

Qatar's education reforms paying off

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Giving clear indications that Qatar's ongoing education reforms are making steady strides, though slow, the 2007 Qatar Comprehensive Educational Assessments (QCEA) have found that students who had attended Independent Schools the longest periods are performing better than their peers in Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

The QCEA programme assessed the performance of over 18,000 students in Grades 4 through 11, testing the four subjects.

Across all grades and subject matters, Cohorts I (the first batches of Independent schools) generally outperformed students in Cohort II and III, while both Cohorts I and II outperformed Cohort III, proving that the students attending independent schools for longer periods of time regularly outperformed students attending Independent schools for shorter periods.

The results released by the Evaluation Institute of Supreme Education Council (SEC), yesterday, also proved that the students generally scored better in languages, while showed less mastery in mathematics and science.

Comparing the 2007 outcome with the last two QCEA results, Adel Syed, director of the Evaluation Institute, Supreme Education Council (SEC) said: "Students that have been a part of the reform since its beginning continue to outperform their peers across all subjects."

To buttress his point, Adel Syed cited the indications that student cohorts appeared to perform better than the student Cohort just prior to them, across multiple subjects. He pointed out that the first batch of students of Independent Schools (cohort 1) consistently performed better than the students of cohort just prior to them. The 2005 Grade 6 student cohort who moved to Grade 7 in 2006 and to Grade 8 in 2007 demonstrated higher performance than the student cohort that attended Grade 7 in 2005 and Grade 8 in 2006", Adel Syed said.

"Over the first three years, the QCEA examinations have become increasingly challenging as we benchmark them to very demanding international standards. While we would like to see major improvements in the overall test scores, it will take time for the benefits of the reform to be fully apparent. In most countries these changes take the time span of one generation, close to twenty years. In Chile, it took 23 years to achieve the target. I am optimistic that we are making progress and that we will be able to reduce the average international required time", he said.

QCEA results are based on five performance levels. Level 5 is categorized as 'meets standards', level 4 is 'approaching standards', while levels 1, 2 and 3 are 'below standards'. The 2007 results showed that a majority of students in Qatar are in categories 1-3. The greatest number of students meeting or approaching standards is in English and Arabic.

Like any other performance assessments of Qatar's curriculum standards, the QCEA results have proved that across all grades and subjects, girls have outperformed boys. This is a trend that has persisted over the years and has been recently confirmed by the international studies in which Qatar has participated.

The QCEA examinations were administered in the Independent schools in Spring 2007. The examinations were administered and processed by the SEC's Evaluation Institute. Dr. Hamda Al Sualiti, Assistant director, Evaluation Institute was also present.