Interview with an Author

Prof. Hissa Mohammed Sadiq

Former Dean of the College of Education and Member of the Board of Trustees at Qatar University

On her book: "Education Policies in the State of Qatar: From Inception to Education Reform 2002" recently published by Qatar University Press



Understanding the history of educational policies provides an essential gateway to envisioning the future of education and guiding its development. In this interview, we speak with Professor Hissa Mohammed Sadiq, former Dean of the College of Education and Member of the Board of Trustees at Qatar University, about her book, which documents the evolution of educational policies in the State of Qatar and offers an analytical perspective on their challenges and future directions.

To begin, Prof. Hissa, how would you introduce yourself to our readers, and what key milestones have shaped your academic journey and research interests in education?

I currently serve as a Professor Emerita at Qatar University and previously had the privilege of serving as Dean of the College of Education, an experience that profoundly shaped my understanding of educational issues and challenges. I am also honored to serve as a member of Qatar University's Board of Trustees and the National Human Rights Committee, roles that have provided valuable opportunities to contribute to society and broader human development.

My research interests have focused on educational leadership, school administration, educational reform, and the professional development of educators. Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to receive several research grants from Qatar University and the Qatar National Research Fund. I have also published numerous scholarly works and participated in conferences, seminars, and workshops dedicated to improving and advancing education. One of the milestones I particularly value was receiving the State Encouragement Award in Education in 2005, in recognition of my contributions to the field of education. This recognition further strengthened my conviction that investing in people and improving the quality of education constitute the foundation of sustainable progress.

What motivated you to write this book, and why did you consider documenting educational policies in Qatar an academic and research necessity?

The motivation for this work arose while teaching the "Educational Policies" course in the Master of Educational Leadership program at Qatar University's College of Education. During course preparation, I noted the absence of a specialized reference text, as teaching relied on selected materials aligned with learning outcomes.

Although existing literature addresses educational policy broadly, there was no comprehensive source documenting the evolution of educational policies in Qatar within their historical and social contexts. This gap prompted the compilation of available materials into a scholarly reference to support graduate students, researchers, academics, and others interested in understanding the development of education in Qatar.

What are the key messages this book seeks to convey regarding the understanding and development of educational policies in Qatar?

The book aims to document the evolution of educational policies in Qatar and analyze the factors that shaped them, based on the belief that envisioning the future of education begins with a thoughtful reading of its history and a clear understanding of both its successes and its challenges.

It also emphasizes that effective educational policies are not built upon idealized models or ready-made solutions; rather, their success depends on their relevance to the societal context and their capacity to be translated into actionable plans and practices subject to continuous evaluation.

Perhaps the book's most important message is that educational reform should be grounded in clear policy directions and overarching educational visions, with those policies undergoing regular review based on evidence and scientific data rather than individual preferences or assumptions.

Drawing on this historical analysis, what were the most significant factors that shaped educational policies in Qatar?

The factors influencing educational policy in Qatar have varied across different historical periods. During the era of the traditional kuttab schools, social and economic factors played the dominant role, as educational opportunities were closely tied to families' economic circumstances and social standing, as well as prevailing gender norms.

With the emergence of formal education in the 1950s, three major influences became apparent: governmental priorities emphasizing the preservation of religious and cultural identity; political developments across the Arab world, which affected curricula and educational orientations; and the indirect influence of British presence and the oil industry, both of which contributed to the expansion of vocational education and the preparation of a national workforce responsive to labor market needs.

Following independence, political stability and economic growth facilitated the development of educational legislation and the issuance of the country's first written education policy in 1982. This period witnessed a strong emphasis on investing in human capital, expanding higher education, and supporting scholarship opportunities abroad. As concerns emerged regarding the quality of educational outcomes and their alignment with labor market demands, comprehensive evaluations of the education system were undertaken. A new education policy was introduced in 2001, followed by the launch of the landmark "Education for a New Era" initiative

in 2002, which represented the most significant educational reform effort in Qatar's history. While the initiative achieved notable successes, it also underscored the continuing need for systematic review and evaluation to ensure sustainable improvement.

In light of your analysis of previous educational policies, what are the book's key recommendations for improving student learning and enhancing educational quality?

The book recommends reviewing several procedural policies affecting student learning across three principal areas.

First, at the level of educational leadership, the book calls for refining policies governing the selection of school principals through more comprehensive and transparent criteria, strengthening leadership preparation and professional development programs, reconsidering the scope of principals' authority by granting balanced autonomy and flexibility, improving performance evaluation mechanisms through realistic indicators, and introducing incentive systems that encourage innovation and educational initiatives.

Second, at the level of teachers, the book highlights the importance of revisiting admission policies for teacher preparation programs, strengthening pre-service preparation and assessment, enhancing the effectiveness of in-service professional development, promoting the meaningful integration of technology and artificial intelligence in education, and improving teacher evaluation through diversified assessment tools, qualified evaluators, and the effective use of evaluation data to support professional growth.

Third, at the curriculum level, the book emphasizes translating the competencies outlined in the National Curriculum Framework—such as critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry skills—into concrete teaching practices, learning activities, and assessment methods. It also advocates for stronger collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the College of Education to prepare teachers capable of cultivating these competencies and improving student learning outcomes.

In your view, how can Qatar's education system further develop its curricula and programs to meet future needs and labor market demands?

Qatar's education system is among the leading systems in the Arab region; however, continuous research and development are still essential to align education with national goals of economic diversification and a knowledge-based society. Key priorities include:

- Strengthening early childhood education programs due to their critical role in cognitive development and maximizing children's potential from an early age.
- Enhancing students' motivation to learn and raising awareness of their value as national assets contributing to national development.
- Expanding support for gifted and high-ability students through specialized schools and targeted programs to ensure effective investment in exceptional talent.
- Diversifying educational pathways to accommodate students' different abilities, interests, and aspirations.
- Introducing innovative and flexible educational models that go beyond traditional approaches, particularly for high-achieving and gifted learners.
- Promoting values of belonging, civic responsibility, and collective commitment, so education contributes to national development rather than being limited to employment outcomes.

In closing, what does this book contribute to Qatari and Arab scholarship, and how do you reflect on the experience of publishing it with Qatar University Press?

This book documents an important yet underexplored aspect of Qatar's educational history, focusing on the evolution of educational policies and the factors shaping them. It is intended as a reference for researchers, graduate students, and policymakers, while also contributing to comparative studies in the Arab world by highlighting the distinctive features and transformations of Qatar's educational experience.

Publishing this work with Qatar University Press has been both meaningful and rewarding, given its role in supporting rigorous scholarship and disseminating specialized knowledge. The Press helps document national academic expertise according to high publishing standards, and it is hoped that such efforts will continue to encourage scholars to turn their research into publications that enrich Qatari and Arab intellectual life and strengthen scholarly presence.