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Features of Qatari Teachers' Contracts

The Education Institute is entrusted with the role of providing continuous support to all elements of the newly established Independent Schools. Recruiting qualified teachers, particularly nationals, for these schools remains among the highest priorities.

In May 2005, the Education Institute issued a framework of bylaws and policies regulating the compensation plan for Qatari staff (teachers and administrators) working in the Independent Schools. Non-Qatari staff is subject to different regulations. "Education for a New Era" met officials from the Independent Schools Office (ISO) to discuss the policies.

Dr. Jamal Al-Ammari, Educational Consultant at ISO, stated that the bylaws were established to encourage Qatari teachers to join Independent Schools. The bylaws establish a minimum salary scale for Qatari teachers and allow Operators to determine the ceiling in order to attract the most qualified nationals and provide them with necessary professional development.

He also added that the Education Institute has developed a legal framework within which contracts are written, which guarantees the rights of the Independent School employees. The ISO reviews all the contracts to ensure consistency with the framework.

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Dr. Al-Ammari concluded by advising those employees whose contracts were signed prior to the issuance of the bylaws to review their contracts to ensure that the bylaws framework covers them. When asked about the contract period,

Mr. Al-Saadi, school liaison officer at ISO, said that most job contracts are limited to one year, which is beneficial to both parties. "This provides the Operator with the opportunity to evaluate the employee's performance, and then decide on whether to renew the contract at

the end of the academic year. The employee, on the other hand, may decide to terminate the contract for any possible reason in that period of time. Usually, all contracts are renewable as long as both parties approve them. Contracts are legally binding documents so we advise all teachers to seek legal advice to be aware of their rights and the terms of their contracts," he said.

On the issue of teachers' job descriptions and teaching load, Mr. Al-Saadi elaborated that an Operator determines job descriptions for all positions in the school in the education plan they submit to the SEC. However, by necessity, the teaching load is usually determined after the school opens and varies from one school to another according to each school's needs. But in any case the load shouldn't be more than 70 percent of the school day.

With respect to determining teachers' duties prior to signing contracts, Mr. Al-Saadi advised teachers to ask the Operators for job descriptions before signing the contracts. The job description can be included in the contract. For instance, an Arabic Language teacher can pre-determine the teaching load by specifying the number of classes, the grades and level they will teach. In addition, the teacher might be asked to develop lesson

plans, mark exam papers and handle some administrative or supervisory duties. There are also certain subjects that require a heavy teaching load – it all depends on the nature of the subjects.

Regarding teacher qualifications, Mr. Al-Saadi responded that all teachers should hold the necessary qualification to be eligible for employment. The ISO also investigates all complaints brought to its attention from parents, Boards of Trustees or through the information center at the Education Institute. If a complaint is made, the ISO makes sure that the concerned Operator provides information to ensure that the teacher has the right credentials to qualify him/her to teach the subject in a particular grade.

"For example, we previously identified some cases in the first batch of the Independent Schools. We notified the concerned schools immediately and they in turn took the corrective measures to resolve the issue. We reviewed all of the teachers' contracts in the second batch of Independent Schools to ensure consistency with the framework of bylaws."

Such bylaws and procedures are important and protect the rights of both teachers and schools.

