



SHEIKH SAUD BIN SAQR AL QASIMI
FOUNDATION FOR POLICY RESEARCH

RESEARCH STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES 2013-2018

“SUPPORTING RESEARCH, DEVELOPING MINDS”

Introduction

The past forty years have witnessed rapid economic, community, and cultural development in the United Arab Emirates and broader Gulf region. However, research regarding these changes, their impact on the Arab world, and implications for the future has been limited, providing little assistance to the region's decision makers. The Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation was established in 2009, in part to conduct, support, and promote high quality research to inform policy makers in Ras Al Khaimah, the United Arab Emirates, and the broader Gulf region.

In order to best take advantage of available resources, this Research Strategies and Priorities Plan (Research Plan) is designed to clarify and focus the research sponsored and conducted by the Al Qasimi Foundation. It identifies the Foundation's priority research areas for the next five years (2013-2018). It also describes the current and past initiatives that have been undertaken related to each priority area. Further, the Research Plan identifies new areas of inquiry to be explored in the coming years. Underpinning all of the Al Qasimi Foundation's research efforts is a commitment to both scholarly excellence and integrity.

The three core research areas identified in this plan are:

1. Education Quality and Impact
2. Community Development
3. Health and Well-Being

These three areas will form the central focus of the Al Qasimi Foundation's research activities for the next five years. However, the Foundation leadership also recognizes there may be projects of significant societal importance that fall outside the immediate scope of these areas and reserves the right to support such research on a case-by-case basis.

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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

The Research Plan builds on the existing Vision and Mission statements in order to create a framework and goals for the Al Qasimi Foundation's research activities over the next five years.

Purpose & Goals of the Plan

The Research Plan is intended to promote high quality research that is of use and value to policy makers in the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah (RAK), United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the broader Gulf region. The purpose of the Research Plan is to:

- Focus and strengthen the quality of research conducted or sponsored by the Al Qasimi Foundation
- Promote awareness of major research themes to both academics and the general public
- Highlight Al Qasimi Foundation research expertise across different sectors

The Research Plan is also intended to provide direction and focus for researchers working with or for the Al Qasimi Foundation over the next five years. Accordingly, five primary goals have been identified as a guide for researchers:

1. Contribute to building local research capacity in RAK and the UAE
2. Conduct and disseminate research that provides new knowledge relevant to public policy both nationally and regionally
3. Increase the amount of high-quality, scholarly research available in the Arabic language through translation of the Foundation's English language publications
4. Develop a strong interlinking network of international and national research partners to focus on high priority research topics
5. Communicate research findings directly to policy makers

Research Framework

The Al Qasimi Foundation Research Plan is situated within a broader framework that emphasizes the following:

Developing highly qualified, locally-based researchers

The Al Qasimi Foundation is dedicated to developing locally-based researchers who reside in the UAE and contribute to its long term development through partnerships with international researchers at the doctoral and scholarly levels. There is also an emphasis on using local interns and research assistants and to provide them with training on research methods (including data collection, data analysis, literature review writing, and grant proposal preparation). All research projects conducted with or by the Al Qasimi Foundation are encouraged to engage Emirati nationals and other motivated young people studying at local universities in order to develop the next generation of researchers.

Research ethics and excellence

As the UAE is still relatively new to research, the Al Qasimi Foundation places a heavy emphasis on all researchers adhering to international standards of research ethics. All locally-based researchers are required to have completed the CITI Human Subjects Protection Course and to adhere to local Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. All international scholars must have IRB approval from their home institution. At all stages of the research process excellence is also emphasized, from the inception of the project till its dissemination.

Innovation, creativity, and collaboration

The Al Qasimi Foundation endeavors to be an innovative and creative organization that constantly seeks exciting new ways to address research challenges. It therefore encourages inter- and multi- disciplinary research in order to promote collaboration and creativity across various fields of inquiry. The Al Qasimi Foundation also looks to the arts and technology in order to help communicate research findings and make research accessible and relevant to the general public.



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Research Framework

Engagement with local policy makers

One of the primary roles of the Al Qasimi Foundation is to serve as a bridge between scholars and policy makers. The Foundation seeks to connect policy makers with researchers in order to help promote evidence-based policy-making and the value of researchers in the community. As such, the majority of research conducted or sponsored by the Al Qasimi Foundation is of an applied nature. We anticipate that projects sponsored by the Foundation will result in both scholarly and

applied work products; however, we will work specifically with researchers to inform local policy makers about relevant findings from their research. Such communications could include presentations, a policy or working paper, or a research-based editorial in the local newspaper. The Al Qasimi Foundation also works toward establishing direct communication channels to discuss policy research outcomes with the relevant policy makers.

“The Foundation seeks to connect policy makers with researchers in order to help promote evidence-based policy-making and the value of researchers in the community.”



Major Research Themes

The Al Qasimi Foundation's three priority research areas over the next five years (2012-2017) are:

1. Education Quality and Impact
2. Community Development
3. Health and Well-Being

Cutting across all three themes are questions of public policy and planning, which are addressed through comparative considerations of evidence from the UAE and abroad.

Education Quality and Impact

The educational system in the UAE is complex with the regulation and monitoring of educational activities varying across the different Emirates. The private school system is rapidly expanding and the public system is in the process of modernization. Foreign students outnumber domestic students at almost all levels of education and foreign education providers can often outnumber domestic providers, resulting in nearly a dozen different national curriculums (e.g., American, British, Indian) from which students can choose. These factors make it difficult for the local governments to assure quality across schools.



The Al Qasimi Foundation began its work with a focus on secondary education. Our work in this area includes groundbreaking studies investigating the quality of education in boys' and girls' secondary schools and reasons behind the high drop-out rates for males. More recently, we have expanded our focus to include higher education issues with studies relating to faculty working in the UAE and the local impact of foreign education providers (e.g., international branch campuses).

As the UAE continues to strive to improve its education sector, the Al Qasimi Foundation places particular emphasis on the following sub-themes:

- a. Teacher quality and effectiveness
- b. School-to-work transitions
- c. Education policy and planning

Major Research Themes

Community Development

The rapid development of the UAE from a mostly rural, poor, and tribal-based society to modern economic power with significant international influence has placed great strain on many of the nation's local communities struggling to adapt to the modern era. The Al Qasimi Foundation is committed to working with local stakeholders and decision makers to strengthen local communities in RAK and the UAE. As such, it encourages research related to any aspect of the community. To date, this has largely focused on urban design and development, but there is interest in widening the scope to include issues related to sustainable development and the environment. There has also been some limited research done on vulnerable populations and the challenges they face in society.

Sub-themes in which the Al Qasimi Foundation has a particular interest include the following:

- a. Urban planning, sustainable development and the environment
- b. Vulnerable populations (prisoners, the elderly, infants)
- c. Anchor institutions (schools, hospitals, cultural centers, mosques)



Major Research Themes

Health and Well-being

The UAE and broader Gulf region are struggling with issues relating to health and well-being. This is due in part to the rapid urbanization and development of the region that has led to the spread of non-communicable diseases related to poor lifestyle choices (Khatib, 2004). The Al Qasimi Foundation therefore wishes to encourage unbiased and in-depth research that examines public health issues such as lifestyle diseases, genetic disorders, and other issues relating to physical and/or mental health. The Foundation's existing work in this area includes a study of nutrition awareness of school-aged children and their parents, but there is a pressing need for additional inquiry in this area.

Sub-themes in which the Al Qasimi Foundation has a particular interest include the following:

- a. Nutrition, lifestyle, and related diseases
- b. Health education in schools and university
- c. Public health policy and planning



References

Khatib, O. (2004). Noncommunicable diseases: risk factors and regional strategies for prevention and care. *East Mediterranean Health Journal*. Retrieved August 28, 2012, from http://jft-newspaper.aub.edu.lb/serve/data/nfsc306-mz diseases/Noncommunicable_diseases-riskfactors_and_regional_strategies_for_prevention_and_care.pdf