

education



● Pupils sit the first national evaluation exams



● Hi-tech learning in Bahrain's schools

Pupils in Grades Three (seven to eight years old) and Six (10 to 11 years) sat the first round.

Grade Nine (13 to 14 years) students will sit similar exams in May next year, while Grade 12 (16 to 17 years), will follow suit later.

The scheme marked the first time an external body had conducted national examinations for government school students in Bahrain.

The aim is to assess their problem solving and critical thinking skills in subjects like mathematics, science, English and Arabic.

QAAET's National Examination Unit (NEU) has developed the examinations in conjunction with Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), which operates in more than 150 countries, and works in partnership with more than 20 ministries of education on national education and assessment programmes worldwide.

All in all, these educational initiatives complement the broader process of development in all walks of life in Bahrain and are spearheaded by HRH The Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and education and training reform committee chairman Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa and the EDB, led by chief executive Shaikh Mohammed bin Essa Al Khalifa.

Various educational fields have already given positive indications that the development projects are yielding successful results.

There has been a noticeable rise in the level of academic attainment, with a significant increase in pass levels and the numbers of high-achievers in the General Certificate Examination. University admission tests have also seen improvement in the results.

But educational reforms require time to produce tangible results, one example being the teaching of English from the first year of schooling.

The aim is to improve the standard of English in schools, but it will take some time to for positive results to materialize on the ground.

Quality is what counts, which is why the Education Ministry, led by Minister Dr Majid Al Nuami, has opened the doors over recent years to independent assessors, to ensure standards are kept at a premium.

It has used internal and external assessors to evaluate the entire educational system.

Bahrain voluntarily took part in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), as far back as 2003 and continues to learn from and build on continuous re-evaluation.

The TIMSS 2003 report gave Bahrain an average placing amongst the participating countries and indicated that review and development would be indispensable in improving performances in maths and the sciences.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organisation's (Unesco) annual report on Education for All – its global aim for 2015 – ranked Bahrain as the first and the only Arab country to be categorised as of a high standard performance.

A package of reform and developmental programmes was instigated in the light of comprehensive education reports produced in co-ordination with Unesco, represented by the International Institute for Educational Planning



● Deputy Premier and education and training committee chairman Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa visited schools during the first national exams

and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bahrain.

These included in particular a comprehensive review and re-examination of secondary education, to redesign the unified academic tracks, as well as the transition of the teaching/learning process to electronic learning, such as through the His Majesty King Hamad Future Schools scheme to put computer labs in every school.

Since then the ministry has put forward 14 major educational projects, which are expected to put education in Bahrain at the forefront regionally and hopefully internationally.

Decentralisation of school management has been implemented in two key areas, namely the introduction of educational zones, to ease the supervision of schools and granting schools greater autonomy, including in handling their finances.

In so doing, schools are now managed boards of administrative and academic staff.

Curriculum review and development is a focal point in improving education and the ministry endeavours to develop these in various ways, such as:

Transforming an abundant portion of the school curricula into electronic software. This is a purely technical development, thus approach development is desperately needed as this is a vital tool to present the transformed electronic teaching materials to students in the

and help prepare them for their place in society.

Dr Al Nuami stipulated that the ministry policy in designing human rights curricula reflects the Kingdom's Constitution of the Kingdom, which pledges equality for all citizens.

Social Studies and Arabic curricula in use in all levels of the education system comprise topics that discuss and help engrain human rights and democracy, tailored to suit the student's age, abilities and intellectual cognitive and social maturity.

Bahraini society, the family, women's rights, as well as the civil service establishments and the services they offer to the community, are all included in students' studies.

The list of topics extend to include Bahrain's constitution, the National Action Charter, faith and community services, along with the importance of dialogue and tolerance.

In terms of technical and vocational education, Bahrain places great importance on apprenticeships, which give students theoretical and practical learning experiences.

Apprenticeship amalgamates education with profession the student intends to assume in the future.

This requires a strong partnership between education and the labour market, with students expected to acquire the basic skills and competencies of their target trade or profession.

Apprenticeship involves the labour market in curricula design and material development training.

The labour market also actively takes part in evaluating learners, which it is anticipated will lead to the review and adaptation of school curricula, to keep it abreast with the labour market needs.

Apprenticeship also involves students in real-life internship activities, which introduce them to the work environment.

This also assists students in developing life skills, such as, working in a team, shouldering the responsibilities, solving immediate problems, adopting quality concepts, abiding by hygiene and safety work rules and appreciating the importance of the time factor.

On December 19, Unesco director-general Koichiro Matsuura will present this year's His Majesty King Hamad Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Education, at Unesco headquarters in Paris.

Bahrain's Royal Equestrian and Endurance Federation president Shaikh Nasser Bin Hamad Al Khalifa and Dr Al Nuami are scheduled to attend.

This award has been established in support and encouragement of individuals, associations and non-governmental organisations working to create distinctive and innovative models of information technology and communication, to be employed in education.

classroom.

Development and revision of the existing school curricula in light of scientific and technological advancement, particularly with regard to science, mathematics, Arabic and English.

This is being carried out by adopting the latest trends and best practices in the field of curricula development.

To achieve this, the ministry is dealing with renowned regional and international bodies specialist in curricula design and material development, giving priority to science and mathematics.

New curricula have also been introduced to keep pace with political, economic and social reforms in Bahrain.

Citizenship Education, Life Skills and Community Service modules for all school levels have been brought into the school timetable.

It is hoped these will reflect positively on the students' characters, personalities and behaviour