

***Language, culture, education in a Qatari
English classroom – exploring areas of
dialogue and tension in the diverse
environment of the Academic Bridge
Program, Education City, Doha, Qatar.***

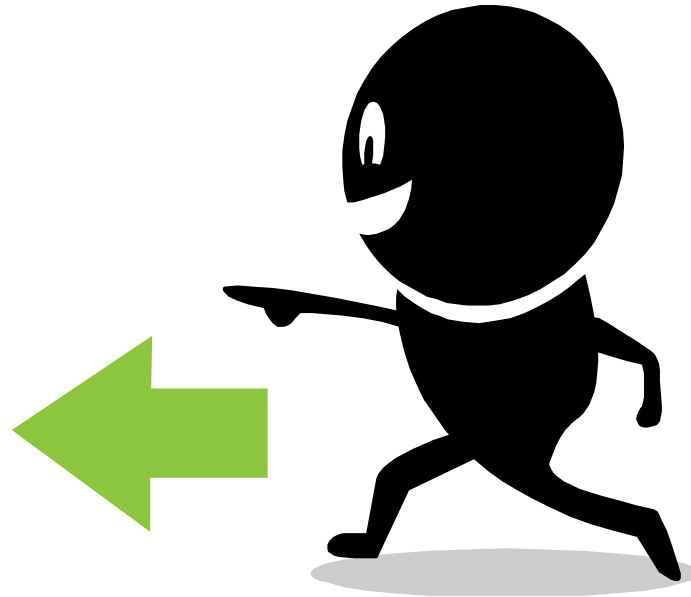
GU CULP Faculty Seminar,

22nd Sep, 2011.

Magdalena Rostron

Main points

1. Introduction
2. Language issues
3. Culture issues
4. Education issues
5. Areas of dialogue
6. Areas of tension
7. Strands of subversiveness
8. Conclusions?



Introduction

My teaching biography (frustrated fascination)

Story of my research (starting big...)

Proposed PhD work

Fundamental questions

Frustrated fascination

$$-20 = -20$$

$$16 - 36 = 25 - 45$$

$$16 - 36 + 81/4 = 25 - 45 + 81/4$$

$$(4 - 9/2)^2 = (5 - 9/2)^2$$

$$4 - 9/2 = 5 - 9/2$$

$$4 = 5$$

Starting big...

- **Initial reactions to a new culture – generalisations, making sense of shock, putting order into chaos**
- Large culture constructs (anonymous text + Hofstede, Triandis, Jandt, Hall, etc.): *collectivism, honour-shame, polychronic use of time, high power distance (teacher centred-education), uncertainty avoidance (memorisation), reproductive approach to education, etc.*
- ***RESULT => negative inertia***



*Resource 9*THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISLAMIC AND
WESTERN VALUES IN THE CLASSROOM⁹

Sometimes I'm convinced that I've been teaching English in this little Moslem town too long for my own good.

The whole social structure of this country tends to undermine the goals of the Western scholar. Logical thought processes, on which most Western teachers rely instinctively, have just never been taught here. Deductive reasoning is unheard of. The teacher is thought of only as a lecturer and a recorder; what he teaches is not original; it has been true from the beginning of time and known since the time of Mohammed. The teacher has made no discoveries of his own and will make none; but, as he has been fortunate enough to have been taught, he is in turn privileged to re-teach what he has learned. As truth is unchanging, there is nothing to discuss or question. The teaching process is a continuation of the oral tradition; what has been learned in the past is now transmitted verbatim to the student who writes it down and then memorizes it. This method, however, is more than tradition: it is dictated by the nature of the cosmos and can only be the repetition of what Allah revealed to Mohammed, the last and greatest of Allah's prophets. There is no other way of knowing. As original knowledge does not exist, the most reliable way to learn is through the same medium and by the same technique that knowledge has been acquired in the past.

Accordingly, there is no discussion and no personal opinion in the Moslem classroom. The teacher either reads to the students from his notes, or from a book, and they copy in their notebooks what is read to them. Sometimes a student is substituted for the teacher and he reads to the boys. No papers of any kind are ever written, and there is no questioning the teacher. To these people there is only one truth: the idea that two "experts" might interpret the same facts in opposite ways is inconceivable to them. An American teacher once "proved" to his class that 1 equalled 2. No one objected, and the students all wrote the proof down in their notebooks. The teacher had shown it to them; therefore, it must be true. There is no distrusting the conveyor of the source of truth.

In this society it is the form, and not the content, that is important, and herein lies the most significant problem that the Western teacher has to deal with. In the Moslem scale of values it is not so important that a student cannot know seventeen subjects at

⁹ Source unknown, but this is an authentic letter from an American who had spent approximately two years in an Arab country.

Shift of perspective: proposed research

Experiencing education as a cultural other: Qatari students on an English preparatory course for western universities

Big issues and wider context reflected in local students' personal experience of western education:

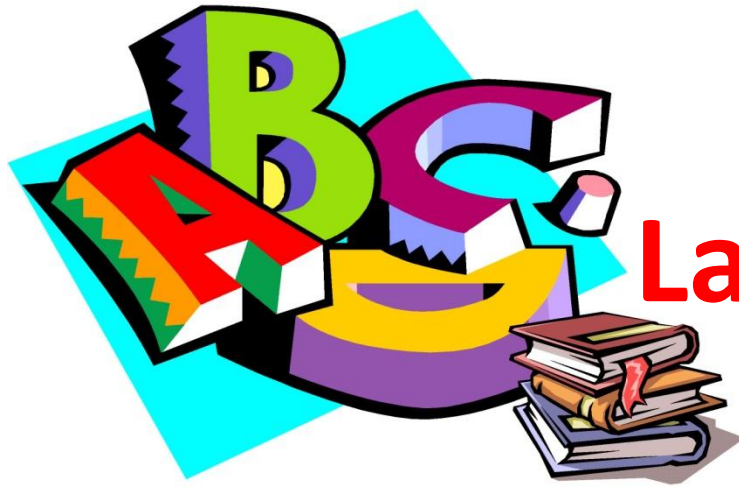
A qualitative, ethnographic study into Qatari students' educational experiences in the English composition course in the ABP (an American-run and – accredited institution preparing non-western students for entry into English-medium universities)

Questions

What happens to my Qatari students during their year of studying English in the ABP?

1. Nature and meaning of Qatari students' educational experience in the English course I teach here
2. Main formative aspects of that experience
3. How can it be contextualised within the operational framework of EC/QF - dialogue/tension?
4. Most appropriate methodology to maximise dialogue and minimize tension (educational/cultural/social/personal)

CONTEXT / BACKGROUND



Language



Education

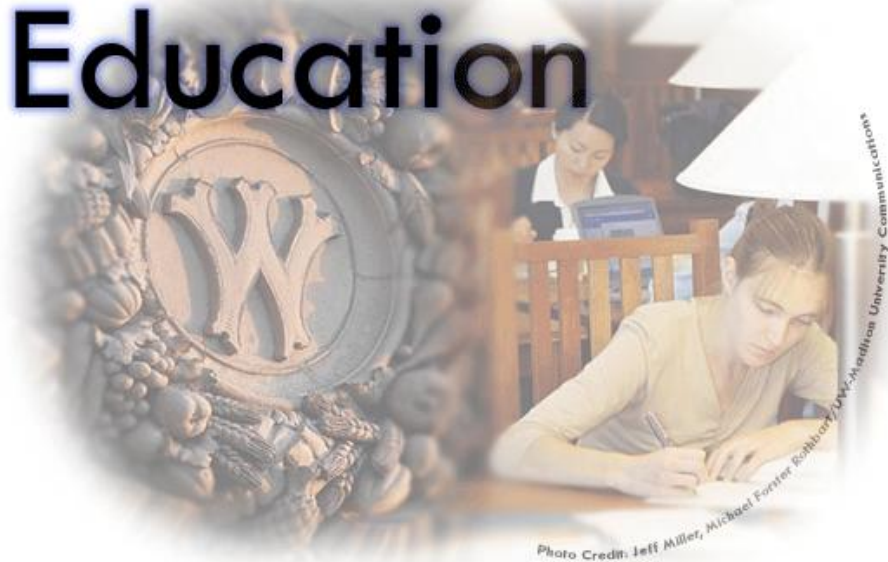


Photo Credit: Jeff Miller, Michael Forster, Robbory, WU-Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, University Communications



Culture

Language issues

- Paradigms of teaching English in the ABP
- English replacing Arabic as an academic language?

English

Academic Vocabulary and
Grammar

Academic Word Lists



English vs. Arabic

Questionnaire:

- *“I find English easier to deliver my thoughts.”*
- *“Writing in English is fun and easier than Arabic.”*
- *“I prefer **righting** in English more than Arabic.”*

Essays:

- **“The education for Arabic language lost its power because parents take their children to English schools thus Arabic is not used much...”**
- *“Arab students who speak English are considered very intelligent and educated people.”*

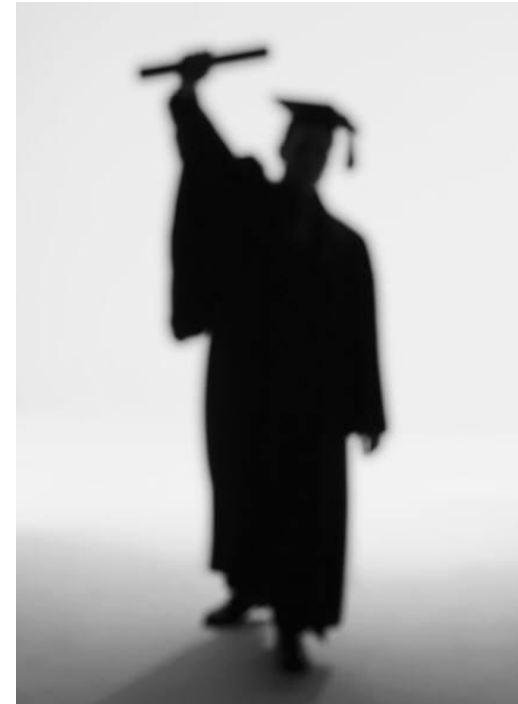
Culture issues

- Historical/social background
- Modernisation: opening up to new ideas, views, lifestyles...
- Westernisation?



Education issues

- Local educational traditions
- School system reform
- American/western education



GULF TIMES

30 schools feted for excellent performance

Publish Date: Tuesday, 15 March, 2011, at 12:55 PM Doha Time

Thirty schools across the country have been honoured by the Supreme Education Council as best performing schools under the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA 2009).

The tests aim at assessing how well students aged 15 are prepared to meet the challenges of today’s societies.

A total of 9,078 15-year-old students from 153 schools comprising independent, international, private Arabic and community schools in Qatar took the PISA 2009.



Overall, the Al Khor International School (Indian stream) received the first prize with 603 marks while the International School of Chouaiefat came in second with 564 marks. Al



SEC Evaluation Institute director Dr Hamda al-Sulaiti presents awards to school representatives

Bayan Preparatory School for Girls was honoured for achieving the highest score among all independent and private Arabic schools in Qatar.

PISA tests are conducted every three years by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as well as a number of

partner countries and are designed to evaluate the literacy skills of 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science.

For PISA 2009, the main focus was on reading literacy.

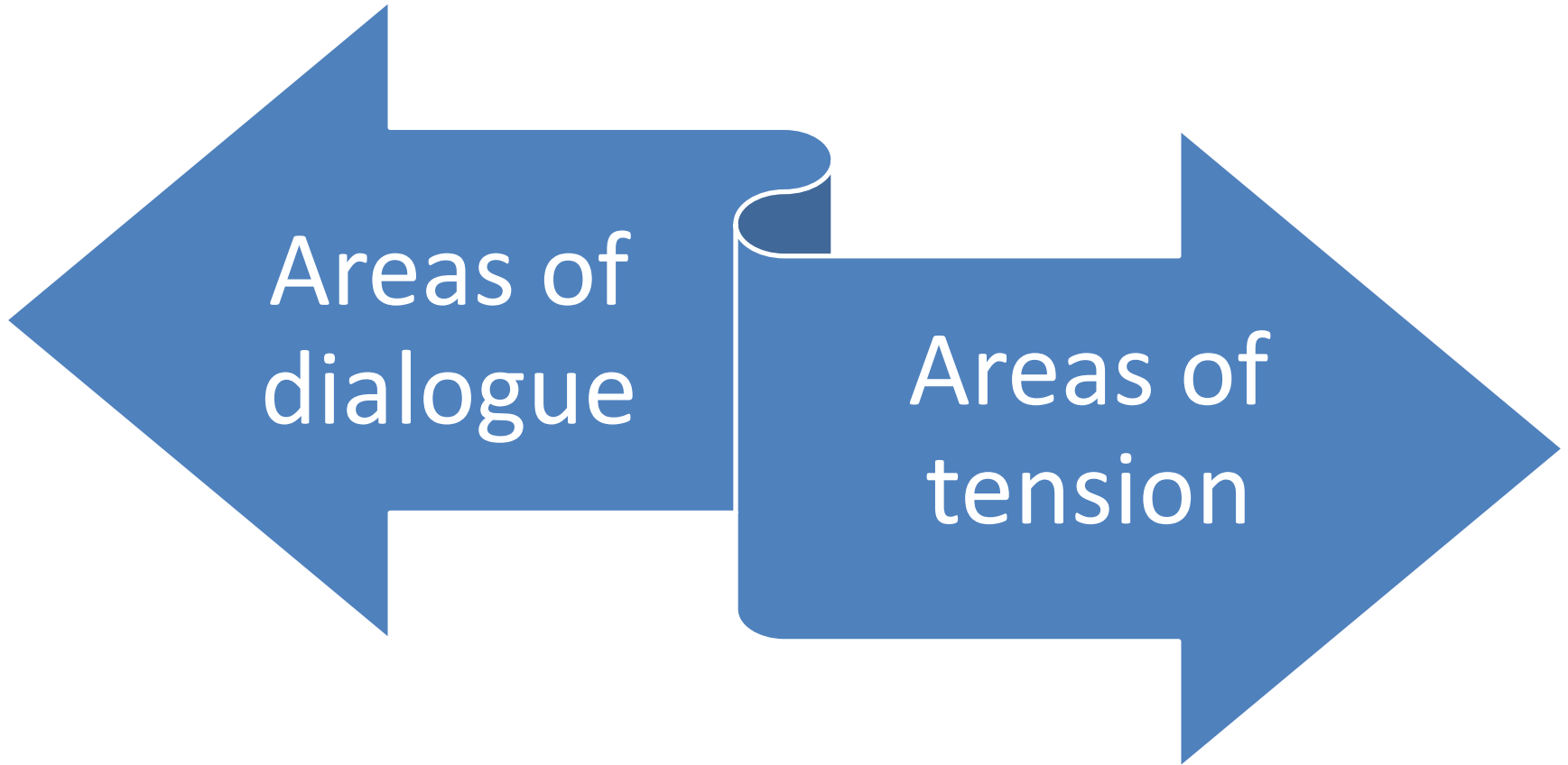
Qatar was among the 67 countries that participated in the PISA 2009. The country first participated in 2006, with 7,404 students from around 135 schools being assessed.

The comparison of the PISA 2006 and 2009 results will present Qatar with an external validation of the impact of its educational reform efforts.

Other schools that were ranked among the top 10 and obtained scores comparable to those achieved by the OECD countries include Doha College, DPS Modern Indian School, Qatar Academy, The American School of Doha, Park House English School, Birla Public School, Qatar International School and Al Bayan Preparatory School for Girls.

The other achieving schools are: The Cambridge International School, Doha Modern Indian, Al Khor International School (British stream), Dukhan English School, Debakey High School for Health, Qatar Canadian School, MES Indian School, Ideal Indian School for Girls, Sudanese Community Schools, Al Arqam Academy, Gulf English School, Philippine School of Doha, Jordanian School, Tunisian School, Lebanese School, Middle East International, Al Andalus Independent School, Ideal Indian School for Boys, Egyptian Languages School, and American Academy.

Opposing forces



MACRO-DIALOGUE

**QF and western
universities**

**Qatar Foundation and
the world**

Qatar and the world



الكويتية
Qatar Foundation



ISLAMIC FINANCE

Instilling confidence in inv
Amidst the global recession, Islamic
ever more attractive to weakened e

QATAR

From Qatar to the world

Qatar's wealth from the oil and gas sector is being reinvested into society for sustainable development and for the generations to come

Qatar is converting its wealth from natural resources into other, more lasting kinds of riches: education, humanitarian aid and health. In other words, Qatar is establishing the hallmarks of sustainable development.

The country is becoming a casebook study of how an emerging market can speed up its economic growth and social development whilst preserving its history, traditions and culture. And much of this is due to the vision of H H The Emir Sheikh

In 2002, Qatar Foundation officially inaugurated Education City. The expansive project is a 1,000-hectare campus on the outskirts of Doha, anchored by seven US universities as well as the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies. This regional centre of educational excellence affords Qataris and international students access to a world-class education, thereby preparing them for employment in the private sector – a sector primarily dominated today by expatriates due to the heretofore

lutions not achieved by traditional approaches alone. WISE asserts that the desire to innovate is, in fact, an innate human need to shape and improve our environment."

A stalwart proponent of development, Sheikha Mozah regularly represents her country at international conferences and speaks at public events. Most recently, she attended the 21 September Millennium Development Goals summit in New York, where she explained her motivation: "My passion is

PHOTO CREDIT: MR. MAHER ATTAR - HHOPL

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/12/punching_above_its_weight

Punching Above Its Weight

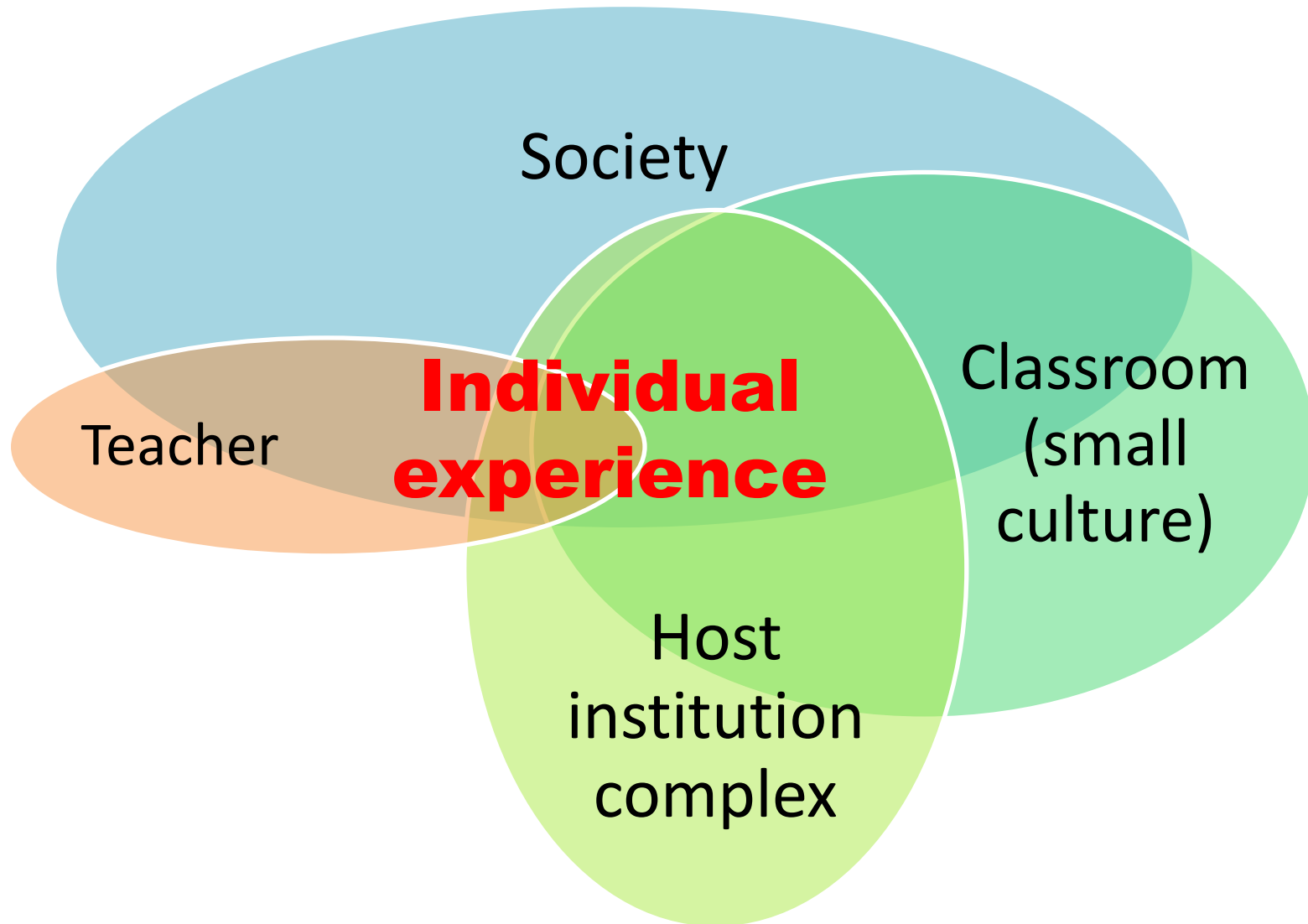
Could tiny Qatar send ground forces to Libya?

BY DAVID B. ROBERTS | APRIL 12, 2011



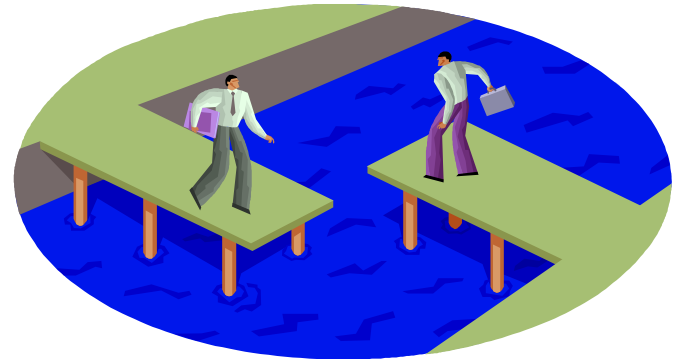
In recent years, Qatar has become something of a mecca for international conferences, attracting a wide and diverse variety of global events to the small Arab state. It is therefore not surprising that this week, shortly before both the Pipeline Integrity Management Forum and the Undergro Infrastructure and Deep Foundations Conference, the Libya contact group -- the gangle of count and international entities set up to provide "political direction" for the war effort -- will meet in to discuss the evolving confrontation.

Micro-dialogue



Areas of tension

- **Socio-cultural** (e.g., co-education, values)
- **Institutional** (procedures, styles of bureaucracy)
- **Educational** (liberal arts, academic freedom, academic integrity, student motivation)
- **Methodological** (teaching/learning strategies and approaches)
- **Personal** (all of the above)



Strands of subversiveness

- Goals vs. effects
- Theory vs. practice
- “THINK” campaign
- Liberal arts vs. pragmatic educational choices
- Maintenance/development vs. culture of acquisition and disposal
- Arabic vs. English
- ?
- *My teaching/research biography (big => small)*
- *My students' educational experience*



LOGIN

Survey: Western education erodes Qatari culture Sunday, 15 May 2011 02:2

DOHA: Western education provided through the Qatar Foundation would lead to influence the Qatari culture says a survey.

A 64 percent of respondents of a survey conducted among the readers of the Qatar Foundation's Telegraph have said that a western education will water down Qatari culture.

While 36 percent of readers in response to this survey have said that the western, predominantly American education, would not help the country's culture.

A western education provided through the universities and educational institutes under Qatar Foundation prepares students for a good career in an increasingly demanding world.

But to find how it could give students education with international standard and teach them the Qatari culture an values was one of the objective of the survey.

The survey was designed to find whether there is a more of a focus on western culture rather than Qatari culture has Qatar Foundation found the right balance in giving its students an international education.

Some faculty members of the educational institutions within Qatar Foundation too have expressed their views to Telegraph, on western education's influence on the country's culture.

Dr Elsayed Elsiefy, professor of Finance, Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies, said that Qatar Foundation is doing needful to keep a balance between the western education and local culture.

"QF is handling this challenge well at the moment. Combining Western and Middle Eastern values in education is always easy, but the rewards for both cultures are huge. Not everything is perfect in the Arab world and not everyt is perfect in the western world. By combining the best elements of both cultures we can create something that ber both cultures," Dr Elsiefy said.

Hissa Al Kubaisi, head of Arabic Curriculum at the Qatar Academy said: "One of the strengths of the school is the address our cultural identity. All students learn about Qatar with topic including hospitality of the country, traditions customs."

According to Jonathan McCollum, EFL Faculty Staff, Academic Bridge Program, all activities of the institute are c by honouring the Qatari culture.

"In our department incorporating the culture and traditions of the local population is part of our programme. We t make the students' transition from local high schools to western universities a little bit easier, and one of the way: do this is by honouring Qatari traditions," McCollum said.

The survey titled 'Does a western education lead to a watering down of Qatari culture?' was conducted by the



Pictures of groups of students

As soon as I close the classroom door behind me, I am faced by real human beings whose behaviour and views often contradict what I think I have learned about them by studying mega-dimensional, statistics-based, cultural paradigms that may describe their world in general terms, but tend to lose their seemingly sharp contours when considered in the concrete microcosm of my class.

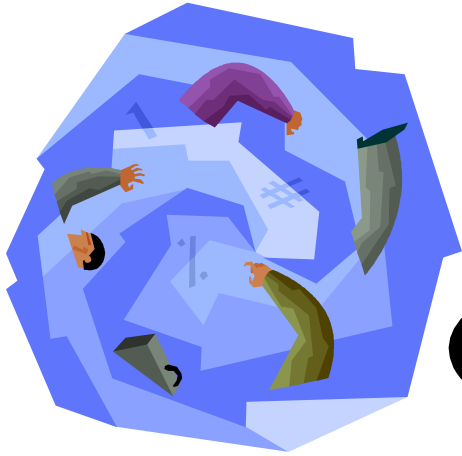
Pictures of individual students

...ending small.

Global cultural paradigms need to be adjusted to fit the small, local size of my educational setting to facilitate a better informed and more action-oriented approach to (my) teaching.



Conclusions?



Education is a messy and unpredictable business.

THANK
YOU

धन्यवाद

Merci

Gracias

תודה

Спасибо

Ευχαριστώ

شكراً

Dziękuję!