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Fostering student persistence on TVET pathways through mutual adaptation: a case study of Qatar

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ABSTRACT
Technical educational and occupational traditions emerge locally, evolve under complex influences, and become transmitted generation to generation over time. However, newly resource-rich countries in the Middle East face a conundrum: native technical capacity constrains their ambitions for sustainable social and economic growth. This case study examines the tensions a Canadian technical college encountered in fostering education pathways for Qatari nationals. Analysis of interviews of key personnel reveals several localized factors that impact student persistence and mediate the college's institutional outcomes: basic life skills, academic and technical preparedness, beliefs and expectations about learning, and life priorities (i.e. family, occupational prestige, expectations/rewards of technical careers). The findings suggest that transnational educational innovations need to attend to the localized conditions that mediate their effectiveness. Positive mutual adaptation, through academic and technical apprenticeship, aimed at supporting student persistence is a necessary condition to shifting the culture of Qatari nationals to embrace new educational and work traditions.

Introduction
Technical educational and occupational traditions emerge locally, evolve under complex influences, and become transmitted generation to generation over time (Maclean & Lai, 2011). However, newly resource-rich countries in the Middle East face a conundrum: native technical capacity constrains their ambitions for sustainable social and economic growth.

Qatar is pursuing a national vision of becoming an advanced country capable of sustaining its own development and maintaining a high standard of living for future generations by 2030 (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). While Qatar has enjoyed unprecedented prosperity from its oil and gas reserves, it recognizes the need to diversify from a hydrocarbon-based to a knowledge-based economy (Government of Qatar Planning Council, 2007). Central to this desired shift are an educated population and a capable and motivated workforce, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related fields (GSDP, 2008). Accordingly, Qatar has cultivated a suite of foreign university and college

KEYWORDS
Student persistence; technical and vocational education and training; STEM education; Middle East; intercultural studies; innovation; international education; adult education