

Qatar school bans teachers from getting pregnant

Principal of school in Qatar asks teachers not to get pregnant to avoid negative effects on their performance

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Manama: The principal of an Independent School in Qatar has asked teachers not to get pregnant to avoid negative effects on their performance.

The school was this year upgraded from semi-independent to full-fledged Independent School, a status that called for outstanding results under an official plan to boost education standards.

According to a report in Qatari daily The Peninsula, the principal told the staff that she refused to accept new applications from pregnant teachers even the ones who were employed by the school when it was semi-independent, but had to re-apply under the new school status.

"I am against recruiting pregnant women as teachers," she reportedly told the school staff.

She also told married teachers not to get pregnant to ensure that their work performance would not be affected, the daily reported.

However, her requests, in violation of the country's official policies, drew the teachers' scorn.

"Maybe she should provide us with contraceptive pills to prevent us from getting pregnant," one married teacher said.

Another teacher suggested that the principal "make arrangements for us to stay in the school and not to go to our homes, so that we can be fully dedicated and devoted to the school."

A teacher was quoted as remarking that the "directive" was dictatorial.

"The principal is crazy and wants to run the school as if it were her private company and without regard for laws and rights," she said.

"There is no institution or school in Qatar that has denied women the right to get pregnant. The human resource law applicable to Independent Schools does have

provisions for maternity leave for teachers. How can you simply stop a married woman from becoming a mother? Motherhood is a woman's fundamental right," she said.

For another teacher, the future looked bleak.

"Tomorrow, the principal might ask single teachers not to get married and those who are already married might be requested to seek divorce," she said.

In a different school, the principal has reportedly refused to sanction paid sick leave to a teacher, saying no staff would ever be permitted to take sick leave with pay.

The teacher said the principal's decision was against the human resource law, but added that she had no intention to challenge the decision.

Fact file: Independent School

An Independent School is a government-funded school that is granted autonomy to carry out its educational mission and objectives while being held accountable to terms agreed to in a contract with the Supreme Education Council.

Independent Schools were created to turn Qatar's vision of developing a world-class education system into a reality. These schools foster the kind of creativity and critical thinking the 21st century demands by offering new models for curriculum design, teaching methods, and collaboration.

All Independent Schools must meet established curriculum standards in Arabic, English, mathematics and science, as well as comply with periodic financial audits. Tuition is free for Qataris and others eligible for public education.

Currently, there are 102 Independent Schools in Qatar. -- Qatar's Supreme Educational Council.

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