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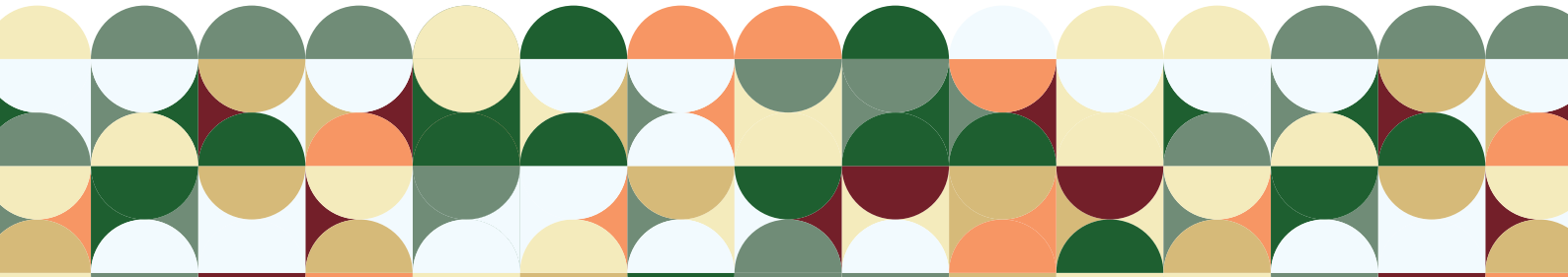
Member of Qatar Foundation

CAREER GUIDANCE: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION IN QATAR

QATAR CAREER FORUM 2015 FINAL REPORT

Prepared by

QATAR CAREER FAIR





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CAREER GUIDANCE GAP – STRUCTURAL, INSTIUTIONAL AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES:

The Qatar Career Forum emerged from a series of high-level discussions between Qatar Career Fair (QCF) and experts in human resources, education and employment who identified that Qatar has rightly invested in education. However, there remain structural, institutional and cultural barriers to enabling youth to make informed education and employment decisions, due to limited awareness of and access to professional impartial career guidance and gaining employability skills. This gap results in youth, employers and the Qatar economy gaining limited benefit from rising education levels.

QCF FORUM VISION:

To add value to the strategic policy process of developing quality career guidance related to the education, training and employment dimensions of human development, to help meet the QNV 2030 goals in Qatar.

QCF FORUM OBJECTIVES:

- To engage and collaborate with diverse stakeholders – including clients and beneficiaries in education, employment, career guidance, employability, policy, research, practitioners, Qatari youth and parents - in open dialogue to share experiences and ideas.
- To present, discuss and evaluate career planning and development practices, identify best practice, lessons learned and recommendations for future programs and improvement.
- To develop a culture of research –to-policy engagement, build understanding in career guidance and support to improve employability, employment outcomes and career progression for Qatari youth Qatar through effective knowledge exchange, innovation and stakeholder collaboration.

FORUM APPROACH:

The Forum is a Pilot initiative by Qatar Career Fair - The strategic planning, design, governance, delivery and participation were developed to be inclusive, engaging and innovative. Open dialogue engagement enabled accelerated interactive learning, sharing key messages, knowledge exchange and networking among diverse career guidance stakeholders with a clear focus on nation-wide career guidance, human development solutions and evaluating impact, for sustained improvement in education and employment outcomes for Qatari youth.

FORUM FOCUS GROUPS: FOUR DIVERSE STAKEHOLDER AUDIENCES ENGAGED:

1. Career guidance decision makers, policy makers and researchers
2. Career guidance practitioners
3. Qatari parents and youth
4. Career guidance and knowledge exchange experts



OVERARCHING STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDER MESSAGES ON CAREER GUIDANCE GAP, CHALLENGES AND FOCUS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Forum stakeholders in the Focus Groups and Validation Meeting shared considerable insights into how to address the challenges in career guidance in Qatar and put forward key strategic structural, institutional and cultural policy recommendations, for a nation-wide career guidance and education-to-employment system in Qatar:

- **Lack of nation-wide career guidance provision** - Good practice examples by schools and employers in skills and career support are not enough – Qatar needs to make strategic structural changes to integrate career guidance into the education system to provide nation-wide education-to-employment support and establish a central career guidance entity.
- **Limited career awareness by Qatari youth** - Career guidance needs to be accessible nation-wide through career centers for all youth to raise career awareness, access education and employment advice, gain skills, internships, summer camps and career guidance.
- **Qatarisation policies and programs need to be re-focussed** – Shift from quantity to quality to meet Qatari youth an diverse employer education and skills needs.
- **Lack of career guidance platforms** – Open dialogue is needed for QCF, education, human resources and employer experts to address challenges, exchange knowledge, evaluate programs and share education and skills projections to meet economic and QNV 2030 goals.

FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS

Forum stakeholders in Focus Groups and the Validation Meeting shared informed insights of how to address the career guidance challenges in and put forward key strategic structural, institutional and cultural policy recommendations, for a nation-wide career guidance and education-to-employment system in Qatar. The key themes of the recommendations are outlined below:

Recommendation 1:

Qatar Career Fair should coordinate with the Ministry of Administrative Development to consider establishing a national career guidance policy steering committee between education, labour and commerce ministries, leading public, private and NGO organisations – led by Qatar Career Fair - to integrate career awareness in all education institutions, encourage employers to actively build youth career skills, develop education and skills projections for the next 15 years including STEM careers and sector needs, and facilitate labour market knowledge exchange platforms.

Recommendation 2:

Qatar Career Fair should coordinate with the Ministry of Administrative Development to consider establishing nation-wide Career Centers, under the auspices of a central career guidance entity, Qatar Career Fair, to provide career awareness and guidance services, employability skills programs, internships and work experience, to meet the needs of youth, employers and the economy.

Recommendation 3:

Supreme Education Council and Qatar Career Fair should collaborate to agree a way forward of how to integrate career guidance into the education nation-wide - all schools and universities - and increase the number of trained career guidance counsellors.

Recommendation 4:

Qatar Career Fair should collaborate with key government departments including Supreme Education Council, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Administrative Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports and ICT-Qatar to raise awareness and access career guidance, and create a culture of career advice, awareness, skills and orientation among Qatari youth and parents:

Recommendation 5:

Qatar Career Fair should establish the Qatar Career Forum as an annual career guidance platform for diverse policy, research, education and employment stakeholders, Qatari youth and parents.

Recommendation 6:

Supreme Education Council in collaboration with Qatar Career Fair and Qatar University should commission in-depth research to assess career guidance challenges, monitor the impact of career advisors and career centers on increasing youth skills, career awareness, understanding and experience, and disseminate key messages to educators, employers and policy-makers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In May 2015 Qatar Career Fair implemented an innovative Pilot initiative – the Qatar Career Forum. This report details the planning, delivery and impact of the Qatar Career Forum.

Qatar Career Fair and the report author are indebted to the Chair and Members of the Forum Strategic Planning and Technical Committee and the Administration Committee for all their generous support, interactive engagement and kind collaboration throughout the Forum.

Qatar Career Fair would also like to express sincere thanks to all the organisations whom kindly participated in the Forum for sharing their expertise, experiences and ideas as career guidance policy, education, employment, economic, human resources, national development and Qatarisation experts - and Qatari parents and youth - as without their generous contributions and support this Forum Pilot would not have been possible.



1. INTRODUCTION: THE CAREER GUIDANCE GAP IN QATAR NEEDS BRIDGING

1.1 Background: There is a structural, institutional and cultural career guidance gap in Qatar

The Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030 recognizes the importance of investing in education, skills, diverse employment and nurturing entrepreneurship to develop a highly-skilled workforce to meet the aspirations of Qataris, sustain growth and productivity for a knowledge economy. The availability of quality impartial career guidance can motivate and nurture youth, enable them to gain skills, understanding and experience of the labour market to help identify suitable education and employment paths through making informed career decisions, achieve their aspirations, and meet the needs of diverse employers and wider economy.

The absence of career guidance results in youth coping with complex education and employment career decisions, which can lead to unintended outcomes, under-performance or dropping-out of education or employment and repayment of sponsorship support. This results in waste of human capital, talent, financial resource and youth feeling they have failed themselves and their families.

1.2 Qatar Career Fair Role: Bridging the gap

The Qatar Career Forum emerged from a series of high-level discussions between Qatar Career Fair (QCF) and experts in human resources, education and employment who identified that while Qatar has rightly invested in education, the following structural and institutional factors do not exist to help youth, employers and the Qatar economy benefit from rising education levels:

- Sustainable education-to-employment transition support and integrated nation-wide career guidance system in education for youth to access professional career advice;
- Platform to strengthen relations between QCF and education institutions, human resources practitioners and diverse public and private employer stakeholders in Qatar.

As QCF transitions to become Qatar Career Development Center, strategic policies and programs are needed to bridge the career guidance gap to meet Qatari male and female youth aspirations. The Pilot Qatar Career Forum was established to engage diverse stakeholders in open dialogue, highlight challenges and identify how best to support Qatari youth to benefit from increasing education levels through providing career guidance in preparation for labour market entry and progression, to help meet career aspirations, the needs of diverse employers, growing economy and QNV 2030 goals.

1.3 Report Structure: Chapter summary

This report contains the following chapters:

- Chapter 2 – describes the vision, objectives and culture of the Pilot Qatar Career Forum.
- Chapter 3 – is concerned with methodology and describes the strategic planning, governance, delivery and evaluation of the Forum.
- Chapter 4 – details the informative, engaging and solutions-focussed Forum plenary, presentation and focus group format with diverse expert, Qatari parents and youth.
- Chapter 5 – details the key findings and analysis from the Forum focus group discussions, Q&A sessions and the Validation Meeting, and evaluate impact based on the Forum survey.
- Chapter 6 – details the Forum recommendations.

2. QATAR CAREER FORUM: VISION, OBJECTIVES AND CULTURE

2.1 QCF Forum Vision:

To add value to the strategic policy process of developing quality career guidance related to the education, training and employment dimensions of human development, to help meet the QNV 2030 goals in Qatar.

2.2 QCF Forum Objectives:

The objectives of the Forum are:

- To engage in open dialogue diverse stakeholders in education, employment, career guidance, policy, research, practitioners, Qatari youth and parents to share experiences and ideas.
- To present, discuss and evaluate career planning and development practices, identify best practice, lessons learned and recommendations for future career guidance programs.
- To develop a culture of research –to-policy engagement, build understanding in career guidance services to improve employability, employment outcomes and career progression for Qatari youth through innovative policies and stakeholder collaboration.

2.3 QCF Forum Culture: Pioneering Pilot in Qatari Human Development

The Forum is a Pilot to connect and engage diverse stakeholders in interactive open dialogue to value their contributions and identify how to bridge the education-to-employment transition gap:

- Qatar aspires to become a knowledge economy and many organisations have adopted key initiatives to help achieve this - the Forum provided local stakeholders including Qatari youth and parents the opportunity to engage, recognise their value-add, exchange knowledge, network and identify recommendations.
- Raise awareness of career guidance as an integral education, employment and labour market strategic issue.
- Produce analysis and policies on developing quality career guidance, disseminate key materials to policy-makers and diverse stakeholders, and facilitate onward collaboration.

3. METHODOLOGY: PILOT – INCLUSIVE, ENGAGING AND INNOVATIVE

In order to address the career guidance gap, QCF developed a realistic, effective and ambitious program for the Pilot Qatar Career Forum through ensuring clear objectives, strategic planning, organisation, good governance, diverse participation, knowledge exchange and efficient and evaluated delivery. The Forum facilitated diverse engagement with career guidance, education, employment, policy and program stakeholders – and Qatari parents and youth – and assessed impact through surveys, analysis and key follow-up activities for sustainability including a validation meeting and developing an Action Plan, as detailed in this report.

3.1 Forum Approach: Strategic Planning, Organisation and Outcome-Focused

In order to effectively engage, discuss and address the career guidance and education-to-employment transition gap and deliver a successful Forum event, QCF undertook an extensive program of strategic planning, organisation and good governance through the following key goals and activities - **see Annex 1 for the Qatar Career Forum Project Overview**

1. Establishing an expert Strategic Planning and Technical Committee and Administration Committee to develop strategic planning, organisation and delivery goals – with clear objectives, roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders;
2. Facilitating diverse, inclusive and interactive engagement, accelerating awareness, knowledge exchange, networking and collaboration between career guidance, education, employment, policy and program stakeholders – and Qatari parents and youth.
3. Identifying key target groups for Focus Group sessions - formulating a tailored, stimulating and engaging approach to enable career guidance demand and supply-side factors, expert and user experiences, challenges and ideas understood and strategic demand-led policy recommendations identified - with clear roles for Leaders, Moderators and Secretaries;
4. Delivering an effective and solutions-based Forum Format – Interactive, informative, solutions-based engagement, measuring impact and identifying recommendations through analysis of Focus Group discussions, key messages, challenges and highlighting recommendations, and a qualitative and quantitative participant survey.
5. Delivering key follow-up and sustainability activities including a Validation Meeting, developing and disseminating an Action Plan, based on the key messages and recommendations raised in the Focus Groups, and onward engagement and collaboration with stakeholders.

The strategic planning and implementation of the Forum as a national event engaging diverse stakeholders with a demand and supply focus adds value to the importance of developing career guidance as an integral nation-wide policy and planning issue in the education, training and employment dimensions of human capital development in Qatar.

3.2 Forum Governance: Strategic, Transparent and Effective

To ensure effective planning, preparation, delivery and outcomes of the Forum were successfully achieved the QCF Senior Management Team identified that considerable expertise in strategic planning, organisation, program management and delivery, technical guidance, critique, operations, administration and reporting would be required. Therefore, QCF determined that an expert-led Strategic Planning and Technical Committee and Administration Committee needed to be established, appointed and mandated to deliver the Forum. QCF also recognised that strategic planning would require considerable operation support, time for meetings for Forum planning discussions, deliberations and documentation preparation. The high quality contributions of these committees – and the Moderators and Secretaries they appointed - ensured a realistic and ambitious program for Forum delivery, follow-up and impact.

3.2.1 Forum Strategic Planning and Technical Committee

The Strategic Planning and Technical Committee Chair and Members are detailed in Table 1. The overarching role of the Strategic Planning and Technical Committee was to plan, implement and evaluate the technical dimension of the Forum. The full listing of objectives and roles of the Members can be found at **Annex 2 Technical Committee Action Plan** – detailed below are some of the key elements:

- Develop and review the Forum’s objectives and methodology.
 - Plan and coordinate the submission of Forum papers – and follow-up on submitted papers.
 - Provide leadership for the delivery and evaluation of the Forum – including recommendations for future improvement.
- In addition, Members were encouraged to take lead responsibility for one of the Forum Focus Groups, including the following:
- Provide advice, guidance and collaborate closely with the proposed moderators – and nominate moderators - on the delivery plan of the Focus Group sessions.
 - Observe the Focus Group sessions and ensure that discussions and papers produced are according to the Forum objectives and standards. At the end of the Forum members are expected to provide QCF and the Committee with their feedback and recommendations.
 - Encourage engagement and collaboration of key stakeholders by suggesting particular organisations/ individuals to be considered by the Committee.
 - Evaluate forum-based papers, analysis and policy briefings and reports and share with policy-makers and decision-makers to ensure knowledge exchange, impact, innovation and utilization of relevant research and best practice when assessing and formulating new career guidance policies, or improve existing ones, developing codes of practice and designing programs in education, training and employment.

Table 1: Strategic Planning and Technical Committee Chair and Members

	Name	Position	Role
1	Dr. Khalid Al Khanji	VP Student Affairs, HBKU	Chairman
2	Mr. Essa AL-Kaabi	Senior Advisor, National Development & Qatarization	Member
3	Dr. Khalid Al Horr	Director of Higher Education Institute, SEC	Member
4	Dr. Maryam Al Ali	Draw Your Way Consulting and Training Center, Founder & CEO	Member
5	Dr. Mohammad Abul-Ola	General Manager, Integral Training and Development	Member
6	Ms. Zamila Bunglawala	Fellow, University of Manchester and former British Government Policy Advisor	Member
7	Dr. Taj Kardaman	Career Counseling Consultant, QCF	Member
8	Ms. Sini Parampota	Senior Activities & Volunteerism Officer	Member

3.2.2 Forum Administration Committee

To complement the technical side of the Forum, an Administrative Committee was established to provide requisite administrative support, including office and secretarial work, marketing, public relations, logistics, financial and procurement services and wider support to enable adequate planning and implementation of the Forum. Members of this committee the Administration Committee are detailed in Table 2 and were selected from among career development administrators in QCF, senior administrators working for Qatar Foundation including in marketing, public relations, procurement and talent development in addition to experienced volunteers.

Table 2: Administration Committee Chair and Members

	Name	Position	Role
1.	Mr. Abdulla Al Mansoori	Director, QCF	Chairman
2.	Dr. Taj El Sir Kardaman	Career Counseling Consultant, QCF	Member
3.	Mr. Saad Al-Kharji	Head of Operations, QCF	Member
4.	Ms. Sini Parampota	Senior Activities & Volunteerism Officer, QCF	Member
5.	Mr. Mohammad Tagrida	Senior Publication Specialist, QCF	Member

3.2.3 Focus Group Moderators and Secretaries

The Strategic Planning and Technical Committee recognised that expert advisory, implementation and broader stakeholder engagement for successful management, delivery and reporting of the Forum initiative would be needed. Therefore, key roles were identified to support design and delivery of the Focus Groups in the form of Moderator and Secretary.

Clear roles for Focus Group Moderators and Secretaries were developed by the committee to ensure effective preparation, planning, stakeholder engagement, delivery and reporting of each Focus Group – these are detailed in full in Annex 2 and key elements are outlined below.

Role of the Moderators – To actively engage, interact and collaborate with Focus Group Leaders, conducting Focus Group discussions - summarizing and ordering the findings and developing recommendations, selecting and collaborating with the secretary whom will support the Focus Group discussions and provide a final report to the committee, including the outcomes of the discussions, supported by detailed minutes.

Role of the Secretaries – To provide support before, during and after the Focus Group Moderator, including preparing agendas and other support documents needed, record and archive each session, with detailed minutes, prepare a final summary with outcomes of the discussions and be the focal point for the Administration Team to help coordinate operational elements of the Forum.

3.3 Facilitating engagement, accelerating awareness, knowledge exchange, networking and collaboration

The Forum interactive approach was designed to facilitate engagement, focus on raising and accelerating awareness, knowledge exchange, networking and building sustainable and collaborative relationships enabled organisers and participants – including Qatari youth and parents - to benefit from diverse education and employment expert opinions, raise and accelerate awareness of 'user-experiences', facilitate engaging discussion and debate, and highlight career guidance demand and supply challenges and opportunities, as follows:

- To engage diverse experts –to identify influences, pressures, design, share case studies and research, education, employer and labour market factors to inform policies, deliver impact and improve outcomes;
- Raise awareness and understanding of the career guidance profession: role, responsibilities and national need – practices, challenges, opportunities, training, structural, cultural and national demand capabilities;
- Inclusive engagement with policy-makers, educators, diverse employers, career guidance professionals, NGOs, Qatari parents and youth - to facilitate dialogue, share experiences and expertise, understand the demand and supply – and cultural/family - needs for career guidance, human development and Qatarisation;
- Facilitate the exchange of ideas, knowledge and networks in a collaborative environment - diverse participation to improve communications, build relationships, expand networks, identify opportunities for collaboration, for mutual onward engagement and benefit.

3.4 Forum Format – Interactive, solutions-based engagement, identifying recommendations with report dissemination, onward engagement and sustained collaboration

The Forum format was designed to deliver an effective and solutions-based, interactive, informative, sharing key messages, challenges and highlighting recommendations initiative. Therefore an overarching strategic format needed to be adopted to deliver key follow-up activities to sustain engagement and collaboration and share key messages and recommendations raised in the Focus Groups with stakeholders was also considered a priority.

Therefore, two weeks after the Forum event a Validation Meeting inviting all Forum participants would be scheduled for Focus Group Leaders and Moderators to share the key messages and recommendations from their group discussion with all stakeholders, engage in Q&A. QCF committed to develop an Action Plan based on the Forum's key findings and recommendations.

- **Interactive solutions-based event** – Opening expert panel discussion highlighting career development issues, challenges and Forum objectives, followed by four simultaneous interactive focus groups to explore issues raised, discuss challenges, exchange knowledge and best practice, and identify practical and innovative solutions.
- **Transparent dialogue, Validation Meeting and report dissemination** – Harnessing positive participation and demand for onward engagement a validation meeting shared key messages, challenges and recommendations discussed in the individual Focus Groups and permit further discussion and Q&A with all Forum participants. The meeting closed with a commitment to share the Forum Report with participants.
- **Sustained collaboration, Action Plan and follow-up** – An Action Plan will be developed summarising key messages and detail recommendations. This will be disseminated to attendees and highlight measures to sustain onward collaboration and deliver impact.

The Forum day consisted of the following (for the full Forum Program see **Annex 3**):

- Opening QCF presentation;
- Plenary expert panel discussion;
- 4 simultaneous Focus Group sessions;
- Closing ceremony.

3.5 Formulating a tailored, stimulating and engaging approach – and identifying target groups for Focus Group sessions

Formulating a tailored, stimulating, open dialogue engaging approach was considered essential for the Forum pilot to enable career guidance demand and supply-side factors, diverse expert and user experiences, challenges and ideas to be raised and strategic demand-led policy recommendations identified – all in a culturally appropriate and effective manner. Therefore, identifying the key target groups for the Focus Group sessions – including Qatari parents and youth and how many Focus Groups should be held - required considerable discussion, deliberation and decision-making.

Key discussions points included the following and can be found in the official Minutes in **Annex 4**:

- **'Issues/groups in need'** – Career guidance was discussed as encompassing considerable education, employment, employer, sectoral and entrepreneurship issues and challenges, from which strategic topics would be identified for Forum plenary and Focus Group formats.
- **Focus Group Topics and Themes** –

The number of Focus Group sessions had to be strategically selected to ensure they covered key topics and challenges while also ensuring they adopted key themes, were manageable in number and logistics. The final number of Focus Groups was reduced from 6 to 4 as groups and issues were merged such as combining the groups for career guidance decision-makers with policy-makers or dropped as in the case of entrepreneurship for subsequent events.

Appropriate themes determined from the 4 final Focus Groups identified relating to the immediate and future career guidance, human capital and resource needs in Qatar, as follows: (for full details on the Focus Groups topics and themes see Section 4):

1. Career Guidance Decision-Makers
2. Career Guidance Practitioners
3. Qatari Youth and Qatari Parents
4. Career Guidance Knowledge Exchange Experts

Planning, Steering and Reporting – It was agreed Focus Group discussions would be steered by Leaders and Moderators using an opening narrative to highlight key issues and pre-developed questions and focus on identifying solutions via interactive, engaging discussion.

It was agreed that an overarching paper would be produced – summarising the key messages and recommendations all 4 Focus Group reports.

- **Practicalities, Culture and Logistics:**

- Timing – To ensure participants were actively engaged, stimulated to stay for the full duration of the Forum and prayer times respected, it was agreed that individual Focus Groups that would be run simultaneously was agreed to be a one day event combined with opening plenary, breaks, Focus Groups and closing session.
- Invitees –Diverse stakeholders to cover all the target groups would be identified by Focus Group Leaders and supported by QCF for formal invitations and admin.
- Culture – It was agreed the morning Focus Group session for Qatari parents and youth would be help separately to encourage youth to share experiences and the afternoon session would have subgroups to help all participants share insights and interact. Male and female participants would be separately seated.
- Language – All Focus Group discussions were delivered in Arabic with the exception of the Career guidance knowledge exchange group. Simultaneous translation would be provided throughout to encourage interactive engagement by all participants.
- Logistics – It was agreed that the committee meetings would be scheduled in person, via Skype and/or one-to-one catch-ups of a bi-weekly basis (full committee Meetings Schedule detailed in Annex 2).

3.6 Expert and Diverse Stakeholders Identified and Invited

For the Forum to be successful also required significant planning, identification and invitation of diverse stakeholders to ensure their attendance and active engagement in the event.

The full list of Forum participants can be found at **Annex 5**– they include the following key groups with a total number of **registered delegates rising up to 158 Participants** v from various public, private and mixed sectors:

- Policy Stakeholders - Government Ministries: 32 Participants
- Schools, Colleges and Universities’ Students - Parents: 45 Participants
- NGOs/Practitioners: 63 Participants
- Knowledge Exchange: 18 Participants

Qatari youth and parents attended to share their key experiences, cultural insights and suggestions for positive change for the future of Qatar’s youth.

A variety of broader QCF activities including info sessions and a lecture series were utilised as communication vehicles for the following key reasons:

- To promote the Forum and attract diverse career stakeholders to attend the Forum.
- To introduce and prepare for the Focus Groups and to formulate a strong team.
- To encourage engagement, collaboration and experience exchange between different stakeholders involved in career guidance planning, development and implementation.

3.7 Forum Evaluation, Analysis and Reporting

The Forum Report would detail the key strategic design, planning, organisation, delivery, logistics and impact material, key messages and recommendations from the Forum and Validation Meeting and qualitative and quantitative analysis from the Forum Participants Survey - **see Annex 6**

3.8 Forum commitment: Qatari and Non-Qatari and gender-balanced representation

Both Qatari and Non-Qatari female and male chair, moderators, leads and reporters panel representation from diverse professions in education, employment, policy, research and delivery.



4. FORUM OPENING PRESENTATION, PLENARY PANEL DISCUSSION AND FOCUS GROUPS

To ensure the Forum met its objectives of informative, engaging, interactive and solutions-focussed diverse, expert, informed and detailed material was shared with Forum participants in the diverse formats of the opening presentation, plenary panel discussion and Focus Groups.

4.1 QCF Opening Address Presentation

QCF colleagues ensured the opening Address thanks stakeholders for attending this pilot initiative, highlighted the importance of the Forum event and their interactive contribution as essential to the further development of the career culture & awareness in Qatar, the genesis and methodology of the pilot initiative, shared the Forum objectives, open dialogue, engagement and solutions-focussed themes, the Focus Group topics and Forum Program. See **Annex 7 for full Opening Address presentation**– key details are outlined below:

Forum Genesis and Objectives Shared with Stakeholders:

- How best to develop a powerful career guidance system that contributes to the achievement of Qatar National Vision 2030?
- QCF organized a series of discussion and partnership meetings with human resources, education and human capital representatives in Qatar.
- Qatar Career Forum: Pilot idea – never been done:
- To encourage engagement and collaboration of key stakeholders;
- To present, discuss and evaluate key career planning and development practices applied in Qatar, identify best practice and lessons learned
- To develop a culture of research –to-policy engagement and build the career guidance profession to support the people of Qatar.

Forum Focus Groups:

1. Career guidance decision makers, policy makers and researchers
2. Career guidance practitioners
3. Qatari Parents and Youth
4. Career guidance and knowledge exchange

Forum Themes:

- Open dialogue and interactive engagement to discuss key issues, concerns, expectations, challenges and opportunities in career development in Qatar.
- Sharing best practices, research and evaluation of existing career guidance.
- Developing policies and programs for career guidance in diverse sectors.
- Discussing capacity building, institutional and cultural collaboration issues.
- Share, disseminate and discuss key findings and a chart a future path.



4.2 Focus Groups – Key stakeholders identified and engaged from diverse sectors

The four Forum Focus Group sessions were held simultaneously with key target groups of stakeholder participants and led by the Leader and Moderator, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Forum Focus Groups

Focus Group	Target Stakeholder Participants	Leader	Moderator
Career Guidance Decision-Makers, Policy-Makers and Researchers:	Policy-makers and researchers in public, private and mixed sectors - school principals, senior human resources, senior government, regulatory and career/labour market experts and academics involved in the education and employment policy and program fields.	Mr. Abubaker Al Saiari, QP Chairman of the Strategic Qatarization Plan Steering Committee	
Career Guidance Practitioners	Career counsellors/advisors in education institutions, career guidance and corporate training and development experts – with direct experience of engaging in career guidance with Qatari youth.	Dr. Khalid Al Khanji	Mr. Adam Al Saadi Director of Career Development Center, HBKU
Qatari Youth and Qatari Parents	End-users/clients – Qatari youth including persons with physical and mental challenges, and parents/guardians clients and beneficiaries – whom are directly engaged in and affected by the career guidance process.	Dr. Maryam Al Ali	Dr. Aziza Ahmad Al-Saadi Director of Education and Training Sector Strategy, SEC
Career Guidance Knowledge Exchange	National and international career guidance providers, employers and academics highlighting case studies, challenges and lessons learned – to contribute to the development of locally appropriate career guidance practices, research and professional collaboration between career guidance stakeholders.	Dr. Kholode Al Obaidli Vice President National Talent Management, Human Resources Division, Qatar Airways	Ms. Zamila Bunglawala Honorary Fellow, University of Manchester

Each Focus Group was delivered in the following way – **See Annex 8 for Focus Group Questions:**

- Opening narrative presented by Leader;
- Focus Group questions highlighted and open dialogue discussion engaged in to identify challenges, case study experiences, lessons learned, best practice, ideas and solutions;
- Recommendations identified and agreed.

4.3 Key strategic messages from Forum Focus Groups

Each Focus Group open dialogue discussion highlighted a variety of key messages in the form of challenges that should now be addressed, best practice examples, case studies and challenges which are detailed in the sections below.

Career guidance practitioners: Key challenges that should now be addressed highlighted:

- Career guidance is carried out in some schools but is often an individual effort – challenges include lack of support, resource, training or counsellors delivering administrative tasks in addition to focussing on youth;
- Students are negatively impacted upon due to the late introduction of career awareness in education;
- There is inadequate communication between high schools and universities – this would help inform youth career choices;
- Employers are not satisfied with the education and skills levels of Qatari youth – many highlighted youth are unprepared for the labour market;
- Majority of current initiatives do not reflect the QNV 2030 goals – there are no statistical projections of education and skills needs of employers, for a knowledge economy – or to address the challenges youth face;
- Good practice examples to build upon include – Bedaya Center increasing presence in schools, career and university orientation, HBKU summer programs and Promising Students Program.

Career guidance decision-makers, policy-makers and researchers: Key policy focus areas identified:

- While there are some good and diverse career awareness initiatives – there is a clear absence of an overarching national framework for universal access and impact.
- Qatar needs a national career guidance strategy for effective delivery, maximise efforts and resource, as follows:
- Establish nationwide Career Centers providing training, job-search and education-to-employment opportunities for all youth – under the auspices of a central career guidance entity;
- Establish a career guidance policy and program collaboration board for government education, labor and commerce ministries, leading employers and key providers including Bedaya Center and Silatech;
- Develop 15 year projection plan of education, skills and career needs - and award scholarships accordingly;
- Ensure there are career advisors to provide career advice - with professional qualifications, financial and educators' support;
- Develop a legal framework for career advisory services and mandate all students to build career skills in high schools and universities.

Qatari parents and Qatari youth:

- Challenges identified:
 - Many students were familiar with school academic advisors, some organise trips to career fairs, universities and employer organisations – however the advisor role is very limited due to a lack of professional training and resource.
 - Some students benefitted from volunteer work gaining valuable experience and skills, building confidence – however the majority stated that they did not participate or benefit from such activities as they did not receive any clear guidance, orientation or tasks, that would otherwise have helped them.
 - Many youth have heard of the QNV 2030 goals but few aware of the detail, content or strategic importance and direct relevance to their own education and career paths, aspirations and outcomes.
 - When trying to identify suitable jobs parents and students consider the following – salary, benefits, professional prospects, sector, rather than the interest and ability of the student.
 - Majority of parents do not attend school meetings and the role of boards in student career choices is minimal – parents are supportive of youth undertaking higher education.
 - Best practice - Students praised the Qatar Career Fair Ambassadors program and Bedaya Center – Many highlighted that there is urgent need to support all youth interests and ambitions, to enable them to make informed education and employment choices.

Knowledge Exchange:

- Challenges identified:
 - There is no entity in Qatar officially vested with national career guidance responsibility or mandate or the objective to integrate career guidance practices within education – leading stakeholders focus solely on Qatarisation targets.
 - There is very limited knowledge exchange, engagement or strategic collaboration between policy, education and employment sectors on careers – only individual informal engagement occurs – leading to persistent education and skills challenges.
 - Career development practices are usually reactive not proactive in providing counseling to students who seek guidance – there are no mandatory policies or program to increase nation-wide student career awareness, employment experience and skills.
 - There is a clear lack of trained expert career advisors – nor professional career guidance Masters or PhD programs available in Qatar universities. Therefore the majority of students are not familiar with the concept of careers as there are few advisors to provide this support.
 - Best practice – QatarGas has an 8-week summer program and Qatar Airways has an effective graduate program – with mandatory internships - highlighted for their strong focus on career development and preparation for students.

4.4 Cross-cutting themes and focuses discussed by all the focus groups:

- Qualitative, analytical and expert-led – Highlighting individual, cultural, policy and program qualitative case studies, research, challenges and best practices in career guidance by diverse stakeholders.
- Knowledge exchange focus – Identifying opportunities, challenges and improvements based on local and international examples to better engage, disseminate and collaborate.
- Sector engagement and integration – Discussing how best to integrate education, training and labour market goals to achieve the 2030 Vision and Qatari youth career aspirations.
- Addressing the gap – Identifying, formulating and recommending research, policy, program, framework, institutional and sector-wide solutions in national career guidance.



5. FORUM BENEFITS, IMPACT AND ANALYSIS

The Forum, as a Pilot initiative attempted to engage diverse stakeholders, raise awareness, identify best practice, challenges and demand-led solutions in career guidance in Qatar, through an innovative format of an open dialogue focus group discussions and a Validation Meeting. This section details analysis of stakeholder comments in Focus Group sessions, the Validation Meeting and quantitative and qualitative feedback from the Forum Surveys.

5.1 Qualitative Findings 1 – Overarching Messages

With regards to the Forum objectives and culture, the following key messages and analysis were identified from Forum stakeholders' contributions and direct comments during the Focus Groups:

Engagement: The Forum was well received by diverse stakeholders whom welcomed the opportunity to interactively participate in this key open dialogue discussion that directly affects educators, employers, youth and their parents.

Career development and identifying best practice: Stakeholders across the focus groups shared best practice examples of career awareness and skills building initiatives – all agreed these were better placed if delivered under the auspices of a central career guidance entity and having trained career counsellors/ advisors in schools and universities, to enable all Qatari youth to benefit.

Identifying challenges and solutions: Stakeholders consistently agreed that while recent policy and employer career guidance and development initiatives were welcome, they were not nation-wide, integrated within schools and universities or with dedicated career centers, to ensure access and sustainability, for universal impact.

Forum culture:

- Stakeholders welcomed the diverse format of panel discussion, interactive focus groups and follow-up validation session enabling all stakeholders to learn the key messages raised in each focus group and permit Q&A across the groups.
- Diverse stakeholders were grateful for the opportunity to build their policy and program networks across education and employment sectors, and valued the knowledge exchange focus.
- Qatari youth and parents were very grateful to have been invited to share their experiences as many commented they had not previously been engaged on education and employment matters relating directly to them.

Next steps: Stakeholders welcomed the objective of an Action Plan being shared and many requested that the Forum now become an annual event to enable onward effective dialogue, engagement and collaboration on the crucial issue of career guidance – and continue to include Qatari youth and parents.

5.2 Forum Survey: Qualitative Findings

Qualitative responses to the Forum Survey completed by participants highlighted diverse yet highly consistent messages regarding the career guidance challenges facing Qatar, how to address the career guidance gap, benefits of the Forum in raising awareness, facilitating open dialogue and identifying solutions. Key points and qualitative responses are identified below by Focus Group.

Decision-Makers, Policy-Makers and Researchers:

This group identified the following key issues – as highlighted in the quotations below:

- Forum permitted identification of key challenges - absence of qualified career counsellors, career guidance strategy and central delivery body for career guidance in Qatar;
- Forum enabled Qatari engagement in discussions of how to address youth challenges as well as vital networking between participants and diverse stakeholders.

“Qatar needs to develop a long-term strategy for career guidance and improve career awareness among youth and parents – there should be a central body to plan, implement and deliver career guidance across the country.”

“The Forum enabled healthy discussions and identification of key recommendations – including a career guidance framework, professional career guidance qualification and standards - and good networking with key decision-makers.”

“Discussions highlighted the need to empower career counsellors in schools, universities and the workplace, while creating an evaluation system for tracking improvement – Forum enabled greater understanding of the challenges and the benefit of networking.”

“Forum showed the benefit of bringing different Qatari generations together to discuss and learn about youth taking personal responsibility and making informed life choices.”

Career Guidance Practitioners:

This group identified the following key issues – as highlighted in the quotations below:

- The government needs to integrate career awareness into the education system to meet youth and labour market needs;
- Integrated career guidance will help to meet the employment needs of employers and manage youth expectations through greater understanding of the labour market.

“The Forum identified the work that is needed to integrate strong career awareness foundations in schools for Qatari youth – a system should be implemented in alignment with QNV 2030 that is also beneficial for employers and corporations in Qatar.”

“There is no top-down career guidance system– or career counsellors - the government needs to provide clear and integrated direction to high schools and universities on future labour market needs. We need to produce students capable of adapting to the changing employment environment!”

“Qatari students have high expectations for career progression – there needs to be better communication between education and employment stakeholders to help manage expectations and address the challenges youth and employers face.”

Qatari Parents and Qatari Youth:

This group identified the following key issues – as highlighted in the quotations below:

- Limited student awareness of career counsellors: no set lesson/curricula on career guidance;
- Counsellors lack resources and senior support to provide credible guidance to youth.

“There are few career advisors in schools – it can be one advisor for 700 students! Even then they are assigned extra roles and responsibilities. It is understandable there is a lack of career awareness among students and their parents.”

“We did not know there was a career counsellor in our school – our teachers did not tell us. We need knowledge on how to choose majors, identify internships and find jobs. There is no support from schools and our parents are not engaged - schools only contact parents when there are problems.”

“There is no curricula, no lessons, no career guidance policy and no qualified career counsellors - the Forum helped to raise my knowledge of career guidance and to network with others.”

“The Supreme Education Council needs to be more helpful and develop a career guidance system... currently there is no system and so students do not care about careers.”

Knowledge Exchange:

This group identified the following key issue – as highlighted in the quotations below:

- Qatari students should be encouraged to gain labour market skills and experience;
- Qatarisation should shift from a focus on quantity to quality of employees – underpinned by strong labour market information, education and skills projections available for employers.

“Qatar needs projected labour market information, more support for students and to address the current lack of training for career guidance professionals.”

“Qatarisation should focus on quality not quantity – we need to equip students with the values and attitudes needed to take on employment challenges.”

“Students should be encouraged by their schools to take-up employment opportunities and gain interview and communications skills – and these activities should be assessed for impact.”

“There is a need for career counselling and aptitude assessments - these should be provided by an independent agency that also disseminates labour market information to students and youth.”

5.3 Forum Survey: Quantitative Findings

There were two separate Forum Surveys one for the Qatari Parents and Youth Focus Group and one for the remaining three Focus Groups. The quantitative responses to the Forum Survey were very positive. Stakeholders provided strong positive responses to questions relating to raising awareness of career guidance current challenges and how to improve services, networking and the format interactive approach.

Table 4 details aggregate statistics from the survey 120 responses from **156 total Forum participants**. Some key findings are detailed below :

- 92 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Forum gave them better understanding of career guidance environment in Qatar;
- 92 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Forum gave them better understanding of career guidance challenges and/or how to improve career services;
- 87 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Forum helped them to expand their policy, education or employer networks/or the Forum should be promoted to Qataris.

Table 4: Post-Forum Focus Groups Questionnaire

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Dis strongly	BLK
QUESTIONS - BUILDING CAPACITY AND BETTER NETWORKS:						
1. This session has given me a better understanding of the career guidance environment in Qatar	45%	47%	4%	1%	1%	2%
2. This session has given me a better understanding of the career guidance challenges and/or how to improve career services in Qatar	35%	57%	3%	4%	1%	0%
3. This session has helped me to expand my network of policy, research, program, public and/or business sector professional contacts	32%	55%	10%	1%	2%	0%
4. I am confident that I may contact these professionals in due course	50%	45%	2%	2%	0%	0%
5. The session was well organised with sufficient time for presentations and Q&A	38%	46%	3%	12%	1%	0%
6. The session format encouraged interactive Q&A and discussion between the panel and audience members	43%	51%	3%	3%	0%	0%
QUESTIONS - MAKING RESEARCH RELEVANT AND HAVE IMPACT:						
7. would be happy to attend other sessions and/or recommend them	53%	41%	4%	1%	1%	0%

6. FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS

Forum stakeholders in Focus Groups and the Validation Meeting shared informed insights of how to address the career guidance challenges in and put forward key strategic structural, institutional and cultural policy recommendations, for a nation-wide career guidance and education-to-employment system in Qatar.

Overarching strategic messages for career guidance recommendations were as follows:

- While there are some good practice examples by education institutions and diverse employers, this is not enough – Qatar needs to establish a central career guidance entity, integrate career guidance into the education system, and provide trained career counsellors.
- Career guidance needs to be accessible nation-wide through career centers for all youth to access education and employment advice, gain skills, internships and career guidance.
- Policies and programs need to engage diverse stakeholders - public and private sector employers, Qatari youth and parents - to ensure a cultural shift to address career guidance challenges, ensure positive and sustained impact, to meet youth and employer needs.

Stakeholders were advised that QCF would develop the recommendations into an Action Plan for follow-up engagement, dissemination and onward collaboration with stakeholders.

Recommendation 1:

Qatar Career Fair should coordinate with the Ministry of Administrative Development to consider establishing a national career guidance policy steering committee for effective collaboration, policy formation and program design between education, labour, youth and commerce ministries, leading public, private and NGO organisations – led by Qatar Career Fair to:

- Develop nation-wide career guidance policies and programs to integrate career guidance within all education institutions to increase youth career awareness, understanding of the labour market, employability skills and experience, to meet their aspirations and employer needs.
- Encourage employers to actively engage in youth career awareness and skills building through school visits, mentoring, career fairs, paid internships and work experience.
- Develop education and skills projections needed in the economy over next 15 years – including STEM careers and sector needs - disseminate to ministries, schools, universities and employers.
- Facilitate engagement, collaboration and knowledge exchange platforms for diverse labour market stakeholders, to ensure challenges are addressed and recommendations identified.

Recommendation 2:

Qatar Career Fair should coordinate with the Ministry of Administrative Development to consider establishing nation-wide Career Centers, under the auspices of a central career guidance entity, Qatar Career Fair, to provide career awareness and guidance services, employability skills programs, internships and work experience, to meet the needs of youth, employers and the economy.

Recommendation 3:

- Supreme Education Council and Qatar Career Fair should collaborate to agree a way forward of how to integrate career guidance into the education nation-wide - all schools and universities - and increase the number of trained career guidance counsellors, this includes:
- Consider developing clear job descriptions for career counsellors – focussing on career development lessons and initiatives for all students – and not administrative school functions;
- Allocate financial and resource support to ensure schools actively engage with universities and employers to raise awareness of higher education, diverse careers and gain employability skills;
- Consider providing graduate qualifications for career counselling at Qatar University;
- Set targets to increase the number of trained career advisors in all high schools and universities.

Recommendation 4:

Qatar Career Fair should collaborate with key government departments including Supreme Education Council, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Administrative Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports and ICT-Qatar to raise awareness and access career guidance, and create a culture of career advice, awareness, skills and orientation among Qatari youth and parents:

- Encourage Qatari youth to be resilient and autonomous to make informed career decisions, develop employability skills through volunteering and internships, explore career ambitions, aspirations and diverse professions.
- Engage and strongly encourage parents to attend school meetings and career events to learn about youth ambitions, career skills and diverse professions now available in Qatar.
- Use diverse media including social media, TV and print to promote career guidance awareness, understanding, diverse opportunities available and needs of the Qatar labour market.

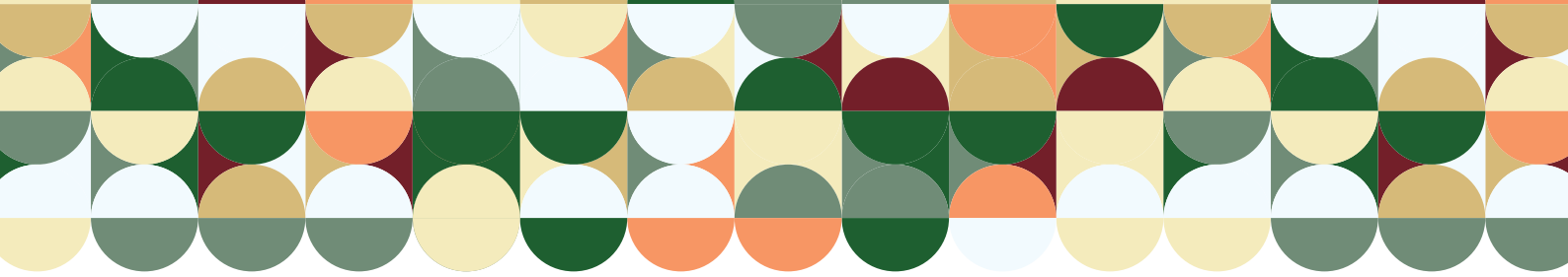
Recommendation 5:

Qatar Career Fair should establish the Qatar Career Forum as an annual career guidance platform for diverse policy, research, education and employment stakeholders, Qatari youth and parents to:

- Share skills building, recruitment, development and career guidance best practice and challenges by industry and sector – building on the positive example by the energy sector
- Identify ways to better deliver Qatarization - shifting the focus from quantity to quality, and meeting the education and skills needs of diverse employers in the Qatar economy.
- Engage Qatari youth and parents to identify challenges and impacts of new policies/programs.
- Share valuable research and ideas within and across sectors to multiply positive impact.

Recommendation 6:

Supreme Education Council in collaboration with Qatar Career Fair and Qatar University should commission in-depth research to assess career guidance challenges, monitor the impact of career advisors and career centers on increasing youth skills, career awareness, understanding and experience, and disseminate key messages to educators, employers and policy-makers.



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