

## Too early to judge education reform, says official

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It is too early to judge the outcome of Qatar's education reform process which was launched only five years ago, according to Dr J Enrique Froemel (pictured), director of the Student Assessment Office at the Supreme Education Council.

In an exclusive interview with Al Sharq, Froemel said, there is great scope for the experiment to become a success given the determination of the Qatari leadership to establish a solid platform for achieving educational excellence. Qatar is providing one of the best educational environment in the world, as far as the infrastructure is concerned.

A huge budget has been allocated for the reform initiative and highly qualified people have been recruited to assist in efforts to achieve international standards.

Commenting on the recent education assessment report announced by the Qatar Comprehensive Educational Assessment (QCEA) which was exposed to strong criticism by parents and community members, Froemel said it would be inappropriate to judge Qatar's educational initiative at its early stages.

The achievements might be unforeseen for an ordinary observer at the moment for it requires minimum 7 to 10 years to achieve the targeted goals. But by having a close look on the assessment report it can be easily discovered that results of the students who have stayed longer in Independent Schools are relatively better.

However, it cannot be said that parents have lost confidence in the initiative but they were just disappointed for not getting fast achievements.

The performance of female students was relatively better compared to male students. Girls being better is not a problem but corrective measures are required to enhance the level of the male students. The number of students becoming addicts to video and electronic games in Qatar is one of the highest in the world, he added.

Increasing the number of trained teachers and motivating students, particularly males, can contribute to correcting the prevailing situation.

Defending the assessment system -QCEA- he said that it was an effective and unavoidable way of assessing the education reforms in the country.

As for the step taken by the Supreme Education Council by cancelling the permit of an Independent School operator, Froemel said such measures would become necessary if the operators fail to fulfill their duties. "Being independent would not mean necessarily that there would not be accountability," he added.

Unlike the traditional system, the new educational system requires a harmonic and comprehensive interaction among school operators, teachers, families and the entire society to achieve its goals.