



Annual symposium to discuss education and cultural identity in a global era



التعليم والهوية الثقافية في زمن العولمة
EDUCATION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY
IN A GLOBAL ERA

الملتقى السنوي للمجلس الأعلى للتعليم ٢٠٠٩
Supreme Education Council Annual Symposium 2009



How do we ensure that our children have the same understanding and appreciation of their heritage as their parents and grandparents have? Is globalization affecting our cultural identity? What role can the schools play in strengthening our values, culture, and language?

These issues will be discussed at the Supreme Education Council's Annual Symposium entitled Education and Cultural Identity in a Global Era on March 16, 2009. Once a year, parents, teachers, principals, other

educators and Qatari officials gather to mark the anniversary of the reform and hear renowned scholars and practitioners from the region and the world speak on key topics in education. This annual event that has become an important tradition in Qatar, also provides a chance to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and look ahead to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Since the launch of **Education for a New Era**, topics such as technology in education, parental involvement, teaching creativity and the role of international assessments have all been addressed.

This year, the symposium will deal with a topic at the heart of **Education for a New Era**: maintaining our children's cultural identity while simultaneously preparing them to compete in a globalized economy. As Qatar seeks to build a world class education system by incorporating the best education practices from around the world, how can we best maintain and stay true to the values and traditions that make us unique as a country? From its inception, **Education for a New Era** has been and will continue to be a purely Qatari reform both in principle and

practice. The emphasis on Arabic and Islamic values and culture has always been a priority for our leaders as they continue to develop one of the best education systems in the world.

But as the Internet and other technologies bring the world closer together, our young students are increasingly susceptible to influences from outside of Qatar and the Middle East. While being more connected to the outside world helps us learn and grow as individuals and as a nation, teachers, parents and school operators are understandably concerned about preserving our traditions and our heritage.

In addition to our families and other public institutions, our schools play a critical role in educating our young people and helping them understand and value their culture, religion, language.

“As a nation, we are extremely proud of our strong national and cultural identity,” said Dr. Nawal Al Sheikh, Communications Manager at the SEC. “As we continue to work toward our goal of developing an education system that meets the needs of all of our students, we must continue to do so with an eye toward maintaining our heritage, tradition and values. This symposium gives us an opportunity to hear from a world-class scholar on this important topic.”

The featured speaker at this year's symposium, Prof. Yasir

Suleiman, the Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Professor of Modern Arabic Studies at the University of Cambridge in England, is very familiar with Qatar and its education reform efforts. As a leading international scholar of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies, Prof. Suleiman has led many accreditation committees in ministries of higher education throughout the Arab World. In Qatar, he helped the Education Institute write the Arabic curriculum standards.

He is also an international expert on education and cultural identity and has specific, first-hand experience with the education reform effort here in Qatar that is balanced by his exposure to educational systems around the world. His research covers the cultural politics of the Middle East with special reference to identity, conflict, diaspora studies and modernization in so far as these issues relate to language, modern Arabic literature, translation studies and memory. He also conducts research on Arabic grammatical theory and the Arabic intellectual tradition in the pre-modern period. Professor Suleiman is author of several books and numerous articles, and has lectured internationally on language policy and Arabic linguistics including. Some of his publications include:

- A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East (2004)
- The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology (2003).

“Education for a New Era is a pioneering project, which combines educational innovation with a deep-rooted commitment to the culture and heritage of Qatar as both an Arab and Islamic country that is proud of its religious values, language and history,” said Prof. Suleiman. “The commitment of so many people in Qatar to turn **Education for a New Era** into a reality is a testimony to the vitality of Qatari culture and to the high aspirations of its guardians.”

The symposium will also feature presentations by Ms. Salwa Al Sada, the Arabic Coordinator at Al Wakra Secondary Independent School for Girls and Mr. Mohammed Taymour, the Academic Manager at Al Yarmouk Preparatory Independent School for Boys, citing examples of how the schools have developed best practices in integrating language, values, religion, and traditions into the curriculum and school experience.

The symposium will take place on Monday, March 16, 2009 at the Four Seasons Hotel from 9am.

