

A proposal to prepare more teachers in the State of Qatar

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Introduction:

A quote from the McKinsey (2007) report on education reads “ The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.” All over the world, teaching is simultaneously recognized as a vitally important profession that offers great rewards but faces many challenges. Foremost among these challenges is the difficulty of recruiting and retaining qualified professionals to enter and remain in the field of education. Despite consistent evidence that supports the fact that highly qualified teachers impact the lives and educational opportunities of children in many different ways, it continues to be difficult to attract high caliber students to enter the teaching profession. Some of the reasons for this include more aggressive marketing by other disciplines, higher monetary rewards and greater social recognition of the value of other professions. In Qatar in particular, there are special challenges in recruiting Qatari nationals to work in schools, due to the variety of incentives offered by other careers. This proposal suggests ways in which to redress this situation, especially given the current need for highly qualified teachers in Qatari schools.

Statistics from the Education Institute indicate that public education in Qatar is in a state of change. As the public Ministry of Education schools transition into Independent Schools by 2012, it is estimated that 5,290 teachers will be needed to fill the job vacancies created by this merger. This estimate is partially based on a growth rate of 5% in the student population. This estimate may actually be low, since the merger between the Ministry and Independent schools happened sooner than planned. Although there many good educators who are trying to fill these vacancies, there continue to be many challenges that get in the way of meeting these needs. Qatar University’s College of Education is the only institution in Qatar that currently offers teacher preparation programs. Although the College offers a variety of options for practicing as well as prospective teachers, some of it’s challenges include:

1. The College of Education offers diploma programs in Early Childhood, Special Education, Primary and Secondary Education. These programs are designed for those people who already hold an undergraduate degree in any discipline but who now desire to enter the teaching profession. These programs typically last for a year and a half, including a semester long supervised internship. However, enrollment in these programs has not been up to capacity. In 2009, for example, only 59 students enrolled in the four diploma programs. This is despite concerted efforts by the College to actively recruit new students, such as running an extensive advertising campaign in 2007 and implementing a new tuition waiver policy in 2008 for all Qatari and non-Qatari students who were employed in Independent schools.
2. Wide ranging educational reforms in the Qatari educational system have led to an increased workload for many teachers, including extensive after school

- professional development requirements. This has led to the perception that the time and effort needed to be a successful teacher in the current environment is much greater than the compensation, which has in turn led to a lack of interest among Qataris to work in Independent schools
3. As Qatar has embarked upon an extensive program of modernization, job opportunities for female Qatari students have increased greatly, once again leading to a decreased interest in teaching as a profession.

Due to all of the above factors, the College of Education at Qatar University believes that it is imperative that an aggressive and well planned effort be made to attract more Qatari nationals into the teaching profession. At the College of Education in Qatar University, we believe that there are three major entities who have important roles to play in improving public education in the State of Qatar: the College itself, the Supreme Education Council and the Independent Schools themselves. It is therefore imperative that these three bodies work closely together and commit to a joint plan of action, if reform efforts are to be successful.

Specific proposals from The College of Education at Qatar University

Qatar University's College of Education was established in 1973, and it remains the only four year degree granting institution in Qatar to offer teacher preparation programs. The College has a proven record of preparing high quality teachers to serve in local schools, who continue to return to the College as the only local resource for teachers who are interested in equipping themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills essential to educating students in the 21st century. The College of Education adheres to the highest international standards in teacher preparation and is currently seeking accreditation from the IRTE (International Recognition in Teacher Education). All programs in the College are in alignment with the Qatar National Professional Standards for Teachers. The College is involved in teacher preparation at three different levels and proposes the following incentives to strengthen each of these efforts:

1. Incentives for students in the B.Ed in Primary Education program.

In the Fall of 2009, the College of Education started an undergraduate (B.Ed) program in Primary Education, in an effort to meet the needs for appropriately trained teachers in the state of Qatar. As reported by the Rand Corporation there is a widespread belief that students have not been receiving the kind of education in Qatar that would equip them to undertake the many high-demand, high-skill jobs that are opening up in the expanding economy. It is also important, as the Rand Corporation has suggested, to build the capacity of each citizen to enable Qatari nationals to take charge of the country's rapid growth. The College of Education at Qatar University is committed to preparing highly qualified and motivated primary education teachers who can take on leadership roles in Qatari Independent Schools during this critical period of reform. Through strategic marketing and community outreach efforts the College has already been successful in attracting high caliber students into its programs and seeks to expand these

efforts further through this proposed partnership, to meet its goal of graduating 100 Primary Education teachers each year.

Specific proposal: To ensure the success and quality of this new B.Ed program, the College has undertaken many diverse efforts. One effort has been to ensure that the program meets the highest international standards, through international vetting and accreditation. Another critical dimension of quality, is, we believe to try and attract high achieving, motivated and committed students into the program. We believe that an appropriate financial incentive could be a critical motivator. As such, we propose that the SEC offer Qatari nationals enrolled in the program a monthly stipend of QR 5000, during the four years of their studies (for non Qataris the stipend would be given during their last two years of studies. We believe that this stipend will enable us both to attract and retain students in our program, enabling us to meet our goal of graduating 100 qualified primary education teachers each year. A draft contract between the SEC and the students is attached, that defines the terms of sponsorship.

2. Incentives for students in the Diploma Programs

The Diploma programs in the College of Education are designed for prospective teachers who already hold an undergraduate degree but do not have training in the field of education. Although these are designed to meet current educational needs, enrollment in these programs has not been strong. The College of Education believes that the implementation of the following measures will increase enrollment in these programs, resulting in a greater supply of qualified teachers:

1. Current Qatari teachers in Independent schools who enroll as diploma students be given a full year's paid leave from teaching to attend the diploma programs. Non-Qatari students can be given a 50% teaching load reductions at their respective schools by the SEC.
2. Qatari nationals who are interested in teaching can be recruited to work in Independent schools, but required to spend at least one year in the diploma program.
3. Students who complete the diploma programs be given an appropriate raise in salary by the SEC.
4. The SEC will cover the tuition fees required for taking courses in English, which prepare students for the TOEFL and IELTS exams.
5. The SEC will implement a policy not to allow any new candidates who do not have any education preparation to undertake a teaching career unless they enroll in and successfully complete one of the diploma programs at QU. Prospective teachers who wish to teach in Independent schools but do not have adequate qualifications could be recruited as full time teachers only if agree to concurrently enroll in the Diploma programs.

3. Incentives for students in the Masters Programs

The College of Education offers two Masters degrees, one in Educational Leadership and the other in Special Education. Both of these programs are designed to equip teachers and administrators with the specialized knowledge necessary to fill key leadership roles in the Qatari educational system. However enrollment in these programs has been below capacity. During the 2009-10 academic year, 10 student enrolled in the Masters in Educational Leadership program, as compared to 14 students in the 08-09 academic year and 15 in the year before that. The Masters in Special Education program began in the 2008-09 academic year with 5 students; however no students enrolled during the current academic year. The College of Education therefore proposes that students nominated for enrollment in the Masters programs be given the benefit of free tuition. This could also be structured as a reward given to high performing teachers. Approximately 5-10 teachers could be nominated for admission to the Masters programs each year by the SEC.

Conclusions:

In conclusion, the College of Education believes that it is well equipped to fulfill the need for highly qualified teachers in Qatar. The College believes that creating partnerships with the SEC as well as the Independent Schools in Qatar will further support its continuing efforts in this regard. Supporting students enrolled in the undergraduate, post-graduate and Masters programs in the College of Education through the means described above will be greatly enhance the quality of the teaching workforce in Qatar for years to come.

References:

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December 10, 2009.