



SHEIKH SAUD BIN SAQR AL QASIMI  
FOUNDATION FOR POLICY RESEARCH

# CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES 2013 – 2018

“SUPPORTING RESEARCH, DEVELOPING MINDS”

## Introduction

A key part of the Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation's mission is to develop and deliver strategic programs that strengthen the quality of Ras Al Khaimah's education sector and local government departments.

This Capacity Development Strategies and Priorities document (Capacity Development Plan) clarifies and focuses the Al Qasimi Foundation's role and priorities in funding, designing, and delivering professional development opportunities to those within the education sector, other local government agencies, and the wider community. It identifies the current and past professional development programs undertaken by the Foundation since it was founded in 2009. Further, the plan identifies new segments of the local community where the Foundation may support the provision of professional development opportunities during the next five years (2013-2018).

The core capacity development areas identified in this plan are:

- Improvement of teacher quality
- Promotion of school development
- Gifted and talented student enrichment
- Targeted skills development of Ras Al Khaimah civil service

While these four areas form the central focus of the Al Qasimi Foundation's capacity development activities, the Foundation still recognizes and provides for capacity development that may fall beyond their scope.

Underpinning all of the Al Qasimi Foundation's capacity development efforts is a commitment to both excellence and integrity.

“ Underpinning all of the Al Qasimi Foundation's capacity development efforts is a commitment to both excellence and integrity. ”



## Al Qasimi Foundation's Vision & Mission

### Vision

Our vision is the sustained social, cultural, and economic development of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates and the enhanced capacity, satisfaction, and quality of life for all members of its community, attained through effective public policy research and strategic service delivery.

### Mission

Our mission is to make significant contributions to the social, cultural, and economic development of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates by:

- Generating and supporting innovative, high-quality research focused on education and related policy areas in order to inform decisions and support the creation of relevant, effective public policies.
- Developing and providing strategic services and support to build individual and local capacity in education and the public sector.
- Building a spirit of community, collaboration, and shared vision through purposeful engagement that fosters meaningful relationships among individuals and organizations.

This Capacity Development Plan seeks to fulfill the second part of the Al Qasimi Foundation's mission.

## Purpose of the Plan

The Capacity Development Plan is intended to provide a strategic framework from which programs and capacity building initiatives can be identified, prioritized, and pursued within Ras Al Khaimah (RAK). It has been created in response to a number of factors, including:

- Uneven teacher quality due to the multifaceted nature of the teacher labor market. This has led to a situation in which RAK schools are not able to offer a high quality education relative to international norms.
- Student engagement, particularly among boys, is poor and leads to high drop-out rates and low achievement among boys in secondary school.
- Public employees may lack certain skills (such as English language and computer literacy) that create barriers for accessing professional development and organizational improvement opportunities.
- Local government organizations that are siloed, reducing efficiency and effectiveness, impeding knowledge and resource sharing, and slowing progress.

## Goals of the Plan

The Capacity Development Plan identifies five primary objectives:

- Provide opportunities to improve the quality of educators working in RAK with the intention of raising the overall standard of education in the emirate.
- Begin to bridge the knowledge and skills gap present in local government organizations, so as to enable them to operate with the effectiveness and efficiency necessary in the 21st century.
- Reduce barriers between local organizations and institutions to encourage knowledge sharing.
- Focus and improve the quality of existing capacity building initiatives funded by the Foundation and explore new opportunities for service and program provision according to the needs of the education sector, informed by research.
- Develop and prepare gifted and talented Emirati students for advanced studies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) or abroad.





## Capacity Development Framework

The Al Qasimi Foundation's Capacity Development Plan is situated within a framework of guiding principles which support the Foundation's values of contributing to the positive development of the local community, promoting collaboration, and striving for the highest quality.

The Al Qasimi Foundation will:

- Take into consideration the long-term sustainable development of RAK when creating and delivering programs or initiatives.
- Listen to the local community to ensure that all services and programs are need-driven.
- Base decisions for the selection and development of initiatives on the most up-to-date research.
- Strive to maintain the highest quality of provision when engaging training providers and developing programs.
- Acknowledge the influence of power relations, mind sets, and behavior change, and emphasize the importance of motivation as a driver of change.
- Strive to work in cooperation with existing local institutions to support and strengthen them.
- Recognize that capacity development has unplanned consequences that should be kept in mind during the design process and be valued, tracked, and evaluated as appropriate.



## Programs and Initiatives

In order to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in this Capacity Development Plan, the Al Qasimi Foundation has implemented a number of programs, grants, and initiatives for the benefit of RAK's educators, students, and local civil service staff. This document outlines existing and anticipated programs and initiatives that will continue to be monitored and evaluated over the next five years (2013-2018) and adjusted according to perceived needs.

### Improving teacher quality

#### *Teacher professional development workshops*

The Al Qasimi Foundation began its teacher professional development program in 2010 with the *21st Century Teaching* course. By 2012 the program had grown to six courses delivered twice a year each, including courses focused on action research and a pilot to develop teacher mentors.

Over the next five years the Al Qasimi Foundation intends to:

- Continue to offer a suite of courses tailored to the expressed professional development needs of local educators.



- Analyze and evaluate feedback to inform the Al Qasimi Foundation's decisions on retiring older courses and commissioning the development of new course content.
- Continue to deliver courses bilingually ensuring access for both Arabic and English speakers.
- Maintain a commitment to sustainability by training local teachers to become teaching assistants and subsequently workshop instructors so that teacher professional development is not entirely dependent on Al Qasimi Foundation staff or contractors.
- Develop a new, purpose-designed training space to model the most up-to-date teaching methods and enhance the Al Qasimi Foundation's capacity.
- Investigate the possibility of accreditation for the Al Qasimi Foundation's courses with the Ministry of Higher Education.
- Build constructively-critical and supportive relationships with higher education institutions and other training providers in RAK to ensure alternative, high quality professional development is available to all 3500+ educators in the emirate.

## Programs and Initiatives

### *Ras Al Khaimah Teachers' Network*

The Ras Al Khaimah Teachers' Network (RAKTN) was set up by the Al Qasimi Foundation in 2010 as an online professional network to connect educators across the emirate. RAKTN aims to draw together teachers who are geographically spread out and sometimes isolated in different schools to build professional relationships and share best practices and resources. It also serves as a platform for the course materials and interactions that support the teacher professional development workshops.

RAKTN is managed and moderated by the Al Qasimi Foundation. It currently has 490 members who are most active during their participation in the Foundation's teacher professional development workshops. A newsletter has recently been introduced with the aim of promoting member engagement with RAKTN.

Over the course of the next five years the Al Qasimi Foundation intends to:

- Develop RAKTN into a self-sustaining network, contributed to by its members.
- Identify and train subject-specific and phase-specific group leaders to manage special interest groups.
- Increase the number of active participants to more than 1000 members.
- Develop the newsletter as a tool for engaging members, aiming to distribute nine issues per year.
- Commission regular blog contributions.

### *Education resource library*

As part of its commitment to teacher professional development, the Al Qasimi Foundation understands the importance of educational materials and resources to enable learning and inspire creativity and innovation. The Al Qasimi Foundation also recognizes the existing lack of classroom resources available to RAK's education community, due in part to limited funding sources. To meet this need, the Al Qasimi Foundation wishes to establish itself as a resource center.

Over the course of the next five years the Foundation intends to:

- Build a library of education books and resources, endeavoring to provide Arabic materials or translations where possible.
- Compile a list of recommended online and digital resources.
- Develop a library of teaching films to illustrate innovative ideas and best practices.
- Identify opportunities to make existing English-medium film resources accessible to Arabic speakers (e.g. adding subtitles).

## Programs and Initiatives

### *Teacher exchange*

The RAK Teacher Exchange Program successfully completed its first full exchange with the Institute of Pedagogy (PZ.BS) in Basel, Switzerland as this Capacity Development Plan was being created. Eleven local and Arab expatriate teachers from RAK government schools participated in a week-long study visit to Basel in November 2011, and 20 Swiss teachers and PZ.BS staff visited RAK on a return visit in September 2012. The first exchange was broadly successful and provided plenty of learning opportunities – both cultural and educational – for both parties.

As part of its commitment to providing high quality professional development opportunities for educators, the Al Qasimi Foundation intends to:

- Identify suitable countries or states with which to hold informative exchanges.
- Plan further exchange visits biennially and receive exchange visitors from exchange-partner organizations in the intervening years.
- Consider lessons learned from previous exchanges in the planning of subsequent visits to ensure that participants are prepared to visit another culture and are able to capitalize on the experience.
- Maintain and update the RAK Teacher Exchange Program website. This includes adding written content and photos after each visit and developing a series of digital case studies to document the RAK Teacher Exchange Program and highlight learning points.

### *Teacher scholarships*

In addition to providing professional development opportunities within the Al Qasimi Foundation, the Foundation recognizes that some distinguished teachers may wish to further improve their knowledge and skills by taking professional development courses offered by other institutions or by completing a Master's degree in a field related to education. It is envisioned that teacher scholarships will enable schools to recruit and retain high quality teachers with an increased interest in the profession.

The Al Qasimi Foundation also wishes to foster an interest in action-based research in teachers and an understanding of the importance of data-driven decision making and the need for regular impact assessment.

Scholarships are awarded through a competitive application process, and the breakdown of annual funding available for teacher scholarships is as follows:

- Two partial (up to 50%) scholarships for teachers to undertake master's degrees.
- Five partial scholarships for teachers to undertake short professional development courses in topics related to education.
- Two scholarships for teachers to undertake action research within their classrooms or schools.



## Programs and Initiatives

### Promoting school development

In response to the need expressed by many schools over the course of the last three years, the Al Qasimi Foundation is launching a School Grants program. The Foundation intends to:

- Fund small to medium-sized infrastructure or resourcing projects in schools that will benefit students and create a more positive learning environment.
- Provide up to six grants per year (from a total fund of 40,000 AED per annum) to schools that can demonstrate the tangible benefit of the project to their students.

The grant program will promote teacher interaction with the Al Qasimi Foundation as applicants will need to have engaged in the Foundation's Research Course and will be required to document the impact of their grant-funded project by producing a digital case study. It will also encourage students and teachers to work together to improve local schools and allow them to gain experience in the competitive bid process.

“Improving student engagement and raising the standing of RAK's education system is the ultimate goal of the Al Qasimi Foundation's capacity development activities in the education sector.”



## Programs and Initiatives

### Developing gifted and talented students

Improving student engagement and raising the standing of RAK's education system is the ultimate goal of the Al Qasimi Foundation's capacity development activities in the education sector. In addition to providing teacher professional development, the Al Qasimi Foundation is well-placed to provide development opportunities for gifted and talented students preparing to enter advanced studies in the UAE and overseas.

As this aspect of the Al Qasimi Foundation's work develops, student programming will:

- Establish criteria for identifying and recruiting talented youth.
- Offer workshops and seminars for students preparing to apply to higher education institutions, enabling them to:
  - Develop academic success skills
  - Explore career options
  - Navigate the university application process, especially for overseas institutions



- Provide annual access to education programs, cultural events, and conferences across the UAE that target secondary school students (e.g. RAKCAM conference, Emirates Airline Literature Festival, Art Dubai). Such opportunities allow students to broaden their horizons and meet with, listen to, and learn from role models in a variety of industries.
- Manage a scholarship program to enable the most exceptional students to undertake study at world-class universities around the globe.

## Programs and Initiatives

### Targeted skills development for the civil service

In the process of conducting various research studies, the Al Qasimi Foundation has been approached by various government departments seeking continued professional development opportunities and up-skilling. To date, the Al Qasimi Foundation has funded and managed English language trainings for judges and prosecutors in the RAK court system and digital literacy training and English language courses for RAK Education Zone administrative personnel. English language courses for prison guards and a research program for civil servants are anticipated to launch in 2013.

Looking to the future, the Al Qasimi Foundation intends to:

- Continue funding, developing, and delivering high quality professional development opportunities for local government personnel—meeting needs expressed by the various local government departments.
- Assess the impact professional development opportunities have on local government departments, both at the workgroup and organizational levels.



## Monitoring and Evaluation

The Al Qasimi Foundation recognizes the importance of monitoring and evaluating of all its capacity development initiatives. Through consistent assessment of each initiative, the Foundation will be able to ascertain the impact it has and determine the return-on-investment in terms of time, skills, and finances.

While evaluation components are built into existing courses and initiatives, the Al Qasimi Foundation will develop a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation. The Foundation will also engage with different entities to formulate impact evaluation studies.

