and leading international research centers; and a strong international role in cultural and intellectual activity and scientific research. The education and training initiatives of the *National Development Strategy 2011–2016* build on the ongoing reforms and are based on an extensive stakeholder consultation and analysis of the achievements and challenges facing the sector, along with benchmarking of international best practices. Qatar's education and training system prepares all its people for success in a world of increasingly complex requirements, serving as a vehicle for social and economic transformation. On an individual level, it will offer Qatari citizens opportunities to realize their intellectual potential, develop their abilities and follow their aspirations and interests. The evolving education system also aims to motivate Qataris to use their knowledge and skills to better society. The system will encourage analytic and critical thinking, creativity and innovation. On an institutional level, it will improve accountability and professionalism, making best use of available resources. On a societal level, it will afford students a sense of belonging, responsibility and citizenship so they can lead the way to an economic and societal vision beyond hydrocarbons. The system will promote social cohesion and respect for Qatari values and heritage and advocate constructive interaction with other countries. Further reform of Qatar's education and training system will address three policy themes: quality, equity and inclusiveness, and portability and mobility. (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

Educational policy in the past was derived from various sources, such as the Education Law of 1954, the Constitution of Qatar, and the current practices prevailing up to 1981, when the Cabinet issued **Decision No. 41** forming a committee to draft an educational policy comprising the main objectives of education at all stages. The draft was then adopted by the Cabinet to be put in practice by the school year 1981/82. The policy document included: the general objectives of education, the language of instruction, types and stages of education, cultural relations, scientific and educational research, development strategies, educational planning, and other issues usually dealt with within such a context.

The **Ministerial Decree No. 25** of 1980 defined the selection criteria for educational and school leaderships based upon a combination of elements (personality, qualifications, date of graduation, experience, performance). A number of scores are allocated to each element, then calculated, grouped and classified in descending order. Posts are also classified in descending order and nomination is



conducted accordingly. The **Ministerial Decree No. 65** of 1991 included further elements regarding the classification of posts and the assessment of performance according to a scores system which takes into consideration staff qualifications, experience and performance.

Private education was organized according to the **Decree No. 7** of 1980, which comprised seven chapters dealing with the various legal aspects organizing non-governmental schools. The Supreme Committee for Diversifying Secondary Education was created in 1994 in accordance with the **Ministerial Decree No. 53**. The Document concerning the development of educational objectives was issued under the **Ministerial Decree No. 57** of 1994.

The Supreme Education Council (SEC), which plays a key role in the development and implementation of the education reform launched in 2001, has been established in November 2002 by the **Emiri Decree No. 37**. In May 2006, the **Law No. 11** pertaining to independent schools has been issued. This new law gives the SEC the authority to issue licenses to individuals who wish to establish educational institutions as non-profit organizations. An **April 2009 Emiri Decree** reaffirmed the authority of the SEC and consolidated the Ministry of Education personnel and schools into the Supreme Education Council. All of the remaining Ministry of Education schools were transitioning into independent schools during the 2009/10 school year.

In Qatar, education is free at all levels for Qatari nationals. Article 49 of the Constitution stipulates that education is the right of every citizen; the State shall extend efforts to achieve free and compulsory general education according to the applicable laws and rules in the State. According to the Supreme Education Council, the **Compulsory Education Law No. 25** adopted in 2001 and amended in 2009 stipulates that education is free of charge and compulsory from the beginning of the primary stage to the end of the secondary stage, or until the child reaches the age of 18, whichever of the two comes first. In order to ensure universal access to high quality K-12 (kindergarten through grade 12) education, the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 envisages mandatory kindergarten attendance for Qatari children from the age of 3, and (enforcing) compulsory secondary education. (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011).

Administration and management of the education system

Traditionally, education in Qatar was under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (or more recently the Ministry of Education and Higher Education). Since the beginning of formal education in Qatar (1956), school administration posts were assigned to highly-qualified Arab persons regardless of their nationalities. However, in 1971/72 a decision was issued for gradual Qatarization of the administrative posts in order to maintain stability in this field. Accordingly, all vacant or new posts have been filled by Qataris only. In 1991/92, the percentage of Qataris holding top school administration posts reached 96%. The schools of Qatar were distributed into four geographical zones, namely Doha (the capital city), Al-Shamal (north Qatar), Al-Khor (north-eastern parts), and Dukhan (west of the country). Each Educational Zone had a director and administrative staff. The director was responsible for all the technical, cultural, administrative and financial affairs of the zone. Girls' education was



autonomous. Girls' schools had their own administrators and educational guidance supervisors. However, girls' education was linked with the central educational administration through the Girls' Education Department.

In recent years several substantial changes were introduced in the administration and functioning of the education system, especially within the framework of the education reform initiative *Education for a New Era*, started in 2002.

The **Supreme Education Council** (SEC) has been established in November 2002. It directs the nation's education policy and plays an integral role in the development and implementation of the education reform effort, including the work of three Institutes operating under the Council. The SEC also approves the contracts for the independent schools. As mentioned, in April 2009 a decree reaffirmed the authority of the SEC and consolidated the Ministry of Education personnel and schools into the Supreme Education Council.

The **Education Institute** directly oversees and supports independent and semi-independent schools. The Institute is responsible for establishing rigorous curriculum standards and ensuring schools are equipped to meet them. The Institute also issues licenses for and monitors the private schools including nurseries and kindergartens. It also supports teachers and school administrators at every stage of their career with an array of professional development programmes.

The **Evaluation Institute** develops and conducts comprehensive national assessments of student learning, evaluates the performance of independent K–12 (kindergarten to grade 12) schools, and oversees licensing of teachers and data collection. The Institute also spearheads Qatar's participation in the most important international education assessments. In 2008, the **Qatar Office for Registration, Licensing and Accreditation** has been established at the Evaluation Institute to issue provisional and full licenses to teachers and school leaders according to the National Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders.

The **Higher Education Institute** administers Qatar's scholarship programme and guides students through the college application process, including preparation for international admissions tests. The Institute also handles certificate equivalency, ensuring that students who received credit for courses taken abroad are given appropriate credit by the Institute's standards.

An **independent school** is a government-funded school that is granted autonomy to carry out its educational mission and objectives while being held accountable to terms agreed to in an operating contract. All independent schools must meet established curriculum standards in Arabic, English, mathematics and science, as well as comply with periodic financial audits. Tuition is free for Qataris and others eligible for public education. The organizational structure of the school includes: the school principal, his/her deputies, assistants, assistant directors, the board of trustees, and parents councils. The **Board of Trustees** is considered to be an element of legal organization required for every independent school. Its role is to direct, give advice, represent parents, the society, and help the school in quality control. The first group of independent schools began operation at the beginning of the 2004/05 academic year.



Twelve schools opened September 2004 and more schools opened in September 2005. By 2007/08, the total number was 88 schools. During 2008-2009 several new independent schools were established, bringing their total to 103 in 2009. In the same year, 77 former Ministry of Education schools were operating as 'semi-independent' while their staff and facilities were preparing to act as true independent schools. (SEC, 2009).

The **Supreme Council of Family Affairs** in cooperation with several sectors defines the National Strategy on Childhood aimed at setting up a foundation for caring of children. The Council and several other state sectors jointly implement national strategies for the family, women, youth, and those with special needs.

The mission of the **Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development** is to prepare the people of Qatar and the region to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world, and to make Qatar a leader in innovative education and research. To achieve that mission, the Foundation supports a network of centers and partnerships with elite institutions, all committed to the principle that a nation's greatest natural resource is its people. Education City, Qatar Foundation's flagship project is envisioned as a Center of Excellence in education and research that will help transform Qatar into a knowledge-based society.

Structure and organization of the education system

Pre-school education

Preschool education is mainly run by the private sector. Nurseries and kindergartens are attended by children 3-5 years. The National Development Strategy 2011-2016 envisages mandatory kindergarten attendance for Qatari children from the age of 3.

Primary education

The duration of primary education is six years (grades 1 to 6) and the admission age is normally 6. Upon completion of this stage, pupils enrol in the preparatory stage. Primary education is compulsory.

Secondary education

The preparatory stage lasts three years (grades 7 to 9). Upon completion of general preparatory education students can proceed to a general, commercial or technical secondary school. Religious preparatory education is for boys only. Secondary education also lasts three years (grades 10 to 12). Students completing secondary education and passing the final exam receive the general, technical or commercial secondary certificate, depending on the stream chosen.

Higher education

The Qatar University is comprised of several colleges and programmes offered cover over 60 specializations. The University offers an academic entry programme (foundation programme, normally of one year's duration) for the majority of newly



enrolled students to bridge any potential gaps between the student's academic level upon graduating from secondary school and the academic level needed to be successful at the university. The duration of most undergraduate programmes leading to the award of a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science degree is eight semesters, equivalent to 120 credits, full-time courses (five years in the case of architecture and pharmacy). Holders of a bachelor's degree can also pursue a master's degree, which typically requires at least 33-36 credits, full-time courses. Postgraduate programmes leading to a diploma usually take one year to complete.

The school year ranges from early September to the third week of June and is divided into two terms. The school year typically consisted of 137 working days (or about twenty-eight working weeks, not including two weeks reserved for examinations) at the primary level, 149 working days (or about thirty working weeks, not including three weeks reserved for examinations) at the preparatory level, and 136 working days (or about twenty-seven working weeks) at the secondary level. In 2009/10, the average number of school days in grades 1-12 was about 180 days in independent schools, 158 days in semi-independent schools, 155 days in private Arab schools, and 176 days in international schools. The average number of school days for all schools was about 170 days in grades 1-6, 172 days in grades 7-9, and 167 days in grades 10-12. The average weekly class time (in hours) for all schools was about 25 hours in grades 1-6, 26 hours in grades 7-9, and 27 hours in grades 10-12. (SEC-Evaluation Institute, 2010).

The educational process

Considered as a national priority, the education reform initiative *Education for a New Era* is being implemented since 2002 to ensure the quality necessary to develop a world-class education system. The new education system is based on four main principles: autonomy, accountability, variety and choice. It encourages creativity and improvement of student's achievement through school autonomy. The reform is targeting teachers as well as students, giving teachers time to upgrade their skills and learn the new curriculum standards and how best to meet those standards. The new government-funded independent schools are the cornerstone of the reform. These schools, run by operators under contract approved by the Supreme Education Council, determine their own teaching philosophy and methods, and hire their own staff, as long as the schools meet rigorous curriculum standards in Arabic, English, mathematics, and science.

Curriculum standards are another key element of the K-12 (kindergarten through grade 12) reform. These are the academic goals and expectations for each grade level, i.e. what students should know and understand. The Education Institute has developed curriculum standards in four subjects: Arabic, English, mathematics and science. These standards are internationally benchmarked, based on academic expectations of countries where students achieve at high levels. For example, first graders studying science should be able to collect and classify simple sets of data; they might be asked to group, identify, and label pictures of native animals and plants. Provided they adhere to curriculum standards, independent school administrators have considerable latitude in determining how teachers help their students learn, with the freedom of using any materials and learning resources. Each student's mastery of the knowledge, concepts and skills established in the curriculum



standards will be evaluated through mandatory annual assessments. In fact, in the spring of 2004, 80,000 Qatari students participated in the first-ever assessment including four different tests in Arabic, English, mathematics, and science. Assessments are not intended for determining promotion or graduation. Rather, the assessment provides educators, parents, and the government with a clear picture of educational progress. Periodic assessments are the best way to ensure that students are learning. Starting from 2004, all students enrolled in all public and private Arabic schools sit an annual series of standardized tests, the Qatar Comprehensive Educational Assessment (QCEA). These tests assess and monitor the learning of students in grades 1-12 in Arabic, English, mathematics and science. Student test scores are essential to the Evaluation Institute's ability to measure student progress and school performance.

The Evaluation Institute is also responsible for another key element of the reform, namely ensuring that schools are accountable for providing quality education. This involves a programme of surveys (Qatar Comprehensive School Survey, QCSS) seeking the views on Qatari education of principals, teachers, social workers, parents and students. The Evaluation Institute's School Evaluation Office has responsibility for designing, implementing and overseeing processes for evaluating all public and private Arabic schools. Data is obtained from many sources including students, parents, teachers, principals, school social workers and school reports, as well as information independently obtained by Evaluation Institute staff during school visits. This data is analyzed and evaluated as part of a report on the overall performance of schools, individually and collectively. On an annual basis, the Evaluation Institute publishes a school report card with comprehensive information about each school's performance and characteristics, as well as collective tests scores of the students at each school. This information will allow review and comparison of each school's accomplishments and student performance, as an indication of the quality of teaching and the level of learning at each institution. These report cards will be available to the public online.

Teachers are at the core of education reform. The new independent schools should rely on classroom leaders who possess a deep understanding of subject matter, employ proven techniques in contemporary teaching, and can motivate students to perform to their highest potential. Each independent school has the freedom to hire its own staff. To support independent school teachers in their professional growth and development, the Education Institute offers a variety of teacher training programmes. Topics being addressed include best practices for teaching the new curriculum standards, preparing students for annual assessments, and the special needs of new teachers. There are also programmes designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of experienced teachers, who may then be invited to develop coursework, lead training, mentor new teachers, and become master teachers.

Pre-primary education

Kindergartens are mainly run by the non-governmental sector. The Ministry of Education prepared curricula and established model kindergartens in recent years. A curriculum was developed taking into account the aptitudes and skills of children. Textbooks were also developed for improving the skills of reading, numeracy and other applied capabilities. These books are now in use in all kindergartens. They have



proved very successful as they introduce knowledge through games and entertainment.

The Educational Institute under the Supreme Education Council has developed an Early Years Good Practice Guide addressing different areas such as teaching methods, developing capabilities and skills, and children safety. It further specifies the child to staff ratios, group sizes, staff professional development, outdoor space and play areas, indoor space and learning areas, disease prevention and sanitation, parent-school communication, and children with special needs. The Education Institute developed a curriculum based on desired learning outcomes for Early Years education in Qatar, which aims at helping children grow and develop. There are five learning areas in the EYE Foundation Curriculum: communication (encompassing Arabic and English), exploration (encompassing science and mathematics), creative expression, and managing self and developing identity. For each of the learning areas specific goals and learning outcomes are specified.

The National Strategy of Teaching in the Early Stages, a five-year plan prepared by the Education Institute of the Supreme Education Council, seeks to fulfil a group of objectives. Among these are the development and improvement of actions in kindergartens, the extension of education in the early childhood stage, and the provision of education to all 3 years old children by using different methods which match and meet all their needs, taking into consideration their individual differences. The strategy is founded on a set of principles connected to special programmes and curricula of this age group, and by using appropriate teaching methods which take into consideration the formative experiences in the early learning stage. Moreover, the strategy provides a planned and organized learning environment and a dedicated teaching staff that possess specific competencies and skills which enable them to observe and respond to children. (UNESCO, 2008).

As mentioned, the National Development Strategy 2011–2016 proposes mandatory kindergarten attendance for Qatari children from the age of 3. The Supreme Education Council envisages Early Learning buildings for all independent schools by 2012.

In 2003/04, the gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 32.3% and the total number of teachers was 775. For the school year 2005/06, the enrolment ratio in kindergartens reached 42.5% of the total number of children in the age group 3-5 years old. The total enrolment was 15,634 children, of whom 14,127 (or 90%) in private kindergartens. (UNESCO, 2008).

Primary education

The primary stage is the base of education and lasts six years. The main task of this stage is to help children grow in a way to prepare them for living in their society and to enable them to carry on their study in the following stage. The traditional objectives of primary education can be summarized as follows:

- to bring up children on the basis of the sublime principles of Islam;
- to create in children a sense of pride in their nation and their ideals, values and heritage;



- to achieve the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social growth of children;
- to help children acquire and practice the basic instruments of knowledge such as reading, writing, self-expression and arithmetic;
- to develop children's imagination and satisfy their curiosity;
- to teach children the respect of discipline, co-operation and group work and to be apt to give and take;
- to help children understand their local environment properly, to become acquainted with its sources of wealth and to feel respect towards public property so as to be concerned with its safety;
- to help children acquire skills and sound attitudes and teach them to invest their leisure time in didactic games;
- to direct children's interests and develop their artistic creativity.

The public sector comprises independent and specialized schools, while the private sector includes international and community schools and private Arab schools. At post-preschool level, government schools are gender-segregated and divided into primary, preparatory, secondary and specialized secondary categories. Under the Qatar National Schools Accreditation (QNSA) initiative it will be mandatory for all private and community schools in the country to acquire accreditation. QNSA aims to ensure high educational standards in all schools. Accreditation will contribute to the requirements for re-licensing and enable establishments to be considered for inclusion in the School Voucher Programme for Qatari nationals.

Curricula and textbooks have undergone a number of successive developments involving a comprehensive perspective of the educational process with all its components (planning, experimentation, follow-up and evaluation). The development process has been characterized by flexibility and openness to the latest innovations in educational thinking. The experience of the Gulf States in this field, as compiled by the Arab Bureau for Education in the Gulf States (ABEGS), has also been taken into consideration. Curricula development has closely paralleled the development of textbooks, especially as concerns their layout, composition, style, study skills and teaching approach.

As mentioned, within the framework of the education reform curriculum standards for grades K-12 in mathematics, science, Arabic, and English have been defined. It was considered that the standards must be equal to the best standards developed by high-performing nations around the world; but at the same time tailored to reflect Qatari values and culture, incorporating the knowledge students would need to develop a strong feeling of identity with their country and a deep understanding of Qatar's traditions, achievements and culture. Based on the autonomy principle, the Independent Schools have the choice to choose and develop the syllabus which is consistent with the curricula standards. They are also free to choose the teaching methods and design the school system (for example, the school day, the number of periods for each subject), and the provision of supportive educational sources. To achieve this aim, the Education Institute of the Supreme Education Council provides the support and directives through the School Support Organizations.

The standards are detailed enough to give educators clear indicators about the skills and knowledge students should acquire in each grade, while giving them enough



freedom to design their own curricula, instructional strategies, and lesson plans. The students' mastery of the standards and the extent of their understanding of the curriculum standards are assessed through the Qatar Comprehensive Educational Assessment which is applied to students from grade 4 to grade 11. In 2008 the Education Institute was preparing curriculum standards for Islamic and social studies.

The standards are intended to meet students' educational needs with special consideration to the development of students' personalities and giving consideration the individual. The school principals and academic managers can use the standards to help them in development the school curricula, monitor and evaluate the students, and to support the implementation of school policies for teaching and learning. Subject coordinators can use the standards to develop the plans, programmes of study, assessment and follow up of students' performance and development of teaching methods. Teachers can use the standards to develop lesson plans, define the learning objectives for students, assess their performance, and communicate with parents to inform them of their children's performance. The standards support a number of positive understandings and practices in schools, and particularly they take into account the students' individual differences. Teachers are advised to develop various teaching methods and teaching materials resources so as to meet the needs of students of varying abilities. They can also have two levels of achievement, e.g. basic and advanced levels. (MOEHE, 2008).

The following models have been designed for a group of subjects distributed into 36 weeks per year:

- Science: 2-3 weekly periods in grades 1-4; 3 weekly periods in grades 5-8; 5 weekly periods in grade 9; 4 weekly periods in grades 10-12 (foundation level); and 4 periods raised to 8 weekly periods for students studying the three subject content strands in grades 10-12 (advanced level).
- Mathematics: 5 weekly periods in grades 1-6; 3 to 4 periods (e.g. 7 periods every two weeks) in grades 7-9; 3 weekly periods in grades 10-12 (foundation level); and 4 periods per week in grades 10-12 (advanced level).
- English: 5 weekly periods in grades 1-6; 4 weekly periods in grades 7-9; 2.5 periods per week in grades 10-12 (foundation level); and 4 periods per week in grades 10-12 (advanced level).
- Arabic: 6 weekly periods in grades 1-6; 4-5 weekly periods (e.g. 9 periods every two weeks) in grades 7-9; 3 periods per week in grades 10-12 (foundation level); and 5 periods per week in grades 10-12 (advanced level).

Model lesson plans were prepared to help teachers and curriculum specialists to make sure that the curricula reflect the values and civilization of the Qatari society and at the same time meet the students' requirements and interest. The schools are given freedom to decide upon the best method for achieving the standards and, in parallel, each school may develop its policy towards designing, teaching, learning, and assessing the lessons to enable the greatest numbers of students from attaining the standards. The lesson plans help teachers of the four subjects (Arabic, English, mathematics and science) to translate the curriculum standards of these subjects into

actual learning materials and teaching activities. The aim is to give teachers an idea on practical ways in which lessons can be structured. (*Ibid.*).

Prior to the implementation of the education reform, the weekly lesson timetable was as follows:

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly period in each grade					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Islamic education	5	5	5	5	5	5
Arabic language	10	10	10	9	8	8
English language	5	5	5	6	6	6
Mathematics	5	5	4	5	6	6
Science and hygiene	2	2	3	3	4	4
Social studies	–	–	1	2	2	2
Fine arts	2	2	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	31	31	32	34	35	35

Source: Information provided by the Gulf Arab States Educational Research Center (GASERC), November 2004. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes (45 minutes in the case of physical education and fine arts).

Assessment and evaluation of pupils' learning achievements are among the most significant components of the educational process. In grades 1-4, pupils sit four examinations a year as follows: first exam (20% of the total mark) during the first half of November; second exam (20% of the total mark) during the first half of January; third exam (20% of the total mark) during the first half of March; fourth exam (40% of the total mark) to be held at the end of the school year. The marks obtained by each pupil are calculated by the addition of marks gained in the four exams mentioned above according to the percentage allocated to each.

The evaluation system of the promotion grades has undergone some developments in recent years: regular evaluation tests throughout the whole school year have been adopted instead of pre-scheduled exams; factors such as students growth, activity, behaviour, effectiveness, interaction and participation in the educational process are also included in the evaluation process, and the average required for passing in any subject has been raised to 50% instead of 30% or 40% in order to improve the quality of learning achievement. A comprehensive two-semester evaluation system has been adopted, as it reduces the educational burden on students, provides more in-depth study of the curricula, and promotes applied skills. The system was introduced in 1989/90 and adopted in all grades leading to the general secondary certificate, including the first four grades of primary education by 1994.

In 2000/01, the gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 105%. The pupil-teacher ratio was 13:1. In 2005/06, the total enrolment was 70,927 pupils, of whom 46.4% in the private sector. The total number of teachers in elementary schools was 6,556, of whom 4,497 in government schools; out of this total, 96.4% of teachers had education qualifications and 68.7% were licensed to teach. The net enrolment ratio



was estimated at 97.6%. The average repetition rate in grades 1-5 was 6.2% in government schools (8.1% in grade 3, 8.2% in grade 4) and 5% in private schools (9% in grade 5). The pupil-teacher ratio was 8.5:1 in government schools and 16:1 in private schools. (UNESCO, 2008).

In 2009/10, there were 201 schools at the primary stage (all type of schools, e.g. independent and semi-independent, private Arabic, international, community and other types of schools), with 11,094 teachers (of whom 83% were female teachers) and 88,682 pupils enrolled (of whom 49% were girls). In terms of teachers qualifications, 10% of teachers were holders of a qualification below a bachelor's degree, 68% were bachelor's degree holders, and 22% held a degree above the bachelor's. About 33% of teachers were Qatari nationals. (SEC-Evaluation Institute, 2010).

Preparatory and secondary education

The preparatory stage is an intermediate stage between primary and secondary education. The traditional objectives of preparatory education can be summarized as follows:

- to acquire a higher level of physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social maturity;
- to deeply root the students national affiliation and promote their pride of their Arab nation;
- to provide the minimum education required by youngsters through pursuing their religious studies and providing other types of basic human and scientific knowledge;
- to acquaint the students with their local environment and the Arab World, and to develop an inclination towards aesthetic creativity;
- to prepare students to live in an Islamic society open to the world from which they take and to which they give as well;
- to prepare students for the practical life through: acquiring practical skills; respect for manual work, group work and production; being acquainted with their local and other communities.

Prior to the implementation of the education reform, the weekly lesson timetable for the preparatory stage was as follows:

Preparatory education (lower secondary): weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly period in each form					
	I		II		III	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Islamic education	5	5	5	5	5	5
Arabic language	7	7	7	7	7	7
English language	6	6	6	6	6	6
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5
Hygiene and general science	4	3	4	3	4	3
Social studies	4	4	4	4	4	4
Fine arts	–	2	–	2	–	2
Home economics	3	2	3	2	3	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	36	36	36	36	36	36

Source: Ibid. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes (45 minutes in the case of physical education and fine arts).

The general preparatory certificate was abolished in 1987. Students completing the preparatory stage (grade 9) have access to the secondary stage.

Secondary education has a special importance as it coincides with the intermediate and late stage of adolescence for boys and girls. Upon this stage lies the burden of satisfying their needs in the most critical stage of their life. This stage could also be a bridge to universities or higher education institutions for preparing higher cadres in the various political, economic and social fields. It also could be one of the channels of preparing skilled workers necessary for development purposes. It also could be a final stage for some students after having been prepared and trained for practical life. Due to these facts, in this stage much concern is given to the bringing up of citizens armed with the traits and requirements of their growth in a specific social pattern. The traditional objectives of this stage can be summarized as follows:

- to help students formulate a rational philosophy for their life based upon genuine Islamic and Arab values;
- to help students identify their present and future social roles;
- to get acquainted with the students' inclinations and aptitudes and in turn guide them to the most suitable type of secondary education that would furnish them with knowledge and conduct and render them qualified for their designated vocational and social roles;
- to enable students to acquire skills of research and critical thought that will provide them with instruments for solving their problems and adopting sound decisions;
- to acquaint and guide students to the various types of higher education and the fields of occupations that correspond with their abilities, aptitudes and inclinations;
- to provide students in all specializations with a broader knowledge of general culture and to direct them to the sources of such knowledge through practice;



- to pursue national preparation of students by providing them with facts and information that enable them to understand world trends and their impact on Qatar and the Arab world;
- to provide students with the principles of educational democracy in the context of their theoretic and practical study through school daily practice;
- to provide students with the opportunity to acquire certain experiences of work in industry, agriculture and commerce and other relevant and useful activities.

In accordance with the Secondary Education Diversification Plan (1993-2003), secondary education was reformed as follows: (a) general education, composed of two scientific sections (physics and mathematics; chemistry and biology), and two literary sections (languages; social studies); (b) technical education, composed of four sections comprising eleven specializations, namely the building and construction technology section (building technologies; carpentry and decoration); the mechanics section (light vehicles; heavy vehicles); the electricity and electronics section (industrial electronics; radio and television; air-conditioning and refrigeration; electricity); the minerals section (fitting and turning; blacksmithing and welding; metal shaping); (c) commercial education, composed of three sections, namely office administration, intermediate accounting, and banking and insurance. In addition, two new types of education have been introduced: agricultural education (which includes soil and irrigation technology, gardening, livestock, and fisheries) and applied education (which includes postal service technology, typing technologies, electronic photography technology, hotel services, and nursing).

Prior to the implementation of the education reform, the weekly lesson timetable for the general secondary stage was as follows:

General secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each form													
	First form		Second form						Third form					
			Literary section				Science section		Literary section				Science section	
	Maths		French		Maths				French					
B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	
Islamic education	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Arabic language	6	6	8	8	8	7	5	5	7	7	7	7	5	5
English language	6	6	8	7	6	6	6	6	8	8	8	8	6	6
French language	–	–	–	–	4	4	–	–	–	–	5	4	–	–
Mathematics	5	5	2	2	–	–	6	6	2	2	–	–	7	7
Science	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	2	–	–	–	–
Integrated sciences	5	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Physics	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	4	–	–	–	–	5	4
Chemistry	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	3	–	–	–	–	4	4
Biology	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	3	–	–	–	–	3	3
History	2	2	3	3	3	3	–	–	3	3	3	3	–	–
Geography	2	2	3	3	3	3	–	–	3	3	3	3	–	–
Civics	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sociology	–	–	2	2	2	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Computer science	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Philosophy & psychology	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	3	3	3	–	–
Study skills	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fine arts	–	–	1	1	1	1	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	1
Physical education	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Home economics	–	1	–	2	–	2	–	2	–	2	–	2	–	1
Total weekly periods	36	36	36	37	36	37	36	37	36	37	36	37	37	37

Source: *Ibid*. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes (45 minutes in the case of physical education and fine arts). B = boys; G = girls.

A final examination is held at the end of secondary education and the secondary (general, technical, commercial or religious) certificate is awarded to those who pass the exam successfully. In 2000/01, the gross enrolment ratio at the secondary level was 89%. The pupil-teacher ratio was 7:1. In 2005/06 there were 73 preparatory schools (all sectors, including independent schools) with 26,500 students enrolled; the number of secondary schools was 59 with 23,946 students enrolled. (SEC, 2007). In the same year, there were 698 students enrolled in specialized education (industrial, commercial or religious education). The net enrolment ratio at the preparatory and secondary level was estimated at 92.5%. (UNESCO, 2008).

In 2009/10, there were 126 schools at the preparatory stage (all type of schools, e.g. independent and semi-independent, private Arabic, international, community and other types of schools), and 110 at the secondary stage. The number of teachers was 7,864 at the preparatory stage (of whom 59% were female teachers) and 7,526 at the secondary stage (of whom 57% were females); the total enrolment was 36,924 (of whom 49% girls) and 32,265 students (of whom 48% girls) respectively. In terms of teachers' qualifications, at the preparatory level 6% of teachers were holders of a qualification below a bachelor's degree, 62% were bachelor's degree holders, and 32% held a degree above the bachelor's. At the secondary level, 4% of teachers were holders of a qualification below a bachelor's



degree, 59% were bachelor's degree holders, and 37% held a degree above the bachelor's. At the preparatory level, 14% of teachers were Qatari nationals, and 15% at the secondary level. (SEC-Evaluation Institute, 2010).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

In the spring of 2004, 80,000 Qatari students participated in the first-ever assessment including four different tests in Arabic, English, mathematics, and science. The Qatar Comprehensive Educational Assessment (QCEA) includes a series of tests for assessing and monitoring students' learning achievement in grades 1-12 in Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

The QCEA was administered to some 70,000 students in 2006. As regards Arabic, the percentage of students meeting the standards ranges from 2% (grade 4) to 5% (grades 6 and 11). In the case of English, the percentage of students meeting the standards ranges from 2% (grades 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9) to 3% (grades 6, 10 and 11). For mathematics, the percentage of students meeting the standards ranges from less than 1% (grades 4-9 and 11) to just over 1% (grade 10). Finally, as regards science no students at all grade levels met the standards. As regards the 2008 QCEA, overall the performance levels were generally low. Some students performed at the very highest levels, but the majority was performing at moderate levels at best. The performance in English was marginally better than that in the other three subject tested. For all grades, with minor exceptions, low proportions of students performed at the 'meets standards' level, typically about 10% of students in English, about 5% or less in Arabic and close to 0% of the students in mathematics and science. Girls tended to perform better than boys in Arabic, English and science. Results across years 2005, 2006 and 2007 show a trend of decreasing or inconsistent performance. Performance tended to increase from 2007 to 2008 in most subject matters. However, these increases often were not enough to bring the 2008 performance as high as the performance in 2005.

The Evaluation Institute is also responsible for another key project, e.g. ensuring that schools are accountable for providing quality education. This involves a programme of surveys (Qatar Comprehensive School Survey, QCSS) seeking the views on Qatari education of principals, teachers, social workers, parents and students. The Evaluation Institute's School Evaluation Office has responsibility for designing, implementing and overseeing processes for evaluating all public and private Arabic schools. Data is obtained from many sources including students, parents, teachers, principals, school social workers and school reports, as well as information independently obtained by Evaluation Institute staff during school visits. This data is analyzed and evaluated as part of a report on the overall performance of schools, individually and collectively. On an annual basis, the Evaluation Institute publishes a school report card with comprehensive information about each school's performance and characteristics, as well as collective tests scores of the students at each school.

The Evaluation Institute released the second annual report on schools and schooling in Qatar in July 2007. Key points included the following:



- Problematic student performance against the National Curriculum Standards in Arabic, English and mathematics and science across all grades tested (grades 4 to 11). Overall, between 2% and 5% (varying for different grades) met the Arabic and English standards, and generally 0% met the Science and mathematics standards.
- At most grades there was some slight improvement in average test scores for Arabic which was due to improvements in the scores of private Arabic and government school students; the latest English score averages were about the same as the previous years with a slight decrease in independent school students' scores being countered by minor increases in the scores of private Arabic and government schools' students' scores; variable results were observed for mathematics and science but, in general, the average scores for independent schools' students were trending a little lower than those for the previous year.
- Overall, large proportion of parents (80%) expressed satisfaction with the education offered by the schools this was slightly lower than that of the previous year (82%).
- Student absenteeism, as reported by parents, increased to 8% from the 6% suggested in the previous survey.
- The average amount of homework assigned (3.1 hours a week) has increased (from 2.1 hours a week).
- Far greater access to computers, with an average of 38 computers per school or about 13 students per computer as compared to previous figures of an average of 29 computers per school or about 31 students per computer.
- There was a slight increase (about half an hour on average) in the amount of time spent learning at school in a typical week with primary students, depending upon grade, spending about 21 to 23 hours week and preparatory and secondary students pending approximately 24 hours a week.
- Significant increase in the time spent on teacher professional development during the school year with there being an average of 29.8 hours reported this time as compared to an average of 8.3 hours reported previously.
- Teacher qualification levels are similar with 91% of teachers having degrees this time compared to 93% reporting having degrees in the previous survey; and 65% actually having a formal teaching qualification (versus 69% having such a qualification previously).

The Evaluation Institute through its Student Assessment Office oversees the implementation of three major international assessment exercises in Qatar: the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). About 14,500 Qatari students participated in the PISA and PIRLS assessment exercises in 2006.

As regards PISA 2006, among the 57 countries taking part in the study the average scores of students in 54 countries were statistically significantly above Qatar's average in all three literacy domains. The average level of reading proficiency among 15-year-old students in Qatar was lower compared to those in many other



countries. Students in Qatar' average score was 312 points, which is approximately 172 points below the average reading score achieved by students in OECD countries and 243 points below the average score obtained by Korean students, the best performing country. As in reading, the results for Qatar in mathematics were lower than those observed in many other countries. The average score of Qatar's students on the mathematics scale was 318 points, which falls 165 points below the OECD average and about 230 points below the scores realized by the best performing countries. The average performance in science of 15-year-old students in Qatar paralleled the pattern observed in average reading and mathematics scores. Students in Qatar had an average science proficiency of 349 points, a value that places them among a group of countries with the lowest average scores. The average science proficiency of students in Qatar falls 141 points below the OECD average and 215 points below that realized by the best performing country, Finland. (SEC, 2007).

Concerning TIMSS 2007, the performance of the majority of grades 4 and 8 Qatari students in mathematics and science was classified at proficiency Level 1 (the lowest), and only small percentages of students had skills that were sufficiently advanced, measured against TIMSS benchmarks, to place them at Levels 3 or above in either of the two skill domains. (SEC, 2008).

Teaching staff

Within the framework of the education reform initiated in 2002, the qualifications for Qatari teachers who work in independent schools are the following:

- Kindergarten and primary education teachers: a bachelor's degree in education (normally a four-year programme), or a diploma in primary education, or a bachelor's degree (not in education) plus two years of experience as a teacher in a kindergarten or primary school.
- Secondary and preparatory education teachers: a bachelor's degree in education with a specialty in mathematics, or science or English or Arabic; or a bachelor's degree (not in education) in science or mathematics or Arabic or English plus three years of experience as a teacher in a school; or a bachelor's degree and a diploma in preparatory and/or secondary education.

In terms of curriculum standards, kindergarten and primary education teachers should:

- understand the fundamental concepts of the Qatari education reform system;
- understand the purposes, scope, structure and balance of the curriculum standards as a whole and, within them, the place and scope of the primary phase;
- be aware of the breadth of the content to be covered by the pupils' during each grade within the primary phase within English, mathematics and science;
- understand how pupils' learning is affected by their physical, intellectual, emotion and social development;



- have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the schemes of work, lesson plans and level descriptions at the end of each grade across the primary age range;
- know pupils' most common misconceptions and mistakes in the core subjects and how to address these.

In terms of curriculum standards, preparatory and secondary education teachers should:

- understand the fundamental concepts of the Qatari education reform system;
- understand the purposes, scope, structure and balance of the curriculum standards as a whole and, within them, the place and cope of their subject for their age phase
- have a secure knowledge and understand of the concepts and skills in their specialist subject(s) – English, mathematics or science, which will enable them to teach it confidently and accurately;
- have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the curriculum standards and the schemes of work for their subject;
- have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the lesson plans and level descriptions for each grade for their subject;
- know how to cope securely with subject-related questions which students raise;
- know for their specialist subject, students' most common misconceptions and mistakes and know how to address these;
- understand how students' learning in the subject is affected by their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.

All teachers should be able to plan their teaching to achieve progression in pupils' learning through:

- identifying clear learning objectives and content, appropriate to the subject matter and the pupils being taught, and specifying how these will be taught and assessed;
- setting tasks for whole class, individual and group work, including homework, which challenge pupils and ensure high levels of pupil interest;
- setting appropriate and demanding expectations of pupils' learning, motivation and presentation of work;
- setting clear targets of pupils' learning, building on priori attainment and ensuring that pupils are aware of the substance and purpose of what they are asked to do;
- identifying pupils who have individual needs, including specific learning difficulties, or are very able or who are not yet fluent in English; and knowing where to get help in order to give positive and targeted support;
- providing clear structures for lessons and for sequences of lessons, in the short, medium and longer term which maintain pace, motivation and challenge for the pupils;



- making effective use of assessment information on pupils' attainment and progress in their teaching and in planning future lessons and sequences of lessons;
- establishing and maintaining a purposeful working atmosphere;
- setting high expectations for pupils' behavior, establishing and maintaining a good standard of discipline through well-focused teaching and through positive and productive relationships;
- using teaching methods which sustain the momentum of pupils' work and keep all students engaged through stimulating intellectual curiosity, communicating enthusiasm for the subject being taught, fostering pupils' enthusiasm and maintain pupils' motivation.

In the context of the education reform, the Education Institute under the Supreme Education Council has been offering a variety of teacher training programmes in order to support independent school teachers in their professional development and growth. The topics addressed include “best practices” for teaching the new curriculum standards, preparing students for annual assessments, and the special needs of new teachers. The Education Institute issued new rules and policies in regard to Qatari personnel at the independent schools. The new rules specify the salaries, allowances and training that school operators must provide to Qatari staff. They also address issues of performance assessment, secondment of staff, annual leave, and end of service entitlements. These policies are based on the following goals and principles: to provide opportunities for Qatari educators to obtain well-paid jobs; to develop a system to reward staff for exemplary performance; to set minimum limits for staff benefits and develop a means for school operators to attract and train Qatari staff; to make distinctions between full-time employees, sabbatical employees and seconded employees; to link the professional development of staff with the salary scale and promotion policy; and to ensure there is an inclusive system to evaluate and develop staff performance. The rules require that all independent schools develop a staff organizational chart and salary scales which then must be approved by the Education Institute. The schools must identify each job by title and include a job description and the duties associated with it. In addition to salaries staff is entitled to several allowances, such as for job nature, transport and housing. These allowances must not be less than the allowances offered to employees holding the same job title in the Civil Service (plus any social allowance). Full-time sabbatical employees must be offered a basic salary of not less than their current basic salary plus an allowance as incentive, if applicable.

As mentioned, the Qatar Office for Registration, Licensing and Accreditation (QORLA) was established in 2008 at the Evaluation Institute of the Supreme Education Council to help support and improve the quality of teacher and school leader practice and to ensure it is aligned with the National Professional Standards for Teachers and School Leaders (NPSTL). The NPSTL describe the abilities and knowledge necessary for teachers and leaders, application and understanding of that knowledge as well as the quality teaching and leadership practice in the independent schools. The NPSTL include 12 standards that teachers, and seven standards that school leaders must demonstrate competence in. The Evaluation Institute requires teachers and leaders in all the independent schools in Qatar to obtain professional licenses that allow them to teach and lead schools. The process of applying for and being awarded with a professional license is known as registration.



The first license a teacher or leader must apply for within the QORLA registration process is a provisional license. A provisional license provides evidence that the teacher or school leader meets the minimum personnel requirements for being employed in an independent school. In 2009, nearly 2,000 teachers and 800 leaders from the 85 independent schools have received provisional licenses. QORLA expected that the number of teachers seeking provisional licenses would reach 3,500 by the end of 2009. Beginning September 2009 all teachers and leaders have been required to apply online for all professional licenses. Provisional licenses issued in 2009 and 2010 will be valid for three years. In subsequent years the validity period will be reduced to one year. Once teachers and leaders are provisionally licensed they are required to commence or continue working towards a full license. The NPSTSL envisage three levels of license for those with teaching and learning classroom responsibilities, namely entry level, proficient level and advanced skills level license. Two levels of license are identified for leaders, namely middle manager and senior manager level. To receive a full license teachers and leaders must go through an additional number of steps in the registration process. In May 2009, QORLA introduced portfolios as a tool for teachers and school leaders to demonstrate his/her competence against the NPSTSL, and as a tool for in-school attestation committees and the QORLA Principal-Operator attestation panel to assess the level of full license to be awarded to a teacher or leader.

References

General Secretariat for Development Planning. *Qatar National Vision 2030*. Doha, July 2008.

General Secretariat for Development Planning. *Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016. Towards Qatar National Vision 2030*. Doha, March 2011.

Ministry of Education. *National report on the development of education, 2001-2004*. Presented at the 47th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 2004.

Ministry of Education and Higher Education. *The development of education. National report of the State of Qatar*. Presented at the 48th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 2008.

Ministry of Education and Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science. *Development of education in Qatar 1990-1992*. Presented at the 43rd session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 1992.

Ministry of Education and Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science. *National report on the development of education in the State of Qatar*. Presented at the 45th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 1996.

Ministry of Education and Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science. *Education in the State of Qatar*. Presented at the 46th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 2001.



Supreme Education Council. *Knowledge and skills for the new millennium: Results from PISA 2006 for Qatar*. Doha, December 2007.

Supreme Education Council. *The TIMSS 2007 Study in Qatar: A summary of key findings and options for policy and further study*. Doha, December 2008.

Supreme Education Council. *Education for a New Era. 2009 Annual report*. Doha, 2009.

Supreme Education Council. Evaluation Institute. *Schools and schooling in Qatar 2005-06. A statistical overview of aspects of schools and schooling in Qatar*. Doha, May 2007.

Supreme Education Council. Evaluation Institute. *Schools and schooling in Qatar 2009-10 report. A statistical overview of aspects of schools and schooling in Qatar*. Doha, 2010.

UNESCO Doha Office and UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States. *UNESCO National Education Support Strategy (UNESS). The State of Qatar*. Doha, March 2008.

Web resources

Supreme Council for Family Affairs: <http://www.scfa.gov.qa/> [In Arabic. Last checked: August 2011.]

Supreme Education Council: <http://www.education.gov.qa/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

Qatar Foundation: <http://www.qf.org.qa/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

Qatar University: <http://www.qu.edu.qa/> [In Arabic and English. Last checked: August 2011.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>