



The ABCs Of Assessment

What's Next

QCEA Is Only One of Qatar's Many New Evaluation Tools

Qatari students in March 2006 underwent a new round of tests -- both domestic and international -- to monitor their abilities in a variety of subjects. It is the first time Qatar participated in a number of the international screenings, and the results, when released, will allow students' performance to be compared to their peers across the globe. Here's a brief description of what's been done:

QCEA: This is largest, most comprehensive test given, on a yearly basis, to the 80,000-plus students attending public and private Arabic schools in Qatar. The 2006 exam largely followed the format and substance of the 2005 exam, although questions were adjusted to be more aligned with the SEC curriculum standards and for cultural sensitivity. The areas tested remained the same as last year -- English, Arabic, math and science -- and for the first time the results will be comparable year-on-year. One change: those schools that teach science and math in English were able to test

their students in that language; previously, all science and math questions were in Arabic.

PISA: The Programme for International Student Assessment tested around 8,500 students -- those in public and private Arabic schools, as well as international and community schools -- aged 15 (born during the year 1990). PISA is administered to students worldwide every three years, and tests students in science, reading, and math. The emphasis of the exam shifts every three years, and for 2006 the focus has been placed on science, meaning that about 70% of questions are related to that area. The exam takes two hours, is in English or Arabic, and questions are based on general competency rather than linked to a specific curriculum. Students from some 60 countries will take the exam in 2006, and the results are expected to be made public by the end of 2006.

PIRLS: The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, or PIRLS, is administered to fourth graders and, as its name indicates, assesses

reading literacy in students' native language. The test takes about 80 minutes, and is given internationally every five years. Some 40 countries are participating in PIRLS this year. In Qatar, a total of 7,500 fourth graders from some 120 MoE, Independent and private Arabic schools participated in the study. The international comparative report is expected to be released in late 2007.

TIMSS: Qatar during March ran a field test for TIMSS, or Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, to prepare the ground for 2007, when the main study will be conducted. TIMSS is administered every four years, and in Qatar fourth and eighth graders will take the test. For the field test, a sample of 25 schools and about 1,500 students participated for each grade. The test session lasts 70 minutes for fourth graders and 90 minutes for eighth graders, and covers math and science topics. Some 60 countries will take part in TIMSS 2007, including more than a dozen Arab countries. The results are expected to be released in December 2008.