



## SEC creates space for open discussion on the blog

Chatting online is a great way of sharing ideas, responding to events and discussing new possibilities. Now there is an interactive way for everyone involved in the education reform – parents, teachers, students and other interested parties to share their ideas and responses.

The new SEC blog provides a great opportunity for people to freely express their opinions about the developments taking place in Independent Schools.

Through the blog, comments and responses can be made about the

latest happenings in *Education for a New Era*. Some blogs are generally regarded as an Internet monologue but our blog provides the opportunity for dialogue in a forum style. This provides the transparency and opportunity for continuous feedback that the SEC desires. The content will focus on education reform issues in general and the policies and procedures taken by the SEC in particular.

Any visitor to the blog can post comments. Users often choose nicknames, as they do not need to register their real names.

***Some of the recent issues posted on the blog for discussion include:***

- *Study opportunities provided by the Higher Education Institute*
- *Individualized student reports*
- *An SEC symposium on technology in education*
- *Opening of 18 Independent Schools in 2007-08*
- *Schools and schooling in Qatar*
- *New rules for operators*
- *New personnel policies*

### Teacher's freedom and creativity

A recent blog posting concerned the freedom of teachers in relation to consideration of individual needs, the content of the curricula and encouraging creativity in the classrooms. Teacher Eisa Hassan Al Sheikh wrote a series of op-eds (opinion editorials) about this issue, revealing his own experience as a teacher who moved from a Ministry of Education school into Independent School. He began by saying:

"The establishment of the Independent Schools found a great deal of dispute and discussion, as we are conservative by nature; we found it difficult to accept new ideas easily. Rather, we preferred to keep some old systems results - guaranteed, in spite of the bad education system conditions in the Arab world in the past years concerning its outputs."

This revealed the large ignorance in the Arab World in the past few years among generations that were nurtured for learning through memorization, and information-injection through books and private lessons - all for the sake of the job which Arab families desperately seek, he said.

One reader commented on the importance of the *Education for A New Era* initiative:

"Frankly speaking, the experience of education in the Independent Schools is both (a) pioneer (process) and unique. I want to assure all worried from the multiplicity of curriculum in the Independent Schools that the national standards are the same and all schools stick to them. However different the teaching methods are, all

students in the same grade share the same skills. (There is) no need to fear, because whoever sticks to their place, will never advance.

A female teacher said that she enjoys the selection of content of the curriculum:

"As a teacher in one of the Independent Schools I enjoy creativity and joy in the selection of content of the curriculum which is suitable for the student's grade."

The same teacher replied to another post: "We cannot take student opinion into consideration because students are the recipients. And it is hard to let the receivers select their own curriculum. What should be the teacher's role then?"

But another teacher calling himself "a tired teacher" objected to the previous posts and asked SEC to provide textbooks instead: "God helps us with all these bright terms." He continued: "Why doesn't the SEC provide textbooks aligned with the standards. As foreign countries put standards, they should have textbooks to cope with, especially for science. Please set the teachers free from curriculum preparation, and students from these papers. Buy textbooks."

Another teacher replied with an entirely different point of view. He said that the professional development he received had qualified him for curriculum preparation:

"This is my third year in the Independent Schools and I am proud to be one of the first generation of Independent School teachers who were perfectly prepared. Secondly, curriculum preparation requires many things of teachers for math, as they

should be fluent in English and highly competent, and willing to develop curriculum." He has discovered something new during each of the three years he has been developing the curriculum, he said. "It is difficult yes. But we were lucky as we took training programs right from the curriculum experts."

Another teacher was amazed at the discontent of some teachers regarding the efforts which they have to exert to improve their work. "Every experiment needs at least 10 years to judge whether it is successful or not. The freedom of teachers is one of the principles which the *Education for A New Era* initiative was keen to prove. This freedom is given to teachers who really know their duties.

One parent joined the discussion to discuss the advantages of teacher's freedom in preparing the curriculum. "In spite (of the fact) that the process is not easy for teachers, it is rather useful and ever new for both students and teachers. I want to tell our teachers that life today differs from our past, and the changing of the curriculum is very important to be aligned with the progress in the right way, with the help of our respected educators."

The dynamic discussion continues. All sides are being heard. People are meeting and joining on the SEC Internet blog. They are shaping their views and visions. The SEC blog represents one of the important channels provided by the SEC website giving all those interested and involved in *Education for A New Era* the opportunity to discuss related issues.

To join the discussion please visit:  
[www.education.qa](http://www.education.qa)

