

# 'Schooling hours to be increased for parity with international standards'

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Staff writer

**KUWAIT:** Assistant-Undersecretary for General Education at the Ministry of Education Mona Al-Loghani revealed that the ministry is planning to increase the number of schooling hours in line with international standards and change the current duration of the school day which is far less than required.

The assistant-undersecretary further pointed out that the Ministry of Education is planning to review the existing criteria and mechanisms of those involved in a supervisory position. She went on to say that the "Kuwaitization" in the Ministry of Education is going according to plan. She cited a recent report which points out that the number of Kuwaiti employees working in kindergartens has reached 100 percent. Al-Loghani also stressed her ministry's commitment to a better education by improving the educational input which will begin at the nursery level and continue until students reach the high school level. The following is an excerpt of Al-Loghani's interview with Al-Watan:

**Let us begin with the current standard of education here in Kuwait. Do you believe that the curriculum today reflects and suits our student in all stages?**

**Al-Loghani:** We are working very hard to improve and raise the level of our educational system. There is no doubt that we are doing something right as the students' results have shown. There are four assessments carried out to monitor students' progress. Our program for improvement does not target or focus only on students. There are many aspects involved. An important and essential component of this is the teachers and the educational materials and resources used in classrooms. Our modern curriculum has improved after careful study. The field study included not only students and teachers but also parents whose feedback was meticulously reviewed to compare it with a real life class situation.

It is very important to stress here that any education process requires the assistance of the society as a whole. No element of society can be excluded. They are all involved in one way or another. Therefore, both societal and monetary contributions remain immensely sought-after. I do not think that there are people who would argue against the development of the school curriculum. Since we began our development



Assistant-Undersecretary for General Education at the Ministry of Education Mona Al-Loghani (left) speaks to the Al Watan Reporter at her office on Monday, July 19, 2010. (Al Watan)

program back in the year 2000, as part of the five-year development plan, we have been aiming to develop our school curriculum. We had the support of both the political leaders as well as experts in education. We are spending a huge amount of money on schooling and resources. A huge chunk of the budget is allotted to education at all stages.

We began to implement the program in the year 2005. We start off with the elementary stage. In the year 2009, we began with high school level and since then the program has been empirically tested and monitored to ascertain results. We are still working on presenting a well-suited curriculum and educational program.

**Does this mean that the Minister of Education will go ahead with its 'more schooling-hours' program?**

**Al-Loghani:** First of all, we are not increasing the schooling hours for the sake of adding

more hours. Also, the term 'more schooling hours' is not technically correct. It has been noted that the number of hours which students spend on primary subjects is far less than it should be if we compare them with international standards.

According to the World Bank's educational system assessment, Kuwait has too many holidays and time-offs which makes it necessary to introduce more hours to make it school hours compatible with international standards.

It is obvious with the number of national, official, religious holidays which the country enjoys not to mention the two-day weekend every week, the input is not up to the standard each we are seeking to reach. The idea is being discussed very carefully to ensure that such a program fits well with the ministry's development plans.

**Does this mean that the Ministry of Education is being centralized? And,**

**how has the ministry been dealing with private tuitions and tutors?**

**Al-Loghani:** When it comes to planning, decentralization is not affordable. Policies and mechanisms need to be standardized so everyone works in union and in a synchronized manner. On the hand, the execution stage is no doubt decentralized and department heads are fully authorized to take initiative within the framework of the development plan.

As for private tuitions and tutors, all teachers know for well that it is against the law when the signed the contract with the ministry. The contracts of those teachers who have been caught giving private tuitions are terminated. There are strict rules and regulations which we have and the contracted teachers are made aware of the penalties of the contract. In fact, the ministry had gone a step further to tackle the rampant problem of private tuitions by introducing night classes for the benefit of teachers and students. The idea of night classes

is to attract more students who need help in any subject. The classes are intensive and well-suited for students' requirements. In this case, teachers are working for extra money but legally with the full permission and backing of the ministry.

**Are you personally satisfied with the level of overseas teachers contracted by the Ministry of Education to teach here in Kuwait?**

**Al-Loghani:** The Ministerial Decree 110/2002 sets the ruled and conditions for contracting overseas teachers. These set of rules include good grades, appropriate experience and of course interviews. If they meet the requirements then their chances of being recruited are very high obviously. However, the Ministry of Education has come up with a new procedure that newly contracted teachers should join a 10-day preparatory period as a kind of induction to familiarize teachers with the new environment, students, and syllabus and so on and so forth.

We are contracting more and more people for the simple reason that whatever reasons might be, we have enough teachers as standby just in case. According to a recent report, we have 20 percent female teachers and 7 percent male teachers as reserve. While we are limited in our choices of the countries which we seek to hire from due to educational and cultural agreements but usually we deal with countries which have a good standing in particular subjects and fields. We need to expect worse scenarios any time. Not all teachers find the Kuwaiti education system totally agreeable. Also, others for personal reasons tend to terminate their contracts. The number of those who quit by last June 24 is estimated to be 169 male teachers and 582 female teachers. On our part, we tend to be careful while terminating members of staff. There are committees which monitor teachers and weak performance is usually dealt with.

We are still working on streamlining typical obstacles almost at all levels. We are even looking into the criteria used to determine who holds supervisory positions. Just like we are dealing with the educational issue at grass roots level, we are also targeting senior positions because the two are very much interconnected. Training and skills enhanced programs are provided for the new recruits to ensure that they are working along the lines of the development plans.

## 'Science laboratories to benefit from automation'

**Abdulaziz Al-Fadhli**  
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**KUWAIT:** Technical Supervisor of Science at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Barrak Al-Barrak has stressed the importance of benefiting from technology provided by the State to merge e-learning and laboratory education.

During Al-Barrak's meeting with representatives of the Academic Facilities Sector, he demanded the establishment of new and advanced training centers for teachers, which include special wards for science laboratories and preparation rooms.

He added that training center in Al-Jahra is at the

final stages of execution and urged the Academic Facilities Sector to approve plans to construct similar centers in the Al-Ahmadi and Al-Farwaniya governorates.

Al-Barrak said that he provided notices that the science wards of four laboratories should be on the ground floor to meet safety standards, that two separate exits in case of emergencies should be provided and that ceilings should be provided with fire resistant panels. He added that proper fire extinguishing and ventilation systems, in addition to incorporating electronic fire alarm board and directing signs should also be made available.

The ward should also be provided with computers, Internet and interactive boards.

**Masoud Al-Enezi**  
Staff Writer

**KUWAIT:** A source at the Ministry of Education said that the ministry will receive the first batch of new teachers graduated from the College of Education and the College of Basic Education at Kuwait University at the beginning of August.

He explained that the Civil Service Commission (CSC) will nominate the new graduates at this time. The source said that the nominated graduates are required to visit the educational zones,

except for the Educational Technologies Designers and Librarians who should visit the Ministry of Education who will refer them to the educational zones. He added that the CSC said that the ministry will receive new foreign teachers contracted with the ministry during the period from Aug. 21 until Sept. 13. He explained that foreign teachers will arrive to the country on batches of not more than 50 teachers each. He added that the first batch will arrive from Egypt and who will be followed by those from other countries.

The source went on to say that the

committee formed by the ministry is finalizing the payment of special allowances approved by the Civil Service Council for PhD and Master degree holders, expecting that all procedures will be completed in the near future.

The source said that the allowances approved by Civil Service Council will be paid retroactively from last April. Meanwhile, a source at the Financial Directorate said that all rewards for members of committees and others will be paid during the next period, adding that financial support was received from the ministry.

## First batch of foreign teachers arrive August 21

### Sabah Al-Salem university to hold 40,000 students

**Yahya Dashti**  
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**KUWAIT:** Director of Execution Process at Project Office at Kuwait University Dr. Rana Al-Faris stressed that the Sabah Al-Salem project, which involves establishing a university and dormitory, is one of the leading projects of the national development plan.

She made this statement while accompanying students from the American Society for Civil Engineers to the project site.

Al-Faris told Al Watan that students of the American society are the first to pay a visit to dormitory. She stated that the university welcomes future visits from students.

As part of the tour, she presented a video clip on the different stages of the project before the students conducted a field tour of the site. The students conducted the tour despite the hot weather.

She stressed that the office is serious about organizing more tours in the future to enable other students to have a look at this distinguished project.

The project also involves establishing a several faculty buildings in the same area. The faculty buildings are expected to receive over 40,000 students.

## Kuwait diving team removes 100-meter net from coral reefs



A diver from the Kuwait Diving Team prevents a fish from getting trapped in a fishing net entangled in the coral reefs around Garooh Island on Sunday, July 25, 2010. (KUNA)

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti diving team removed on Sunday fishing nets caught in the coral reefs of the southern Island of Garooh.

Head of the mission Lt. Gen. Jassem Al-Nasrallah told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA)

the Kuwaiti diving team usually combs all coral reef areas in Kuwait, within the framework of the marine protection program.

Al-Nasrallah added that during the scanning of coral reefs around Garooh Island, the



Divers from the Kuwait Diving Team pass on to their team members fishing nets removed from the coral reefs around Garooh Island on Sunday, July 25, 2010. (KUNA)

team located several fishing nets entangled in the reefs, which was life threatening for marine life. Therefore, the team decided to remove the nets, of 100 meters in length and three meters width. The team used air bags to

lift the nets without damaging the coral reefs, he said. He called on fishermen to protect the national marine environment, through refraining from the use of nets in areas containing coral reef. -KUNA