

IN THE 25 FEBRUARY EDITION OF QF TELEGRAPH, WE ASKED QATAR FOUNDATION (QF) STUDENTS IF THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE RECEIVING A HOLISTIC EDUCATION THAT ALSO INCLUDES SUFFICIENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH, ENABLING INDIVIDUALS TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

The response was highly positive, with 83 percent of those polled answering 'yes' to the question 'Does QF provide students with a comprehensive, well-rounded education?'. Only 17 percent suggested more could be done to engage students in different activities, thereby encouraging them to cultivate a range of non-academic skills.

QF encourages university-level students to establish the all-round competencies necessary for vocational and personal advancement. School-age children are similarly inspired and the overall well-being of young people is given due priority at QF's Qatar Academy (QA) Schools, Awsaj Academy, and through the Academic Bridge Program (ABP), as well as its partner universities and Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

All students have access to counselors, with QA schools having counseling staff on site to offer guidance to students, parents, and teachers. QA schools' students are also able to access specialist support at the QF Teaching and Learning Center, which offers access to psychologists, speech and language specialists, and occupational therapists if needed.

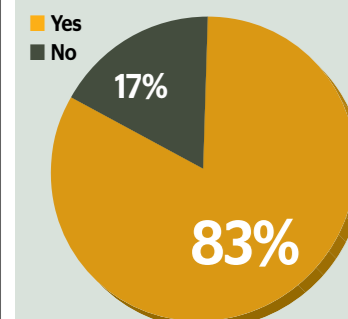
As Rehem Elmerdash, Elementary and Kindergarten Principal, QA Al Khor, explained, the essence of education is to nurture a child's development, starting with the early building blocks of academic learning.

"For education to not only improve literacy, but to build character, it needs to be well-rounded, catering to all the different aspects of a student's growth," she said.

"It should foster critical thinking, creativity, and also physical and social development. A properly well-rounded education should help children develop a sense of

We polled students and parents across all of Qatar Foundation

**DOES QF PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH A COMPREHENSIVE, WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION?**



# QF is providing a well-rounded education for all of its students

▶ A wide range of opportunities are available to cultivate skills

self-esteem and give them the encouragement and tools necessary for making responsible decisions in their lives, both inside and outside of the classroom. To sum up, a well-rounded education prepares students for life," Elmerdash emphasized.

This sentiment is reflected by Stephen Massiah, Director, QA Sidra, who said: "A well-rounded education is essential as we prepare all of our students for a world that looks very different now from how it will when they enter the workplace."

The school is currently in the final stages of preparing to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) program at three different age levels. This will enable students to embrace diversity and thrive whatever environment they are presented with in the future.

"At QA Sidra our focus goes far beyond just factual knowledge and focuses on what we want our students to understand, be able to do, demonstrate, value, and how they will act as responsible citizens of the world," Massiah added.

Dr Imad Deeb, Head of Student Support, QA Msheireb, described how the school provides a welcoming environment enabling students to flourish, with parents encouraged to play an integral role in supporting

children and stimulating academic improvement.

"Parents are regularly invited to meet with teachers and specialists to discuss their child's support plans and the role they play in their applications," he said in explaining how extra assistance for students can be obtained from the school's Support Unit.

Dr Don Francis, Director, Awsaj Academy, pointed out how a comprehensive education was at the heart of "The Awsaj Way."

"This encompasses an individual education program what will help each student learn in an accelerated rate. In the early years, this includes reading and language groups, geared to the learning level of the student. In high school this may mean an elective, like Model United Nations or Robotics, that would not only emphasize literacy and communication skills, but also develop a talent or interest of the individual student," he said.

ABP, a gateway to university, places importance on encouraging students to develop as individuals, pursuing extra-curricular activities which complement studies.

At QF partner universities students are able to learn the vital skills needed for future development

in their chosen careers, and the associated competencies demanded by leadership roles. Texas A&M University at Qatar, for example, offers students a respected liberal arts program which aims to develop students' communication and critical thinking skills.

Everette Dennis, Dean and CEO, Northwestern University in Qatar, explained how a diverse education is central to a student's learning experience.

"Opportunities offered outside the classroom experience enhances the ability of each student to become well-rounded graduates, equipped to compete in an increasingly competitive global economy," he said. This is mirrored by Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, which in keeping with other partner universities, places balanced student development at the center of its mission.

Kelly Anne Nelson, Director for Student Affairs, Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar said: "Here in Education City, we are not just developing future doctors, engineers, etc, we are developing future global citizens who will be leaders in their fields and they communities. A holistic education recognizes that students are here to learn and

develop skills beyond subject-matter expertise."

Georgetown University in Qatar places an emphasis on student service, and UCL Qatar incorporates extended field placements, designed to give students career-sector appropriate practical skills.

Valerie Jeremijenko, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, explained how the creative demands of art and design demand students to analyze the world which encourages aligned personal development. "We also try to foster maturation and an appreciation of the global context through a rigorous general education program, research, work and internship opportunities, and extra curricular programs," she added.

At HBKU there is a keen focus on educational opportunities where inquiry and discovery are integral at all levels.

While QF provides students the academic skills for educational excellence, the organization is propelling the development of a knowledge-based economy – one that is not based only on academics, but that also focuses on holistic development and growth.

# Telling untold stories via film

Celebrated filmmaker, Michael Rossato-Bennett, highlights the opportunities that modern technologies avail to documentary making

FILMMAKERS from across the country got an insiders' view into the inspirations and challenges of the genre during an open interview at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar) between award-winning documentary filmmaker Michael Rossato-Bennett and Alix Madigon-Yorkin, producer of 2011 Academy Award nominated film *Winter's Bone*.

During the 'In Conversation' discussion moderated by Jess Ulmer, held at VCUQatar, a Qatar Foundation (QF) partner university, on 21 February 2016, as part of Discover America week, Rossato-Bennett described how he came to make the Sundance 2014 Audience Choice winning film *Alive Inside*.

"The answer is, I didn't have a choice," he explained after he illustrated how he'd been commissioned to create a website for a non-government organization which had started bringing music therapy to elderly dementia sufferers, and is the film's topic.

Hit by strong emotions upon entering a US nursing home facility, where he had been asked to make a short clip for the website, Rossato-Bennett was compelled to then tell the story in a full-length documentary film.

"I don't know how many of you have ever been into an American nursing home, but this was a 600-bed public institution," he said. "We walked into the hall and there was something I had never seen in my life - there were 100 people just sitting there, and I was terrified."

"They brought this guy with dementia in front of me; he'd been at the facility for 10 years. They put the headphones on him and it was like a light had been lit inside of him. He raised his head and started singing - it was beautiful. We took the headphones off and he started talking. He was a poet, he had the voice of an angel, and to see him go from nothing to this, I knew at that moment I had to make a film about this. There was no choice."

Rossato-Bennett went on to explain how filmmaking is a cathartic experience for those involved. "As a documentary maker, I want to try and help people through cinema," he said.

"What I didn't realize in making *Alive Inside* was that there are five million people in the US dealing with Alzheimer's. I had sort of stumbled across something which is probably one of the world's biggest challenges and to which there is no a solution, and yet here I am saying 'we can really help these people'.



Michael Rossato-Bennett gave an insight into his award-winning documentary

## "There are fantastic resources in the universities at QF and the Doha Film Institute"

"Stories are everywhere and yet nowhere. These are not often seen on the big screen. The major studios don't think people want to see these stories; but they do. I did not realize the impact this film was going to have."

Reflecting on his time in Qatar, Rossato-Bennett was keen to encourage filmmakers to take advantage of the resources and inspirations around them. "There are fantastic resources in the universities at QF and the Doha Film Institute," he said.

"There is so much here and it's a great opportunity. There are films to be made, and they do not need to be expensive. You can make films that the world will see. There is the power to reach a lot of people just by finishing a film, especially if it brings a world that nobody has ever seen."

He explained how technology has made filming cheaper and more accessible, and that despite the threats similar to those facing the music industry, he believes film will survive.

"How awesome is it that you can be a young person and make

your film? Gladwell talks about the 10,000 hours of practice rule - well how about putting your 10,000 hours into your film?," he asked.

"The Internet is literally remaking paths to audiences, and films will find their audiences. An independent film can now find its market. It is not dependent on traditional theatre distribution."

"I get letters from people every day, who write: 'Oh, I just watched your film...' There's this conversation between the audience and those people involved in the film, which is so easy, and that is something which would never happen before. Independent now means a film can find its niche audience which it couldn't in the past," he explained.

Rossato-Bennett told *QF Telegraph* that he had been invigorated by his visit to QF, during which he had visited several other QF partner universities, including Northwestern University in Qatar and Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, at which he was able to appreciate new perspectives on understanding empathy from resident psychology experts.

OPINION

Dr Walid Qoronfleh

## Today's scientists have a duty to mentor tomorrow's leaders

AS a scientist, I am always excited about learning new things, making fresh discoveries, and the potential for applications to contribute to the improvement of healthcare for our population.

I see this same excitement and thirst for knowledge among the young people I interact with through my work, and recognize clearly the need to nurture their ambitions and skills so they can become Qatar's future scientific leaders.

I was very fortunate when young to have an educated uncle who really encouraged my interest in science. He gave me my first chemistry set; he always tried to guide me during my studies, my homework, and my exams. Throughout my career, from medical school onwards, I can pinpoint two or three more individuals who had a really positive impact on my career and my career choices.

I cannot over-estimate the value of people who can serve as role models to assist and guide future scientists.

In this regard, science is no different from fields like sports. People look up to certain role models - you have Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant in basketball, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo in football - and I think there has to be the equivalent for science.

I think sometimes public outreach on behalf of scientists has not been as aggressive as it should have been in order to effectively promote science, engineering, and technology to younger generations. They see sports and music idols, but they rarely see science idols.

The importance of science mentorship is key to our programs at Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI), a research institute of Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of Qatar Foundation, both in Qatar and around the world.

As part of the Qatar Research Leadership Program, we mentor students who have chosen biomedical science as their future career as they obtain their masters and doctorates.

We also have a summer research program for young scientists at the undergraduate level. We

hope to take this a step further, expanding the program to engage with graduate students at the masters and doctorate level, as well as running summer programs for middle and high school students.

I want to impress on young people that a scientific career does not have to necessarily involve becoming a professor or faculty member at a university. While teaching is admirable, I feel one of my responsibilities is to deliver the message that there are a wider range of choices.

## "I cannot over-estimate the value of people who can serve as role models to assist and guide future scientists"

During my career, I have worked for major pharmaceutical companies in the US, leading teams in different areas of biology related to inflammation and cancer, and advancing two drugs into Phase 1 clinical trials.

Now, as the Director of Biotechnology Development at QBRI, I am working toward the development of the infrastructure needed in Qatar for scientists to do their work, as well as to develop the research programs that are relevant to the Qatari population and the healthcare system of the State of Qatar. QBRI is contributing to the development of human capital, and the expertise in the medical and healthcare system, through education, research, and capacity building.



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WHAT DO YOU THINK?  
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