

DIPLOMACY AND CAPACITY BUILDING: THE QATARI EXPERIENCE

Abstract

This article discusses the training and education policy related to the diplomatic field. It deliberates the importance of capacity building in creating capable diplomatic service. It debates the Qatari experience in training its diplomatic cadres and the policy direction towards forming diplomatic corps matching the ambitions of Qatar foreign policy.

Key words: Capacity Development – Training – Education – Human Development – Diplomacy – Foreign Policy – Qatar National Vision 2030 – Training – Methodology – Programme – Functional expertise

I. Introduction

Globalization is characterized by complex networks of relations between states and other entities in the economic, social and political spheres in our world today. There is a clear change in the shape and the content of international relations, along with an ongoing technological revolution contributed to the efficiency and growth of diplomacy. This context has a direct impact in the work dynamics of diplomacy as a profession. With continuous global transformation, the study and the practice of various subjects related to international affairs evolved towards more a specialized outlook in fathoming the details of diverse aspects of any subject. Currently, diplomacy does include new practices apart from the bilateral relations between states, as we traditionally know them. As examples of these new diplomatic practices, we may mention: multilateral diplomacy, economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, educational diplomacy, public diplomacy, etc. Hence, professional training and education in diplomacy emerged as critical dimensions in raising the level of performance and reflecting a positive image of the state on the international arena. UNDP defines "capacity development" as

*"the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time"*¹.

As a response to these developments, many countries around the world set professional development strategies and plans for their diplomatic service. There is a wide range of competencies the diplomat needs to acquire in order to deliver his duties in a professional manner that assists in serving the interests of his country. The broad understanding of different subjects, and the ability to connect the dots in relation to international affairs, while being an expert in a niche area, are critical for any professional diplomat. Diplomats should have the analytical skills of the multidimensional political, socio-economic, institutional and substantive issues. Their ability to communicate and negotiate are essential competencies in their professional environmental setting.

As a profession, Diplomacy is an exclusive area, since the selection for such job requires certain qualities drawing the elite in any society. Francois de Callières wrote in the 17th century, in his book, «On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes», indicating the personal qualities necessary for a diplomat to succeed in missions abroad

*«An observant mind, a spirit of application which refuses to be distracted by pleasures or frivolous amusements, a sound judgment which takes measure of things as they are...a tranquil and patient nature, always ready to listen with attention to those whom he meet; an address always open, genial, civil, agreeable, with easy and ingratiating manners which assist largely in making favorable impression upon those around him»*².

II. Capacity building: The Qatari experience

Human development is considered a central component of Qatar National Vision 2030, since the advancement of any society will not be possible unless high quality educational and training services are provided to achieve future personal and State ambitions. The state leadership has a solid conviction that the continuation of progress and prosperity in Qatar depends largely in capacity building. This would allow Qatar to compete in the knowledge-based economy at the international level, and to diversify its economy in the future rather than depending on the oil and gas sector. In

¹ United Nations Development Group (August 2009). "United Nations Development System: A Collective Approach to Supporting Capacity Development".

² Francois de Callières, (2000) "On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes", Houghton Mifflin, New York.

Qatar's National Development Strategy 2011–2016, the training and education sector were presented as one of Qatar major development priorities. Due to the importance of this dimension in Qatar future development, the government continued to allocate substantial resources for education and training, which will help to address the increasing needs of Qatari professionals in different sectors. The first pillar of Qatar Vision 2030 «Human Development» stipulates:

«The system will provide citizens with excellent training and opportunities to develop to their full potential, preparing them for success in a changing world with increasingly complex technical requirements.»

This statement reflects the commitment of the state of Qatar to keeping the skills of its professionals up-to-date and competitive, through capacity building. Despite the small geographic and demographic size of the State of Qatar, it has developed into an important player on the regional and international levels, thanks to the vision of its leadership. This vision continues to reflect through the changing political and economic landscape of Qatar, with huge developments occurring on the local and external scenes. In a very short period of time, Qatar was able to initiate a pioneer TV channel, Al-Jazeera, today a must among top-international media, not to mention the success of its bid to organize the World Cup 2022, and its extensive engagement in cultural diplomacy. Qatar also became a major investor in different parts of the world, since it follows a strategy of diversification of its economic resources. These political, economic and cultural developments related to Qatar internal and external strategy, needed a competent diplomatic service to defend those interests.

Institutional development in Qatar took huge strides under the leadership of the former and current Emirs. Various institutions were formed to research and examine the best possible ways to achieve national interests whether in the economic, social or political spheres. In this context, the Diplomatic institute at the Foreign Ministry was established in January 2012 by an Emiri decree, as part of an overall restructuring of the Foreign Ministry. The main purpose of the Institute is to deliver high caliber training and educational programmes for the diplomatic cadres at the Ministry. It also conducts academic research and studies focused on regional and international issues.

III. Diplomatic Training

The foreign policy of the State of Qatar envisages greater regional and international diplomatic engagement. This policy direction entails the involvement of its diplomatic corps in many diplomatic assignments in different parts of the world, including diverse mediations, negotiations, post-war reconstruction, climate change, Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons etc. This is apart from other tasks related to looking after Qatar citizens' affairs abroad, and the promotion of Qatar foreign policy and investments that further the state interests. Undoubtedly, these vital issues need capable diplomats that have the sufficient educational knowledge and expertise to enable them deal with the intricacies of nowadays international issues. Hence, the necessity to invest in specialized education and professional training to develop a world-class diplomatic corps able to represent Qatar. This conviction has led the leadership at the Ministry to provide the Institute with all the resources needed in support of the capacity building effort, enabling our trainees to address the challenges and complexities facing Qatari diplomacy.

The Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry uses a wide-range of approaches to transfer knowledge and raise capacity. In each curriculum, tailored for different levels of trainees and diplomats, case studies, group discussions, role-plays, brain-storming sessions and other practical exercises supplement the theoretical side of the programme. The mixture of methodologies provides practical and theoretical knowledge for diplomats, while giving an insight into the use of these instruments. These programmes are implemented and designed by well-known experts, diplomats as well as distinguished international institutions. In the meantime, diplomats taking part in the courses reflect on the topics tackled, and express their views and observations drawing on their work experiences, which enrich their learning experience.

The benefits of the training undertaken at the Ministry were visible in the professional delivery of the Qatari diplomats who attended these programmes. This was clear in the skills they learned and later used in the communications and negotiations of substantive issues related to the political, and investment interests of Qatar. The follow up of the capacity building programmes at the Institute is an ongoing process, in order to have deeper insights as to the impact of these programmes. This process is executed through constant coordination with different departments at the Ministry, for lessons learned and feedback.

In Qatar, the shortage of well-trained professionals is particularly acute in the field of diplomacy. One of the challenges that face the recruitment of skilled personnel for the diplomatic profession, is the fierce competition with other government and semi-government departments. However, the Foreign Ministry was able to tailor successful strategies to bring in a high caliber recruits at the beginners' and mid-career levels to its diplomatic corps. This point is important and relevant to the discussion, since these new comers to the Ministry bring valuable expertise and knowledge.

The new cadres at the Ministry engage into an extensive training programme for 4 months that include different topics essential to the diplomatic assignments, such as: protocol and etiquette, foreign policy, international organizations, human rights and other subjects linked to the practice of diplomacy. Mid-career diplomats at the Ministry undertake special courses on leadership and management, while there are various specialized programmes in certain functional proficiencies. For example, courses include property rights, multilateral diplomacy, privileges and immunities, political analysis, mass media, climate change, conflict resolution, negotiations etc. The training at the Institute is also supported by external institutions, which contribute in tailoring designed programmes in niche areas needed or requested by the Ministry. Collaborations with outside institutions included Harvard, Georgetown, Carnegie Melon and UNITAR. There is also a policy direction to encourage specialization within the different departments at the Ministry. This plan would lead to the creation of a pool of personnel that are experts in technical, substantive or specific regions in the diplomatic service that would benefit Qatari diplomacy in the future. The learning of new foreign languages is also an essential constituent in the Institute's programmes. At present, the focus is on English and French languages. However, the future programmes will include Spanish and Persian. This will ultimately support the direction to build a range of functional area of expertise at all levels of the Qatari diplomatic service. Plans were laid to conduct regular seminars in future for diplomats in the ambassadorial level that would provide an insight into their expertise along with the sharing of their professional knowledge. These seminars will include senior level leadership from other government departments that engage in the different aspects of external affairs. This participation consolidates the learning experience through the exchange of information between diverse groups of senior management professionals, and gives value to the training process.

The Institute has also embarked on developing the latent talents of diplomatic personnel at different levels, which would eventually influence positively the quality of their decision-making skills. It also became important that diplomats with huge potential, who are not performing up to the best levels, though, should be given special attention.

IV. Conclusion

Stability in any State reflects on its strong and consistent diplomatic institutions, which comprise selected professional and trained cadres. The foreign Ministry leadership in the State of Qatar well understood the connection between delivering high quality training courses, and broad understanding of the different spheres of international affairs by diplomats. The training and education strategy to achieve these crucial goals to the State foreign policy, is implemented through the Ministry Diplomatic Institute. With its political stability, its huge financial and natural resources, and its current diplomatic cadres and experts, Qatar is able to build a competent diplomatic corps.

Development and training for personnel in the diplomatic corps lead to important achievements in the implementation of foreign policy. Qatari diplomacy has obtained many successes in the last decade, especially in its mediation efforts in different regional conflicts. Its neutrality gave Qatar the edge in bringing together Lebanon warring parties in 2008, contributing in the conflict resolution efforts in Darfur with the culmination of Doha agreement, helping reconcile the Palestinian Authority and HAMAS in 2011, and bringing closer Djibouti and Eritrea. Qatar's negotiation experience in various conflicts in the region is a pioneering one, despite the challenges and complexity of the context involved. However, the ability of its diplomatic cadres to unravel those conflicts demonstrates the strength of its diplomacy. The Diplomatic Institute continues to build on these successful Qatari diplomatic initiatives by using experienced Qatari diplomats to provide their insights to the new and mid-career cadres in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy.