

QUALITY EDUCATION



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Quality Education

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My work on this book is dedicated to
individuals and innovative organizations
committed to fighting illiteracy.

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FOREWORD

The past decades have, in terms of education, witnessed a historic change: boys and girls around the globe have been brought to school. After this huge success – giving access to education to nearly all—the world is ready for the next step: a joint effort to provide universal quality education.

This is a mission in which strongly I believe. I am very happy to see Dr. Alleem shares the same passion.

Today, we are facing a situation UNESCO is calling “a learning crisis.” Half of the world’s children and young people are not even learning the basic literacy and numeracy skills after spending years in school. We cannot afford this to continue and let the world be divided into two.

Firstly, there is a better half where young people can get a quality education that gives them multiple skills to cope in the world of artificial intelligence, robotics, and space science and continue learning throughout their lives. Secondly, there is another half where the education fails the young people completely and they leave school without retaining even the basic skills.

The United Nations’ sustainable development goal number four is about quality of education. This gives us hope. With joint efforts of multiple actors—the UN family, its 193 member states, educational institutions at all levels, and the private sector—the learning crisis can be defeated. A right formula needs to be found to make sure that every child

leaves school equipped with skills fit for the 21st century and has the basis for life-long learning. Children attending school today will stay in working life until the 2080s, and giving them the right set of skills should be the priority of education. With commitment and political will, the necessary resources can be mobilized and their use focused efficiently to produce learning, not just attendance, at school.

Finland stands ready to share its experience of developing an education system that, in the first four Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) rounds, stood as the best in the world and still is among the highest ranking. The Finnish recipe includes providing equal learning opportunities to all, having highly educated and well-respected teachers, and building the education system on trust. We hope to see such a success story taking place in every single country. Quality education is, after all, the biggest gift we can give to the next generation. Each and every child deserves it.

Marianne Nissilä

Ambassador of Finland to the UAE

INTRODUCTION

PREVALENCE OF EDUCATION

*“Knowledge is power
if applied and shared.”*

—Dr. Rashid Alleem

Hello, and welcome to *Quality Education*. On March 15, 2016, I had the privilege and honor of meeting His Excellency the late S. R. Nathan, former president of Singapore, in his office at the Singapore Management University, where he had served as a distinguished senior fellow at the School of Social Sciences. There, we had a long discussion on how to make the world a better place to live in by applying the principles of sustainability by focusing mainly on quality education. The two of us agreed with Nelson Mandela’s quote: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” That education, however, must be quality education.

I’m glad that you decided to join me on this journey through *education quality*. There is no doubt that quality education is such an important tool for life that I felt compelled to start

my Alleem 21 sustainable development goals list with quality education. Learn, and once you have learnt, teach others in turn, because education is the source of real happiness. Let us open the door of happiness with some of the knowledge that I feel necessary to share with the world.

Why did I decide to write this book? I wrote this book because I want to make a difference in the world and highlight many individuals and innovative organizations in the world who are making progress and improving millions of people's lives through quality education.

I have deliberately left this book short and sweet because I know that almost everyone is time-challenged.

The journey begins now.

Rashid Alleem
Sharjah, UAE
February 29, 2020

PART 1

EDUCATION VOGUE

CHAPTER 1

Educational Freedom For Everyone

1

EDUCATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT

What is quality education, and why is it a human right?

Quality education enables people to develop all of their attributes and skills to achieve their potential as human beings and members of society. In the words of the Delors Commission (UNESCO, 1996): “Education is at the heart of both personal and community development; its mission is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full and to realize our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of our personal aims.”

As per the Unite for Quality Education campaign, below are listed some points describing what is quality education and why it is a human right.

- Quality education is a human right and a public good.
- Governments and other public authorities should ensure that a quality education service is available freely to all citizens from early childhood into adulthood.
- Quality education provides the foundation for equity in society.

- Quality education is one of the most basic public services. It not only enlightens but also empowers citizens and enables them to contribute to the maximum extent possible to the social and economic development of their communities.



2

PROGRAM FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT (PISA)

As we all know, education is the most important thing in most nations' agendas, especially for students at an early stage; hence, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide study of 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance in mathematics, science, and reading conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in member and non-member nations. Initially conducted in 2000, it was the first study of its kind, and since then, it has been repeated every three years with a view to improving educational policies and outcomes. The study measures problem-solving and cognition in everyday life.

An article posted by the World Economic Forum on April 29, 2019, states that the way the world measures success in education has been changing since 2000, when the OECD launched the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The idea of this initiative was to enable countries to make cross-national comparisons of student achievement using a common/standard metric to increase human capital. In other words, higher academic achievement should correlate with earnings in the future and a country's standard of living. As PISA states, it publishes the results of the test a year after the students are tested to help governments shape their education policies.

As PISA has developed, for some it has gained a reputation as the “Olympics of education,” given the widespread attention that country rankings receive following the release of results.

Recent cross-cultural research suggests the influence of PISA is growing around the world. Indeed, in countries such as Germany and Canada, assessment systems have been developed that mirror the PISA test. Further, governments look to PISA results twinned with other social outcome measures such as equity in education and social mobility or immigrant success.

Now, partly in the face of criticisms, PISA is looking at expanding how and what it tests. Collectively, changes to PISA will likely spur a shift in priorities by national governments—particularly since countries are keen to achieve good outcomes and to rank highly.

As this process unfolds, policymakers must remember that the social consequences of a test are just as important as the test’s content. Putting a new face on PISA will undoubtedly present various opportunities and challenges.



CHAPTER 2

Management Systems for Educational Organizations

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 164 national standards bodies. Here, I would like to share the briefing notes of ISO 21001, posted by the ISO. ISO 21001 provides a common management tool for organizations providing educational products and services capable of meeting the needs and requirements of learners and other customers. It is a standalone management system standard, aligned with other ISO management system standards (such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001, etc.) through the application of high-level structure. ISO 21001 focuses on the specific interaction between an educational organization, the learner, customers, and other relevant interested parties. It specifies requirements for an Educational Organization Management System (EOMS) when such an organization:

- Needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide, share, and facilitate the construction of knowledge while conforming with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Aims to enhance the satisfaction of learners, other customers, and personnel through the effective application of its EOMS, including processes for improvement of the system.

TO WHOM DOES THIS STANDARD APPLY?

All requirements of ISO 21001 are generic and intended to be applicable to educational organizations that provide, share, and facilitate the construction of knowledge through teaching, training, or research, regardless of type, size, and the product and service provided. The standard, therefore, applies to the management system of any organization utilizing a curriculum to provide, share, and transfer knowledge.

WHY IS ISO 21001 IMPORTANT?

There is a critical and continuous need for educational organizations to evaluate the degree to which they meet the requirements of learners and other customers in order to improve their ability to continue to do so.

ISO 21001 focuses on the specific interaction between an educational organization, the learner, and other customers. Current educational processes are becoming increasingly focused on co-creation where the traditional customer-supplier relationship is refined into a collaborative partnership. This standard will give guidance on how to deliver quality in this challenging new environment.

Education differs from many other sectors in that a successful educational process maximizes the chance that a learner will succeed, though it cannot guarantee that outcome. The effort and capability of both the learner and educational organization are crucial variables for the educational process to be successful. Learning involves the internalization of knowledge, methods, and skills. The educational organization

stimulates this internalization and provides the framework, input, processes, and learning resources for it to take place. However, it is the effort and capability of the learner that ultimately determines the success of the educational process.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM ISO 21001?

Although learners and educational organizations worldwide are the main beneficiaries of this new management system standard, all stakeholders (i.e., everyone) will benefit from the output of standardized management systems in educational organizations.

Educational organizations that will benefit from the standard include preschools; primary, elementary, middle and high schools; colleges and universities; adult education institutions; special education schools; vocational education and training schools; tutoring or coaching centers; training organizations; education/training departments; consultants; and non-formal educational service providers. This is true regardless of the funding source, which can be public (subsidized), private (commercial), self-sufficient (internally generated revenue), or not for profit (sponsored).

Finally, all interested parties involved in determining requirements will benefit from this International Standard (teachers, parents, government, NGOs, trade unions, etc.).

WHAT BENEFITS CAN ISO 21001 PROVIDE?

The potential benefits to an organization of implementing an EOMS based on this International Standard are:

- Better alignment of objectives and activities with policy
- Enhanced social responsibility by providing inclusive and equitable quality education for all
- More personalized learning and effective response to all learners, in particular those with special education needs and distance learners
- Consistent processes and evaluation tools to demonstrate and increase effectiveness and efficiency
- Increased credibility of the educational organization
- Ability to demonstrate commitment to effective quality management practices
- Development of a culture for organizational improvement
- Harmonization of regional, national, open, and proprietary standards within an international framework
- Widened participation of interested parties
- Stimulation of excellence and innovation

The following pages will highlight some countries who have scored highly on quality education systems.



CHAPTER 3

Educating for Human Greatness

1

FINLAND'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Here is an article from the *Washington Post*, published on August 30, 2019. It's an article looking at changes underway in Finnish schools by two people who are experts and know what is really going on. These two experts are Pasi Sahlberg and Peter Johnson. Johnson is director of education of the Finnish city of Kokkola. Sahlberg is professor of education policy at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. He is one of the world's leading experts on school reform and is the author of the best-selling *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn About Educational Change in Finland?* In addition, I was also fortunate enough to have the below document reviewed and somewhat elaborated with the insights of Jaakko Skantsi, the Counsellor of Finland Education and Science. Material added by Jaako Skantsi is in brackets.

Finland has been in the spotlight of the education world since it appeared, against all odds, on the top of the rankings of an international test known as PISA, the Program for International Student Assessment, in the early 2000s. Tens of thousands visitors [sic] have travelled to the country to see how to improve their own schools. Hundreds of articles have been written to explain why Finnish education is so

marvellous—or sometimes that it isn't. Millions of tweets have been shared and read, often leading to debates about the real nature of Finland's schools and about teaching and learning there.

We have learned a lot about why some education systems—such as Alberta, Ontario, Japan and Finland—perform better year after year than others in terms of quality and equity of student outcomes. We also understand now better why some other education systems—for example, England, Australia, the United States and Sweden—have not been able to improve their school systems regardless of politicians' promises, large-scale reforms and truckloads of money spent on haphazard efforts to change schools during the past two decades.

Among these important lessons are:

- Education systems and schools shouldn't be managed like business corporations where tough competition, measurement-based accountability and performance-determined pay are common principles. Instead, successful education systems rely on collaboration, trust, and collegial responsibility in and between schools. [This is essential. If you measure teachers strictly based on a pre-prescribed criteria and make the teachers compete against each other, they will *not* share their ideas, materials, new pedagogical approaches nor anything else with each other but rather keep “all the good stuff” to themselves in fear of not being highly enough ranked in the “competition” within the school/school provider. The only way to have truly collaborative atmosphere and thus successful development of the school, the school leadership and teachers should be setup in dynamic teams where collaboration and development efforts are truly

possible, in the similar manner as in the most advanced (ICT) companies' self-directed work teams (SDWTs)].

- The teaching profession shouldn't be perceived as a technical, temporary craft that anyone with a little guidance can do. Successful education systems rely on continuous professionalization of teaching and school leadership that requires advanced academic education, solid scientific and practical knowledge, and continuous on-the-job training.
- The quality of education shouldn't be judged by the level of literacy and numeracy test scores alone. Successful education systems are designed to emphasize whole-child development, equity of education outcomes, wellbeing, and arts, music, drama and physical education as important elements of curriculum[a]. [As the world is changing and more and more advanced algorithms are partly overtaking many roles previously deemed as "secure and well-paying" jobs, learning skills, and soft skills in particular, that are not in danger of being replaced by algorithms in the near future, are become more and more essential].



10 REASONS WHY FINLAND'S EDUCATION SYSTEM IS THE BEST

According to the insights of Jaakko Skantsi, there is one standardized/national test in place in Finland (but only in upper secondary school) and minimal stress in the Finnish education system. There are, in fact, some private (nonprofit) schools in Finland. However, they have applied for the permission to organize education from the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, when it comes to Basic Education (G1-G9), the law clearly dictates that no fees of any kind can be collected from the pupils nor their parents, even in the “private schools.” Private schools get most of their funding from the Ministry of Education in a similar manner as the other education providers (municipalities/cities, or clusters of them in some cases) based on the number of students enrolled in the school.

According to an article posted by *Bigthink* on September 9 2018, education system is consistently ranked best in the world. Finland's common-sense practices and a holistic teaching environment strive for equity over excellence.

Many people are familiar with the stereotype of the hard-working, rote memorization-based, myopic tunnel vision of Eastern Asian study and work ethics. Many of these countries, like China, Singapore, and Japan amongst others, routinely rank in the number one spots in both math and science.

Finland—a country rich in intellectual and educational reform—has initiated over the years a number of novel and simple changes that have completely revolutionized their educational system.

Are they cramming in dimly-lit rooms on robotic schedules? Nope. Stressing over standardized tests enacted by the government? No way. Finland is leading the way because of common-sense practices and a holistic teaching environment that strives for equity over excellence. Here are 10 reasons why Finland's education system is dominating the world stage.

1: NO STANDARDIZED TESTING

Staying in line with our print-minded sensibilities, standardized testing is the blanket way we test for subject comprehension. Filling in little bubbles on a scantron and answering pre-canned questions is somehow supposed to be a way to determine mastery or at least competence of a subject. What often happens is that students will learn to cram just to pass a test and teachers will be teaching with the sole purpose of students passing a test. Learning has been thrown out of the equation.

Finland has no standardized tests. Their only exception is something called the National Matriculation Exam, which is a voluntary test for students at the end of an upper-secondary school (equivalent to an American high school.) All children throughout Finland are graded on an individualized basis and grading system set by their teacher.

[There are actually national "standards" for grade 8 (4 is failed and 10 is excellent). However, these "standards" are still interpreted by the teachers and are often quite broad. For example, for math, there are 20 objectives, such as: "The Concept of Percentage and percentage calculation"—the competence for grade 8 (good) is described as: "The student can elaborate how the percentage is used. The student can calculate the percentage, the amount indicated by the

percentage as well as percentage change and conversion percentage. The student can use knowledge on percentage in different situations.” Now, it’s up to the teacher (the Education Act stipulates that assessment has to be versatile—so not just exams/tests made by the teacher) to conclude in a formative and summative manner whether the student has a command over these goals (grade 8, good), or is exceeding (9 or 10), or underachieving (7, 6 or 5), or failing (4) their objectives.

Tracking overall progress is done by the Ministry of Education, FIEEC (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre), which samples groups across different ranges of schools.]

2: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TEACHERS

A lot of the blame goes to the teachers and rightfully so sometimes. But in Finland, the bar is set so high for teachers, that there is often no reason to have a rigorous “grading” system for teachers. Pasi Sahlberg, said that following about teachers’ accountability: “There’s no word for accountability in Finnish... Accountability is something that is left when responsibility has been subtracted.”

All teachers are required to have a master’s degree before entering the profession. Teaching programs are the most rigorous and selective professional schools in the entire country.

The concept of the pupil–teacher dynamic that was once the master to apprentice cannot be distilled down to a few bureaucratic checks and standardized testing measures. It needs to be dealt with on an individual basis.

3: COOPERATION NOT COMPETITION

While most Americans and other countries see the educational system as one big Darwinian competition, the Finns see it differently. Sahlberg quotes a line from a writer named Samuli Paronen which says that “Real winners do not compete.”

Ironically, this attitude has put them at the head of the international pack. Finland’s educational system doesn’t worry about artificial or arbitrary merit-based systems. There are no lists of top performing schools or teachers. It’s not an environment of competition—instead, cooperation is the norm.

4: MAKE THE BASICS A PRIORITY

Many school systems are so concerned with increasing test scores and comprehension in math and science, they tend to forget what constitutes a happy, harmonious and healthy student and learning environment. Many years ago, the Finnish school system was in need of some serious reforms.

The program that Finland put together focused on returning back to the basics. It wasn’t about dominating with excellent marks or upping the ante. Instead, they looked to make the school environment a more equitable place.

Since the 1980s, Finnish educators have focused on making these basics a priority:

- Education should be an instrument to balance out social inequality
- All students receive free school meals
- Ease of access to health care

- Psychological counselling
- Individualized guidance
- Beginning with the individual in a collective environment of equality is Finland's way

5: STARTING SCHOOL AT AN OLDER AGE

Here the Finns again start by changing very minute details. Students start school when they are seven years old. They're given free rein in the developing childhood years to not be chained to compulsory education. It's simply just a way to let a kid be a kid. [Preschool (at the age of 6) is nowadays compulsory, but it is very play-oriented and one usually does not find school desks, chairs and "the usual classroom setting" in preschools.]

There are only 9 years of compulsory school that Finnish children are required to attend. Everything past the ninth grade or at the age of 16 is optional. [Although about 96% of the students continue to either Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or General Upper Secondary School (GUSS). Also, a reform is being finalized which would push this "minimum age" to 18, meaning that all the students would continue either to TVET or GUSS].

Just from a psychological standpoint, this is a freeing ideal. Although it may be anecdotal, many students really feel like they're stuck in a prison. Finland alleviates this forced ideal and instead opts to prepare its children for the real world.

6: PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL OPTIONS PAST A TRADITIONAL COLLEGE DEGREE

The current pipeline for education in America is incredibly stagnant and immutable. Children are stuck in the K-12

circuit jumping from teacher to teacher. Each grade a preparation for the next, all ending in the grand culmination of college, which then prepares you for the next grand thing on the conveyor belt. Many students don't need to go to college and get a worthless degree or flounder about trying to find purpose and incur massive debt.

Finland solves this dilemma by offering options that are equally advantageous for the student continuing their education. There is a lesser focused dichotomy of college-educated versus trade-school or working class. Both can be equally professional and fulfilling for a career.

In Finland, there is the upper secondary school, a three-year program that prepares students for the matriculation test that determines their acceptance into a university. This is usually based off of specialties they've acquired during their time in high school.

Next, there is vocational education, which is a three-year program that trains students for various careers. They have the option to take the matriculation test if they want to then apply to university. [Students cannot do the matriculation exam without doing courses in GUSS, but if they study and get a degree (e.g., as an electrician), they can continue to a UAS (university of applied sciences) even without the matriculation exam for a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and then continue for a master's degree at university if they wish (and continue all the way to PhD). Also, some students do a double degree (usually in four years). Since the universities do take students based on the matriculation exams, entrance exams, or the mix of two, a person from the TVET program can (with some self-study and hard work) get to medical school or other graduate programs without matriculation

examinations at all (the same applies for students who did not do that well in their matriculation exams—they can try to get a study placement through the entrance exams).

The big difference is that the society highly regards TVET graduates, too, and professions like plumbers and electricians easily make more money than “more academic” professions. So, it is acceptable to do TVET (and continue to improve one’s skills on the TVET level) and never continue to universities of applied sciences nor universities.]

7: FINNS WAKE UP LATER FOR LESS STRENUOUS SCHOOLDAYS

Waking up early, catching a bus or ride, participating in morning and after school extracurricular are huge time sinks for a student. Add to the fact that some classes start anywhere from 6am to 8am and you’ve got sleepy, uninspired adolescents on your hands.

[Since there is very much autonomy granted to the school providers and schools themselves, they can decide how the schedule is organized. Also, schedules are not fixed (same length every day), but quite flexible. The amount of hours of studies is described on weekly level, so e.g. on Monday, some of the students (there might be variance within the same classroom) might start at 8, some 9 and some at 10.

Since this research has been discussed more lately, many school providers (municipalities) are trying to organize the school days so, that they would not start before, say, 8:30.

First graders usually have only 19–20 hours of school per week. The older the students get, more hours per week they have, usually not much exceeding 30 hours per week. Also the older

students become, the more personalized their schedule is (to the extent that usually, in GUSS, all the students have, based on the modules they have chosen, individual schedules).]

Research has shown that early start times are detrimental to students' well-being, health, and maturation. Finnish schools start the day later and usually end by 2:00–2:45 PM. They have longer class periods and much longer breaks in between. The overall system isn't there to ram and cram information into their students but to create an environment of holistic learning.

8: CONSISTENT INSTRUCTION FROM THE SAME TEACHERS

There are fewer teachers and students in Finnish schools. You can't expect to teach an auditorium of invisible faces and breakthrough to them on an individual level. Students in Finland often have the same teacher for up to six years of their education. [This is possible, and it happens, although more common is to have two (or sometimes even three) teachers during the first six grades.] During this time, the teacher can take on the role of a mentor or even a family member. During those years, mutual trust and bonding are built so that both parties know and respect each other.

Different needs and learning styles vary on an individual basis. Finnish teachers can account for this because they've figured out the student's own idiosyncratic needs. They can accurately chart and care for their progress and help them reach their goals. There is no passing along to the next teacher because there isn't one.

9: A MORE RELAXED ATMOSPHERE

There is a general trend in what Finland is doing with its schools. Less stress, less unneeded regimentation and more caring. Students usually only have a couple of classes a day. They have several times to eat their food, enjoy recreational activities and generally just relax. Spread throughout the day are 15 to 20-minute intervals where the kids can get up and stretch, grab some fresh air, and decompress. [In fact, a proper full warm (and healthy) lunch is provided to all, free of charge!]

This type of environment is also needed by the teachers. Teacher rooms are set up all over Finnish schools, where they can lounge about and relax, prepare for the day, or just simply socialize. Teachers are people too and need to be functional so they can operate at the best of their abilities. [Usually, this “simply socialising” is actually quite productive—teachers can discuss in low stress environment their work and possible problems they might need help with, as well as brainstorming for new ways of teaching and learning over a cup of coffee.]

10: LESS HOMEWORK AND OUTSIDE WORK REQUIRED

According to the OECD, students in Finland have the least amount of outside work and homework than any other student in the world. They spend only half an hour a night working on stuff from school. Finnish students also don't have tutors. Yet they're outperforming cultures that have toxic school-to-life balances without the unneeded or unnecessary stress.

Finnish students are getting everything they need to get done in school without the added pressures that come with excelling at a subject. Without having to worry about grades and busy-work they are able to focus on the true task at hand—learning

and growing as a human being. [Naturally, Finland is also facing many of the same problems other education systems in the world are facing. However, in Finland, the approach is to tackle these problems based on research and evidence, not by “solutions” such as haphazardly changing everything and causing more problems in the end.

Likewise, there is continuity in developing the education system in Finland, for there is a strong consensus on education across political party lines. The educational system is simply not a political matter. Of course there are always budgetary debates and so on, but never during the last 40 years has it been on the agenda of any political party in Finland to “drastically change everything in education, in case they get into power”.]



LIFE

Lapland International Forum for Education (LIFE) is an annual event organized by VisitEDUfinn and the University of Lapland. The key purpose of this event is to see in person how learning takes place in Finnish kindergartens and schools. One can choose the age range to ensure it is tailored to your needs. In the year 2020, there are also special visits available for high schools and vocational colleges. If you want to know more about pre-primary education, note that in Finland, it normally takes place in kindergartens.

During the visits, one can observe teachers and children in their activities, and ask them about their daily teaching practices. After each visit, you may take part in a short group session to discuss and share your experiences with the staff

from the visited unit and with your colleagues.

September 6th, 2019 LIFE was chosen as one of the winners in the Authentic Finnish Educational Travel Product contest!



WHAT IS HEAT2020?

Helsinki Education in Action for Teachers (HEAT) is a summer school also organized by VisitEDUfinn, along with Hostel Suomenlinna and the Organization for Outdoor Education in Finland. The school lessons are taught in interesting educational venues and in the historical Suomenlinna Sea Fortress, a World Heritage Site offering unique learning surroundings full of history and with a beautiful archipelago landscape.



EYES2020

The Early Years Education Summit (EYES2020) is the second instance of a unique opportunity to learn from the famous Finnish early years education at a practical level. In EYES2020, you see everyday life in Finnish kindergartens (years 1–6) and in a primary school (years 7–12). You are able to shadow Finnish teachers to see how local ideas could be integrated into your classroom.

In EYES2020, you learn how to:

- promote the holistic growth of each child and provide all children with equal opportunities

- carry out versatile pedagogical activities based on play, arts, physical activity and cultural heritage
- recognize the child's need for individual support
- ensure that children can influence matters concerning them



2

SHANGHAI, CHINA

According to the Asia Society, a nonprofit organization that focuses on educating the world about Asia, Shanghai, the largest city in China, was the first to achieve 100 percent primary and junior high school enrollment and was also one of the first to achieve almost universal secondary school attendance. Furthermore, if students want to attend a certain type of higher education, they are easily able to do that as well.

China has implemented numerous changes to its education system as of late; however, it has struggled to move away from the exam-based system that drives the curriculum, which requires memorizing an array of facts just to pass the test. In 1985, Shanghai began a process of reform and introduced exams that test the application of real-life skills. This has also captured the interest of students. As a result, multiple-choice questions no longer appear on the exams. An estimated 80 percent of students attend night and weekend “cram schools” to ensure that they pass. This comes alongside nightly homework and extracurricular activities, thus making the life of a Chinese student overwhelming. The central Chinese government is aware of this nationwide problem, and its new 2020 reform efforts call for a reduction in student workload. Additionally, Shanghai is working towards improving

students' education experience so that they will learn to learn, as opposed to merely learning a series of facts. An updated curriculum is at the center of this process.

Beginning in 1985, in an attempt to move away from the high-pressure exam system and increase the quality of education, Shanghai began to allow students to take elective courses, which led to new textbooks and materials. Implemented in 2008, a renewed effort to encourage student learning rather than knowledge accumulation led to eight curricular "learning domains:" language and literature, mathematics, natural science, social sciences, technology, arts, physical education, and practicum.

Schools were then encouraged to create their own curricula, and outside groups such as museums became partners in education. Part of the new curriculum includes an emphasis on inquiry-based education. Students independently explore their research topics of interest to promote social well-being, creative and critical thinking, and again, learning to learn.

To support the new changes in education, certification processes for teachers were implemented. Teachers' professional development requirements also increased—teachers in Shanghai must now complete 240 hours of professional development over the course of five years.

An online database provides help with design and implementation of the curriculum, research papers, and best practice examples. Teachers are now encouraged to allow time for student activities in classrooms, rather than relying solely on presentations.

One interesting strategy employed in Shanghai to improve weak schools is the commissioned education program.

Under this scheme, top-performing schools are assigned a weak school to administer. The “good” school sends a team of teachers and a principal to lead the weak school and improve it. This, as well as an exchange program for poor rural schools, has been implemented in the city. Such a system assists the poor schools and benefits Shanghai schools by allowing them to promote teachers and administrators.

In Shanghai, there is a clear awareness that education needs a transformation to keep pace with the rate of change in society— and not just the current change. Hence, a conscious effort has been made to take into account the future of society, the economy, and education.



3

EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE

Singapore is one of the countries I most enjoy traveling to. I love the way the education system is shaping the nation to be among the best in knowledge and talent. According to the PISA 2016 report, Singapore has the highest achieving students in the international education rankings, with its teenagers topping tests in math, reading, and science. For more than a decade, Singapore has been at or near the top of international league tables that measure children's ability in reading, math, and science.

In light of the above, the strategies followed in Singapore that made them achieve the number one ranking constitute a matter worthy of discussion. In Singapore, the education sector is managed by the Ministry of Education, which formulates and implements education policies on education structure, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It oversees the management and development of government-funded schools, the Institute of Technical Education, polytechnics, and universities. The Ministry of Education aims to help students discover their talents, make the best of these talents and realize their full potential, and develop a passion for learning that lasts a lifetime.

According to *The Conversation*, an independent source of news from the academic & research community, Singapore's institutional arrangements are characterized by a prescribed national curriculum. It consists of national, high-stakes examinations at the end of primary and secondary schooling

that stream students based on their examination performance and essentially prompt teachers to ensure coverage of the curriculum and the test. The alignment of the curriculum, assessment, and instruction is exceptionally strong.

On top of this, the institutional environment incorporates top-down forms of teacher accountability based on student performance (although this is changing) that reinforces curriculum coverage and teaching to tests. Major government commitments to educational research (\$137 million between 2003 and 2017) and knowledge management are designed to support evidence-based policy making.

Finally, Singapore is strongly committed to capacity building at all levels of the system, especially in the selection, training, and professional development of principals and teachers.

In addition, parents, students, teachers, and policy-makers share a highly positive but rigorously instrumentalist view of the value of education at the individual level. Further, students are generally compliant and the classrooms orderly. Importantly, teachers also broadly share an authoritative vernacular or “folk pedagogy” that shapes understandings across the system regarding the nature of teaching and learning. These include the fact that “teaching is talking and learning is listening,” authority is “hierarchical and bureaucratic,” assessment is “summative,” knowledge is “factual and procedural,” and classroom talk is teacher-dominated and “performative.”

Clearly, Singapore’s unique configuration of historical experience, instruction, institutional arrangements, and cultural beliefs has produced an exceptionally effective and successful system.



4

SWISS EDUCATION

Even though education in Switzerland was ranked ninth in the PISA list, I would like to highlight some important information and facts about Swiss education. Education in Switzerland has a multilingual focus and is very diverse because the Constitution of Switzerland delegates authority on the school system mainly to the cantons.

Through my research, I came across an online news portal *Expatica*, which helped me find the strategies followed in Switzerland that have led the country to rank high in the field of education. Let us have a look. I am glad to mention that most students in Switzerland attend local schools that provide free and high-standard education. State education is free, but students may be asked to pay for school supplies, books, and school trips. However, foreign families may consider enrolling their child in an international school so that he or she will find it easier to continue his or her education in a familiar language and curriculum. There are no school uniforms in Switzerland.

The Swiss constitution sets the foundations for education, namely, that primary school is obligatory for every child and free in public schools, and that the confederation can run or support universities.

Although the rules on education are set by the individual cantons, they are supposed to be different based on each

individual canton's education requirements. Generally, some children start their compulsory education at the age of five or six, lasting until about 15, as nine years of school education is compulsory for all children in Switzerland. As I mentioned above, most students attend the local school, so students from different backgrounds, sometimes including linguistic backgrounds, come together. Only about five percent of Swiss children go to a private school.

The school year in Switzerland starts between mid-August and mid-September and has two terms or semesters and around 12 weeks' holiday (holiday dates vary depending on the canton). Cantons set their own timetables. However, most cantons and municipalities follow the core times—around 8:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m., and then from 1:30 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. Primary school days are shorter than secondary ones.

I appreciate the strategies followed in Switzerland and respect their constitution for understanding the value of education.



PART 2

**INNOVATIVE
EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

CHAPTER 1

Commitment to Quality Education

1

THE ARAB READING CHALLENGE

The Arab Reading Challenge (ARC) is the largest-ever Arab literacy initiative. Launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai to encourage students to read, ARC challenges students to read as many books as possible (over 50) in one academic year.

The challenge is an Arabic reading competition with participating students from Years 1 to 12 from schools across the Arab world. The competition starts every year in September until the end of March. Students work through five stages of the competition reading ten books and summarizing their content in the challenge passports. Upon completion of the reading and summarizing, the final stage of elimination commences according to set criteria. The eliminations are done amongst schools, education zones, and Arab countries until the finals, which are held annually in Dubai in October.

Aims of the Arab Reading Challenge are to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of reading among students and youth in the Arab World
- Improve Arabic language skills, including fluency and eloquence in Arabic speech

- Develop self-learning and analytical and critical thinking skills, and broaden understanding and comprehension
- Develop emotional and intellectual intelligence
- Promote cultural awareness among students
- Build a network of young Arab readers and facilitate the communication between them to build Arab cultural gatherings
- Promote patriotism and Arabism, and the feeling of belonging to one nation



2

DUBAI CARES

Dubai Cares is a charity whose mission is to increase children's access to quality primary education in 45 developing countries, and this mission is accomplished through integrated programs that eliminate the underlying obstacles that prevent children from going to school and learning. They build and renovate schools and classrooms; improve water facilities, sanitation, and hygiene; and provide school meals, early childhood education, teacher training, curriculum development programs, and many other supportive programs.

I really appreciate and thank them for their efforts, as they are continuously doing an outstanding job in the field of education, especially in Africa.

DUBAI CARES IN MALAWI

Thank you, Dubai Cares, for helping the teenage girls in Malawi go back to school. School re-enrollment rates have doubled in six months since Dubai Cares launched its pilot project to help teenage girls in Malawi. The charity's fund, amounting to \$490,000, was expanded across the region in October 2016 as part of a two-year education project by the UAE charity. The program not only helps teenagers but also older women who have not finished their studies because of ill health, poverty, and so on. Dubai Cares funds a local NGO, Engaging Communities and Schools in Support

of Adolescent Girls in Malawi. “The launch of two Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs by Dubai Cares in Tanzania and Zanzibar could change the face of the country’s education system,” says Cecilia Baldeh, chief of education at the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)—Tanzania. Apart from funding, Dubai Cares personally encourages families to allow the pursuit of education.

WALK FOR EDUCATION

Dubai Cares hosted its 10th Walk for Education on February 15, 2019. All citizens of the UAE was invited to participate with their family, friends, and colleagues and walk in solidarity with millions of children in developing countries who walk long distances every day to go to school. It is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to join in supporting a great cause as well as enjoy fun activities with family and friends. This is such a great act organized by Dubai Cares, part of the Mohamed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum Global Initiative.

I am proud to write here that in 2019, more than 15,000 participants joined the walk, and as a result, Dubai Cares managed to raise vital funds as well as raise awareness among people to passionately support their cause.

Commenting on the year 2019 turnout for the Dubai Cares Walk for Education, Tariq Al Gurg, Chief Executive Officer at Dubai Cares, said, “We are proud of the support that we have been receiving from the UAE community for the Walk for Education as well as other community engagement initiatives by Dubai Cares. The turnout we have witnessed today is something we naturally expect from global citizens, representing approximately 200 nationalities, who call this country their home. It is also another reminder of the reasons

behind the UAE declaring this year as the ‘Year of Tolerance.’ We have now collectively walked over 350 million steps since 2009, in solidarity with millions of children who embark on a long and treacherous journey to school every single day. I would like to sincerely thank all our partners, sponsors, volunteers and supporters, who have tirelessly contributed towards making this event a success.”



3

ALLEEM KNOWLEDGE CENTER

It gives me great pleasure to write about my experience in the field of quality education—it is the Alleem Knowledge Center, my brainchild. For almost two decades now, the Alleem Knowledge Center, which is based in Sharjah, UAE, founded by me in September 2001, has been at the forefront of the real-world applications of cutting-edge thinking in organizational development, leadership, innovation, and change.

PROFESSIONALS CLUB

The seeds of the Alleem Knowledge Center were sown in 2001, when I felt the need to bridge the communication gap in business matters between the UAE business leadership and almost 200 business expatriates with different nationalities living in the UAE by bringing them together in a common platform. The Professionals Club was a platform that met once a week on Tuesday evenings after work hours, where local managers and leaders exchanged thoughts and ideas and shared knowledge, which served as the basis on which the Alleem Knowledge Center was founded. The center now hosts more than 100 nationalities, deliberating and debating on various management and leadership-related issues.

Today, the institution is the UAE's most respected nonprofit center for cutting-edge thinking, best learning practices, and research on advanced business management and attracts the brightest and most influential minds in academia and business.



4

QATAR FOUNDATION

The Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development is a semiprivate chartered nonprofit organization in Qatar founded in 1995 by the then-emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and his wife, Moza bint Nasser. In addition to private funding, it is government-supported, and in some ways it is government-funded. The Qatar Foundation (QF), which is chaired by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, has spearheaded Qatar's endeavors in establishing itself as a leader in education, science, and cultural development on both the regional and the global scale. The QF has stated its aim "to support Qatar on its journey from a carbon economy to a knowledge economy by unlocking human potential."

The organization's initiatives are oriented towards education, science and research, and community development. It has solicited a number of international universities to establish campuses in Qatar as part of its goal to develop a youth population with the necessary expertise to sustain a knowledge economy. Its main science and research agenda is developing Qatar's technological capacity by researching new technologies which can be successfully commercialized.

In addition to diversifying the economy, this strategy also helps achieve Qatar's aim of becoming a research and development

hub. The foundation's social development programs aim to preserve Qatar's culture, "foster a progressive society," and confront pressing social issues.



5

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

Here, I would like to shed light on the education scenario at the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) business school. Unusually, IMD's origins lie in two corporate business schools, the International Management Institute (Geneva) established by Alcan, and Nestlé's Institut pour l'Etude des Methodes de Direction de l'Entreprise (Lausanne), which merged in 1990. This background ensures that the priority is to deal with real world issues and challenges and conducting research in close collaboration with industry. It solely provides executive education, it is determinedly not part of a university, and there are no academic departments, except for one integrated multidisciplinary faculty. The system followed for the faculty is that professors do not have a permanent academic tenure and instead work under a one-year contract and a performance-based pay package. Interestingly, the faculty consists of 60 full-time members with 23 different nationalities.

According to the *Economist*, the 11-month program hopes to cover as much ground as other two-year courses. An emphasis on personal development, leadership, and general management means that graduates tend to work more in the industrial than the financial sector. The school lists its main strengths as general management, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

IMD has a strong focus on training and developing general management and leadership skills. It selects experienced candidates for both the Master of Business Administration (MBA) (average age 31) and the Executive MBA (average age 41). Its other focus is to have a broad international group of participants attending open programs to ensure that no nationality dominates, and every year, some 8,000 executives representing over 98 nationalities attend one of the programs.



6

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

One of the most consistently recognized leading business schools in the world, Harvard Business School (HBS), is worthy of mention. HBS, founded in 1908, is the graduate business school of Harvard University in Boston, Massachusetts, United States. It was ranked first in the United States by US News & World Report in 2016. In 2015, Harvard's MBA program was ranked first in the United States by Bloomberg and second in the world by the Financial Times.

They say the best customers are the loyal ones. They cost less to serve, they're usually willing to pay more than other customers, and they often act as word-of-mouth marketers for your company. It gives me pleasure to share with my readers that I've been a loyal customer of *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) articles since time immemorial. My corporate subscription with them dates back to my early engineering career at AMOCO Oil Company. I have always loved and revered their research—they never failed to keep up with the pace of their customer segments' ever-changing needs, wants, and expectations.

However, March 2, 2020, was D-Day; Mr. Ammar Kadi, executive director of the *Harvard Business Review*, Arabic version, paid me a courtesy visit in my office at SEWA

headquarters. He was delighted to hear that I've always been an ardent reader of their recent publications, and he admired my inclination towards citing HBR articles, research, and publications in my books as well.

During the meeting, we discussed, how HBS is changing the lives of people around the globe through quality education, research, and literatures. So I have decided to highlight and focus on HBS's roles and achievements that have been earned over the years.

HBS offers dual degrees with several Harvard schools, including the law school, the medical school, and the Kennedy School of Government. The list of Harvard alumni includes some of the most powerful people in America: Jamie Dimon, CEO of JPMorgan Chase; Michael Bloomberg, billionaire former mayor of New York City; Jeffrey Immelt, CEO of General Electric; George W. Bush, former US president; Robert Kraft, owner of the New England Patriots; and Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook COO.

Through a network of Global Research Centers and Offices, the School continues to build upon a rich legacy of global engagement in business education, encouraging a global outlook in research, study, and practice. HBS Initiatives cover a range of topics, from sectors of the economy to societal issues that businesses must address in an ever-changing global marketplace.

As explained by the Dean of HBS, Nitin Nohria:

“Each element of the school's mission—to educate leaders who make a difference in the world—is infused with meaning.”

“LEADERS”

When we talk about leaders, we mean people who embody a certain type of competence and character—both the competence that comes from the general manager’s perspective the school cultivates and the character to understand the difference between being self-interested and self-centered. It goes far beyond knowing that it’s not right to lie, cheat, or steal. It involves recognizing that you are a true leader only when you have earned the trust of others, and when others, whether in your organizations or your communities, recognize you as such.

“MAKE A DIFFERENCE”

Making a difference means people who create real value for society, and who create value before claiming value. I’ve not found anyone who begrudges a leader for claiming value after creating value. Rather, the recent economic crisis showed us too many examples of leaders who claimed value without creating any. It is worth noting here that there are many ways of making a positive difference: as an investor, as a general manager, as an entrepreneur, as an active citizen of your community. Indeed, what distinguishes Harvard Business School is that our graduates provide leadership in all walks of life.

“IN THE WORLD”

In the world reflects our understanding of a rapidly changing, dynamic environment, and the fact that many of the world’s most challenging issues will require a global perspective. Moreover, it involves embracing the view that the world desperately needs more leaders to address its most urgent

and challenging problems, and that virtually none of these problems can be addressed without business leaders playing a vital role.

And, of course, the first component of the mission is educating, which we do in many ways—through our educational programs, through the ideas our faculty produce and disseminate, and through the influence we achieve by being close to leaders of all types, and of organizations all across the world. Here, I would encourage us to recognize that the impact of what we do extends far beyond the people who come to our campus. Although we can touch only a few thousand directly each year, we can indirectly influence many more by remaining the most trusted and admired leader in business education.



7

SEWA A

Sharjah Electricity and Water Authority (SEWA) is a government-owned organization with nearly 5500 employees with an annual turnover of US \$ 2 billion. SEWA is the only utility that provides electricity, water, and gas to 1.5 million people living in Sharjah City, UAE.

As part of my continued effort and endeavor to provide for my over 5,000 employees and give them a top-quality education that covers both technical and nontechnical subjects, I have established a training and development dynasty where employees can be rigorously trained/coached to be upbeat, friendly, and customer-focused and create “the happiest place on Earth.” SEWA Academy, or SEWA A, as I love to call it, emerged from this idea. My emphasis was on running SEWA-style leadership and customer service programs/workshops that would create super-engaged employees with cutting-edge knowledge whose a positive outlook would extend to all customer interactions. I started developing in-house blended training programs that breathed a mission into SEWA A: *edutain and innovate*.

LEADERS DEVELOPING LEADERS

I wanted SEWA A to offer curricula that would support functional managers/employees in improving their skills in a variety of leadership and management disciplines, from

business planning and strategic thinking to operations and people development, ultimately empowering my employees to self-manage, manage teams, lead organizations, and become a versatile workforce. Below are the initiatives (that later on turned into mandates) embraced by SEWA A:

- *Every SEWA new recruit must attend SEWA A Induction training programs/workshops for a minimum of a full month in the first year with a blended format of learning encompassing classroom learning to E-learning and on-the-job experiential learning.*

The programs are oriented around the SEWA Way 15 Principles; these Principles are:

1. Smile
2. Teach and learn
3. Learn from experience
4. Generate sound ideas
5. Instill values
6. Create positive emotional energy
7. Make tough decisions
8. Use vibrant stories that motivate others to reach for a better future
9. Face the reality of where we and the organization are now
10. Develop, implement, and use winning KPIs
11. Pour our creative energy and dedication into everything we do

12. Continuous generation of leaders
13. Foster a culture of continuous improvement
14. Grow together with our supplies and partners for mutual benefits
15. Achieve our common objectives through teamwork

- *Every SEWA new recruit must fit in SEWA's 11 core values which are:*

1. Authentic & Effective Leadership
2. People & Safety
3. Passion for Customers
4. Embrace Excellence
5. Ownership
6. Ethics
7. Integrity
8. Teamwork
9. Passion for winning
10. Trust
11. Every idea counts

- Encourage co-opetition (a healthy mix of cooperation and competition) among employees.
- The end result of all the programs ought to produce *“happy and delighted customers.”*

I remember on the inauguration day of SEWA A, I began my speech with the following words: *“Budgets, contracts, meetings, reports, and the never-ending things that eat up your time are of no value unless they end up producing a happy, delighted customer.”*

Since its inception, the academy has trained 3,000+ employees with a plethora of programs. In the span of 3 remarkable years, the academy has hosted 334 courses. We have been pioneers in several global immersion and diploma programs. One of the highlights to speak about are the three batches of graduates in organizational excellence and advance engineering diplomas.

The accolades received by the Academy go beyond the boundaries of the nation, into countries such as South Africa, UK, Singapore, and so on.



8

AL-FALAH UNIVERSITY

PASSION TO WIN

On February 16, 2017, I was invited by Al-Falah University, which is about an hour's drive from Delhi City Center in the National Capital Region, Faridabad, Haryana, India, to address over 500 students and faculty from different universities under the theme of Alleem Sustainable Development Goals. Although an industrial and prosperous state of India, Haryana is the location of one of the most deprived regions in the country. Home to a predominantly Muslim community, it is socially, economically, and literally categorized as a backward district.

Way back in 1995, the educationist Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui decided to venture into this area to promote literacy and educational awareness. Inspired by the motto "Give a man fish and you feed him for a day, teach him how to fish and you have fed him for life," he started an engineering college in Dhauj Village in Mewat District, Faridabad City. The college initially operated in an industrial shed in Gurgaon in 1997 with an intake of 180 students. Then, it moved to its permanent campus in 1998 and began its journey of transforming the sleepy hamlet. After a few years, it was observed that the benefits of the college were still not fully trickling down to the community because of the unavailability of secondary education in the area. Then, Siddiqui decided to launch a six

to 12-month skill-based program. This was the turning point for the community. More facilities were introduced, and the caravan grew. In 2014, the Legislative Assembly of Haryana recognized it as a private university for the Muslim minority community. This brought momentum and gave the impetus for growth. After that, facilities for science, arts, commerce, management, and education were added. After constructing a 350-bed hospital, the university is now at an advanced stage of establishing a medical school. The hospital is charging \$0.15 for consultation and nominal fees for surgery, resulting in inclusive growth in health care for the masses.



9

SHARJAH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR

SHARJAH, WORLD BOOK CAPITAL FOR 2019, BY UNESCO

Sharjah is the third largest emirates in the UAE, with 1.5 million people living in peace and harmony from nearly 160 nationalities. It has become a major cultural hub, as it attracts huge crowds to its literary festivals. The Sharjah International Book Fair has grown to become one of the largest book fairs in the world, with 1,500 publishers and thousands of delegates attending. In addition, the Sharjah Children's Reading Festival holds some 2,000 events every year. It really feels good to be appreciated, and I am proud to write here that on June 26, 2017, Sharjah achieved global recognition, as it was named as the World Book Capital 2019 by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO has described Sharjah's bid to be host city as "very innovative, comprehensive with a community-focused activity program containing creative proposals to engage the very large migrant population." With the slogan "Read—You Are in Sharjah," the program focuses on six themes: inclusivity, reading, heritage, outreach, publishing, and children. These worldwide recognitions generate positive energy and promote reading as a culture. As Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, president of the Emirates Publishers Association and head of Sharjah's World Book Capital

Organizing Committee stated, “We are so proud to have been recognized on a global scale for literary excellence and of [sic] having our name put on the same platform with some of the world’s frontrunners in the world of books and reading.”



10

SUNWAY UNIVERSITY

During my recent visit to Malaysia on January 25, 2018, to speak about my SEWA Turnaround Transformational Leadership, I was staying at the Sunway Hotel, and there I was gazing the beauty of city from the window. Through window, I saw a big billboard for Sunway University, being passionate about education and having the first Alleem Sustainable Development Goals (ASDGs) called *Quality Education*; the university caught my attention.

Sunway University is a leading not-for-profit private university committed to the pursuit of education through scholarship, research, and enterprise. It is ranked among the top 2.5% of universities in Asia and offers an engaging learning space for students and academics. It works with the mission to nurture all-round individuals and devote their selves to the discovery, advancement, transmission, and application of knowledge that meet the needs of society and the global community.

Through the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation, Sunway provide disadvantaged and deserving young adults access to quality education by disbursing \$84 million and counting in scholarships. The Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development, established at Sunway University in 2016, serves as a hub for the education and advancement of sustainability across Southeast Asia. The Center is the first of its kind in Asia.

For almost 30 years, Sunway University has established a reputation both in Malaysia and overseas as an inspiring educational leader, perfectly harnessing the highest quality of academic personnel and an exceptionally diverse range of programs any global educational powerhouse would be proud of.

This ever-growing reputation was recently propelled to even greater heights as Sunway University was awarded the internationally acclaimed Quacquarelli Symond (QS) 5 Star ratings for Teaching Facilities and Employability—an evaluation system first emerged in 2004 that assesses universities worldwide using a rating method. Universities are awarded a rating of one to five stars (the highest rating), depending on their performance within the evaluation. This pioneering spirit of Sunway has seen the university rapidly become one of the nation's flagship education providers.

Families understand and trust that Sunway will nurture their children and their children's future, cherishing both dearly. Sunway is destined and determined to produce young adults, not just academically exceptional, but socially inclusive and kind-hearted people eager to contribute towards a better society for all.

In keeping with its vision of being a world-class university, Sunway Group has invested 85 million US in a brand new state-of-the-art university building.

GOALS

- Become independent, lifelong learners who actively pursue knowledge and appreciate its global application to economic, political, social and cultural development

- Be empowered with the competencies and capacity to contribute to a fast-changing economic, social and technological world
- Develop strong leadership qualities and communication skills
- Be prepared for careers that enable them to lead productive, fulfilling and meaningful lives
- Value integrity and become ethical, accountable, caring and responsible members of society

Sunway is recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency. Programs are designed to fulfill the needs and interests of a modern society. In adopting a global approach, the university has established close partnerships with Lancaster University UK and Le Cordon Bleu International, which lend international qualifications to Sunway's programs. The university has fostered ties with Harvard, Oxford, and Cambridge in bilateral exchange of expertise and research. Sunway's academic staff is an international blend of leading researchers and experts in the field.

The University's 2018 QS Asia Ranking, the 5 Stars achieved in the QS Stars University Ratings for "Teaching," "Facilities," and "Employability," and the Tier 5 "Excellent" rating in the local SETARA 2017 quality assessment bear testament to Sunway's resolve in ensuring teaching, research, and service excellence. To date, the University has drawn more than 26,000 students from over 90 countries.



11

VOICE OF R

A BAGFUL OF LIGHT

Education is definitely a vaccine for violence, terrorism, and poverty. Very painfully, I write here that Pakistan is one of the countries plagued by issues such as poverty, corruption, and—biggest of all, and the one that bothers me most—illiteracy. According to data available from UNESCO in 2017, the overall literacy rate of Pakistan for individuals 15 years and older is 59.13%, which positions it in the lower ranks of the list of countries according to their literacy rates. There are a number of factors that contribute to the lack of literacy in Pakistan, one of the biggest being the 24 million or so children that have never been to school. In this situation, there are people who want to overcome the illiteracy issue in Pakistan; one of these social warriors, Rohayl Varind, won the World Summit Youth Award in Sao Paulo, Brazil for his project Voice of R (VOR) in 2014.

According to the *Youth Award*, Voice of R is an online forum created primarily for Pakistani youth in times where ethnic prejudice, misogyny, poverty, and corruption threaten the democratic foundations of society, according to VOR's founder, 25.5% of males and 57.5% of females in Pakistan suffer from depression due, as the producer suggests, to prevailing fundamentalist thinking of all kinds. VOR is designed to challenge acceptance of the status quo. The VOR

platform engages Pakistanis to bring awareness to young people and to motivate them to take charge of their lives and develop activism for positive social change. A primary focus is the development of online discussions promoting freedom of expression and focusing on human rights. Citizens across the country can connect across the barriers of socio-economic class, religion, and ethnicity. Participants write thought-provoking articles on current issues such as genocide, rape, or honor killings. VOR also takes pride in showcasing Pakistani talent, interviewing artists as an important strategy in confidence-building. Other activities include the organization of social events and a venture into print publishing and news making.



12

SLUM

Now, the young humanitarian [Rohayl Varind] is back with another project with generous support from friends and the community—a Slum School for the children living in the slums of Pakistan’s eastern province of Punjab. SLUM stands for Students Learning Under the Moon, an acronym as succinct as its purpose. “[Slum] is an effort to educate children living in the slums of Pakistan. This is how I aim to win the war against poverty, illiteracy and terrorism,” Varind told *Gulf News*.

According to an article posted by *Gulf News* on February 23, 2018, Varind launched his day school in December 2016, in Faisalabad, and in April 2017, the night school for kids who are working or employed as laborers.

Through a two-part project that runs both day and night schools, Varind uses solar energy to run fans in his classrooms during the day, and for the night school, the fans and the light are solar-powered.

Seeing her children go to school is nothing short of a miracle for Naseem Manzoor, mother of four, who lives in a slum with her family in Faisalabad, Pakistan’s industrial hub and the third-largest city.

“I dreamed of my children going to school one day but we could not bear the cost [of the school fees],” said Naseem,

from Saeed Colony. “Now, with the new school in the colony offering free education, books and stationery, my children along with the neighborhood kids are also studying in school,” says the proud mother.

Naseem hopes that her children’s education will not only help her family to survive but also break the cycle of poverty.

Her children are among the 22 million children in Pakistan who have never gone to school and the family of six is part of up to 30 per cent of country’s population who still live below the poverty line.



13

THE CITIZENS FOUNDATION

The Citizens Foundation (TCF) is a professionally managed nonprofit organization set up in 1995 by a group of citizens who wanted to bring about positive social change through education. 25 years later, TCF is now one of Pakistan's leading organizations in the field of education for the less privileged.

TCF works with the vision of removing barriers of class and privilege to make the citizens of Pakistan agents of positive change. They have a well-defined mission through the power of quality education enabling moral, spiritual, and intellectual enlightenment and creating opportunities to improve quality of life. The 5Cs of education represent TCF's definition of quality education; Creative and Critical Thinking, Conceptual Knowledge, Confidence, Core Values, and Communication Skills.

The journey of a thousand schools began with a single idea and soon turned into a global movement. South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA) awards TCF with "Best Presented Annual Report Award 2016" in the category for non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations. UNESCO honors TCF's Adult Literacy Program "Aagaahi" with the Confucius Prize for Literacy. Below is more information about the TCF's Education Programs.

A CURRICULUM SUITED FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

TCF's school curriculum promotes an interactive, child-centered teaching approach with emphasis on hands-on activities that help children learn, question, and enjoy the learning process.

They use their own textbooks for most of the subjects. The contents are tailored for relevance and ease of understanding for the students. The objective is to standardize the daily lesson plans for teachers across the network.

BUILDING CHARACTERS AT SCHOOL

Special emphasis should be placed on the personal, moral, and social development of the students. Activities at schools are therefore aimed at inspiring children to become responsible and well-rounded individuals.

INTENSIVE PRINCIPALS' AND TEACHERS' TRAINING

TCF understands that specialized principals' and teachers' training is a prerequisite for imparting quality education in all its schools. While teachers have a direct impact on students in classrooms, principals affect all students in the school.

For teachers, the modules are designed based on their training needs assessment ranging from Classroom Management to Motivating Learners to Usage of Visual Aids.

Principals, on the other hand, receive training for effective school leadership. Their training includes courses like Communication Skills, Conflict Management, Delegation, Prioritizing and Taking Action.

The objective is to produce and sustain a positive learning environment that generates strong learning outcomes in classrooms, ensuring students' academic success.

E-LEARNING CONTENT & TEACHER TESTS

Nardban—Stairway to Success was initiated in 2014. It is an innovative program comprising two unique features: Teacher Competency Tests (TCTs) and E-Learning Videos.

TCTs are yearly assessments that all TCF teachers go through based on the subjects they teach. The objective is to test and improve teachers' subject matter knowledge in a competitive way and reward them accordingly. These tests are created using an online management system that generates high-quality standardized questions for all subjects and grade levels.

E-Learning content is another aspect of the program. A specialized Learning Management System (LMS) Unit has been working on creating engaging and interactive videos for English, Mathematics and Science teachers. These videos equip teachers with the material they need to expand their content knowledge. Hence, enabling them to teach more effectively.

ASSURING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

TCF oversees the quality of its Education Program through a dedicated Quality Assurance (QA) team. The objective is to ensure that an acceptable education standard is maintained in all the TCF School units across the country. Visits are conducted throughout the year to monitor each school's

educational activities, formal classroom observations are carried out and insights are collected from principals, and teachers and students to come up with a focused and dedicated school improvement plan.

In addition to the schools' monitoring and evaluation, the QA team also conducts two centralized examinations—midterms and finals—in an academic year. The team prepares the examination papers, monitors the marking, and compiles results.



14

BEACH LIBRARY

The UAE's first Beach Library has been inaugurated in Dubai to help spread knowledge and culture among beachgoers; it was announced on Saturday, April 1, 2017. Below is a *Gulf News* article about the event. Dubai Municipality launched "The Beach Library initiative," which involves opening eight on-beach libraries, to mark the conclusion of its activities during the month of reading.

[...] [T]he first of eight libraries [is] at Umm Suqeim 1, which operates using solar energy and self-lighting systems to conserve energy. The beach library initiative aims to provide eight on-beach libraries at Al Mamzar Corniche, Jumeirah and Umm Suqeim as these beaches attract thousands of beachgoers throughout the year and that makes them perfect place to highlight the leadership's vision aiming to promote reading as a national and governmental priority and as an essential development requirement.

The initiative also aims to bring people and books close together and to entertain beach visitors. The beach libraries have been equipped with a selected collection of books covering all knowledge spheres with more than 360 titles and will be easily and for free available for visitors so that they can borrow and read the books comfortably and bring them back to their places when leaving the beach.

The libraries have been also equipped with more than 2000 knowledge sources in both languages (Arabic and English) so that foreign tourists can read about the UAE and its history, leaders, values and tradition.

Children have not been forgotten in these libraries as there are a lot of popular releases that concern children and adults so as to instil the habit of reading in the coming generations with key focus on stories that promote awareness of correct environmental practices.



15**TEACH FOR ALL**

Wendy Kopp is CEO and co-founder of Teach For All, a global network of independent organizations founded in 2007 that are developing collective leadership to ensure all children have the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

Per the organization's official portal, earlier in 1989, Wendy founded Teach For America to marshal the energy of her generation against educational inequity in the United States. Today, close to 7,000 Teach For America corps members—outstanding recent college graduates and professionals of all academic disciplines—are in the midst of two-year teaching commitments in 53 urban and rural regions, and Teach For America has proven to be an unparalleled source of long-term leadership for expanding opportunity for children. After leading Teach For America's growth and development for 24 years, in 2013, Wendy transitioned out of the role of CEO. Today, she remains an active member of Teach For America's board.

Wendy led the development of Teach For All to be responsive to the initiative of inspiring social entrepreneurs around the world who were determined to adapt this approach in their own countries. Currently, the Teach For All network is comprised of partner organizations in 48 countries on six continents, including its founding partners Teach For America and the U.K.'s Teach First.

Wendy has been recognized as one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People and is the recipient of numerous honorary degrees and awards for public service.



16

TRUCK ART

Truck art is advocating for girls' education in Pakistan through local art. An article posted on March 28, 2019, on the UNESCO official page really enlightens my heart with hope of people spreading awareness to importance of education. The article starts with a very heart touching message, shown below:

“Father, don't bring me silver or gold, bring me a book and a pen.” Messages spreading awareness on girls' education like this one have been making their way through Kohistan's steep mountains, narrow valleys and bridges, and into classrooms.

HONORING LOCAL ART, ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

UNESCO has been using Pakistani 'truck art', a unique blend of murals and painted scenes honoring local art and crafts, to raise awareness on girls' education in the Kohistan district in Pakistan. The local community overwhelmingly welcomed the use of this local art form, adopted by the Girls' Right to Education Programme (GREP), helping to make an impact in favor of girls' education in local communities. The GREP is implemented by the UNESCO Islamabad Office for the period 2014-2019, following the signing of the Malala Funds-in-Trust agreement between the Government of Pakistan and UNESCO to “support to national capacity building to realize girls' right to education in Pakistan”.

Over 20 trucks transporting goods and timber along the Karakorum and Indus highways have been painted with colorful portraits and murals advocating for girls' education, with messages such as "Education is power" and "Education is light". It is the first time that such strong, culturally-sensitive advocacy messages on girls' education have been rendered on trucks. Communities are used to seeing local poetry painted on these vehicles.

Honoring this unique local art has helped transform attitudes in many communities. Parents have realized the importance of education for their daughters. "I was inspired by a quote painted on a truck with a school girl's picture saying: Knowledge is light, and decided to send my daughter to school to learn," shared the father of a girl aged six recently admitted to school. More girls are attending school now and getting a chance at an education.

TRANSFORMING CLASSROOMS

In the classrooms, walls were painted using the 'truck art' technique to provide visual representation of lessons and to inspire a more interactive and colorful learning process. According to teachers in the participating schools, girls attending primary schools look forward to go to school and learn in their newly painted classrooms.

"Our classroom environment looks attractive with all these colors and artwork, and I learn with more interest now," says Gul Bano, attending grade 3 at the Girls' Primary School in Dassu. More girls like Gul have been inspired by the local art, which has made classrooms feel safer and friendlier for girls. In a group of 29 primary schools, 13 had their classroom walls painted using 'truck art' technique. In these 13 primary

schools, girls' enrolment increased up to 14% while in the 16 primary schools that did not use 'truck art', the rate remains unchanged at 10%.

This approach used by the GREP helps preserve the local art developed by rural women and truck artists with the engagement of local schools and students. Not only is the methodology helping to pass on the local craft to future generations, but it is also amplifying important messages on educating girls to the community, and helping to transform girls' lives through education.



17

UNITE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

Unite for Quality Education is a campaign of Education International (EI), the voice of teachers and other education employees across the globe. The campaign urges people to join the 30 million members that EI represents (through its 400 affiliated organizations in more than 170 countries and territories) to demand that quality education for all remains at the top of the agenda for a sustainable, peaceful and prosperous future.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORK AND ELEMENTS

- Every child in the world should have access to a quality education. Education must be a critical part of any worldwide development agenda for creating just and democratic societies. The Millennium Development Goals and the Dakar Framework were vital roadmaps, but tens of millions of children remain out of school and mired in poverty.
- Teachers and unions play a vital role in quality education. Teachers and their unions are taking the lead in fighting for access and quality for all students and reclaiming education for the public benefit. They are calling for action on the three pillars of quality education: quality teaching, quality tools, and quality learning environments. Teachers

are the most important educational resource for students and a critical determinant of educational quality, but their contributions are often not recognized adequately. Teachers must be treated as respected professionals and given the training and support they need. The experience of top-performing countries shows unions play a vital role in teacher professionalism and student success.

- Quality Education is a Basic Human Right! Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, states that “Everyone has the right to education,” all levels of education, including early childhood, primary, lower and upper secondary education, vocational education and training, higher and adult education. Quality education is not simply a public good. It is a basic human right. The Declaration recognises education’s transformative role and potential, when it asserts “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and...the maintenance of peace”. These words matter.

THE THREE PILLARS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

Quality education is based on three pillars:

- Quality teaching—which is ensured through the recruitment of high calibre candidates to teaching, the provision to them of high quality initial teacher education and the support throughout their career of continuous professional development. Teachers are the most important educational resource and a critical determinant of quality.

They must be treated as respected professionals. Teaching must provide an attractive career choice, and must remain sufficiently attractive, in terms of salaries and conditions of employment, to retain the best teachers in the service.

- Quality tools for teaching and learning—including appropriate curricula and inclusive teaching and learning materials and resources. These may be provided, through the application of information and communication technology, that is, by harnessing the enormous power of the internet and the capacity and accessibility of modern technology to assist and support teaching and learning.
- Quality environments for teaching and learning—supportive, comfortable, safe and secure, with the appropriate facilities to encourage student learning and to enable teachers to teach effectively. A quality environment also engages parents, students, teachers, school authorities and support staff in a community working together to achieve the goal of providing quality education for all of its students.



18

FAIZAL AND SHABANA FOUNDATION

Per the news that I read on *Gulf News*, posted on October 21, 2019, “a UAE-based Indian couple’s efforts to elevate the standard of a girl’s government school in Kozhikode of India’s Kerala has paid rich dividends, with the local government now set to implement its exemplary model across 141 government schools in the state benefitting 300,000 students.”

The Nadakkavu Government Vocational Higher Secondary School (GVHSS) for Girls, now a flagbearer of excellence in education in India with a focus on the holistic development of students, has also been ranked as the No. 2 government school in the country in the Education World (EW) India School Rankings in 2019-2020. EW, India, is the world’s largest survey of primary-secondary schools with scores based on interviews with parents, senior school students, principals and teachers. The schools are evaluated on 14 different categories.

A once-crumbling school, the 120-year-old GVHSS underwent an infrastructural transformation in 2015 with funds from UAE based Faizal and Shabana Foundation, the philanthropy arm of KEF holdings, a Dubai-based company. The school is run by Faizal and Shabana Kottikolon, co-founders of the foundation.

Faizal, founder and chairman of KEF Holdings, said: “The top ranking for Nadakkavu school is a true testament to

the success of our foundation’s vision, ‘Giving to Create Impact’. Our goal is to drive the positive transformation of government—and private—schools through an integrated and participatory approach. We are honoured to have created this benchmark of excellence for education in India. We will continue to drive our education engagement initiatives across the country as well as in other nations.”

As Faizal said, “It all started with an interview where someone asked me what I thought India needed to do to change the face of public education. I realised dilapidated infrastructure was the first thing that needed change. Poor conditions not only lowered self-esteem of children but was the main cause of absenteeism and high dropout rate. So in collaboration with Pradeep Kumar, a local legislator, we began our work. When we arrived at this school the first time in 2014, we saw the structure was dilapidated. The building housed classes for 2,400 girls, but had only eight toilets. The mid-day meals were not providing enough nutrition and teachers were qualified but had no upgrading of skills program.”

Pradeep Kumar, who had founded Prism (Promoting Regionals Schools to International Standards through Multiple Interventions), was planning to utilise a portion of the development funds granted to local legislators—in this case around 140 thousand USD—to repair the crumbling school.

The Kottikolon’s invited the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calicut to conduct research into why students were not inspired to study despite free education and free meals along with well qualified teachers. Armed with research and feedback on what was required and with consultation from international architects from Denmark and UK, the school underwent the transformation.

Faizal said: “We did not want to disrupt the school for a single day and undertook the project during the summer vacations, completing it in 95 days, Old walls were pulled down, new ones designed, toilets built and teachers imparted training through IIM Calicut. Suddenly the self-confidence of students and teachers went up manifold when the school reopened for the new academic year in 2015.

NEW LOOK

New structures at the school included a 132,000-sq ft landscaped garden, a library with around 25,000 books and an 18,110-sq-ft astro-turf multipurpose playing field for athletics, football and hockey. A new sports complex with a 13,000-sq-ft indoor stadium, wood-floored basketball and badminton courts, and spacious changing and locker rooms for students were also built.

Learning became fun and interactive as the classrooms were digitally equipped. Students took pride in carrying out experiments in modern laboratories for physics, chemistry and botany. Sanity and hygiene went up several notches with the construction of 92 spotless toilets, a corporate-style kitchen and dining hall that could seat about 600 students at a time.

In an economically empowering experiment, village women found employment cooking at the school kitchen providing healthy, wholesome meals to the students and earning a modest income.

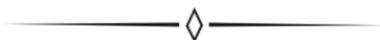
All this brought about a dramatic turnaround of the average performance of the students as results indicated. In the 2015 board examinations, every student who took the exam

passed, with 21 out of 393 students securing A+ (above 92 per cent) in all subjects—a 400 per cent increase in A+ grades since 2012.

SELF-SUSTAINABLE

The school has become the pride of Calicut and a central hub for the community, said Faizal. The facilities are utilised for a fee by the community. The entire neighbourhood uses the school grounds for morning walks and yoga camps during the weekends. The modern stadium and playgrounds are also leased out for community functions.

Shabana, co-founder of the foundation, and vice chairperson of KEF Holdings, said: “Since the inception of the foundation over 10 years ago, our single-minded focus was on driving social impact through our programs. We are privileged to undertake the opportunity to support this school with a history of over 120 years, and to transform it into one of India’s leading schools. More importantly, we see incremental value from this transformation. All our students benefit from high-quality education, delivered by a team of committed teachers. We see these students evolving as well-rounded individuals who can contribute incredible value to the society.”



CHAPTER 2

Education Heroes

1

FOSTERING GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

I would like to share an article that I recently read on UNESCO posted on October 28, 2019 that speaks loudly about gender equality in education.

Students whisper as their teacher enters the classroom with a baby on her back. Tigist Baye is a civics teacher for grades 9 and 10. She lullabies her son to sleep while her students work on their assignment.

It did not take long for the news to reach the director of Woretta secondary and preparatory school, in the Amhara region of Ethiopia. “Tigist must have had no one to care for her son if she is bringing him to class with her”, says school director Tarekegn Degefu.

Tarekegn’s reaction would have been very different before his participation in the gender-responsive pedagogy and assessment training organized as part of a UNESCO project in Ethiopia. The training helps to consider gender perspectives and apply a gender-responsive approach in teaching and learning practices, and in the wider school environment.

The training transformed Tarekegn's views on gender equality. He led the creation of a gender club and started a day care service at the school for teachers and staff.

Soon after the announcement of the day care service opening, 10 teachers with children aged 0 to 4 registered. "I was so happy when I heard about the day care service. I can now bring my daughter here and I do not have to worry much since she will not be so far away from me", says Truaynet, one of the teachers. Many teachers also volunteered to take turns to care for the children during their break hours.

Tarekegn grew up in the town of Woretta and studied in the same school he is currently leading. While he has worked in the field of education for 10 years, the gender-responsive pedagogy training gave him the knowledge and skills to not only apply gender equality principles in the school but also in his personal life. Tarekegn is now aspiring to give back to his school and community.

However, changing the culture of the school requires continuous support and work. To transform the school community, Tarekegn is raising the awareness of teachers and other staff on gender equality and uses every opportunity to pass on what he learned at the training. He encourages the members of the mini media club to include gender equality considerations in their programs and provides constant support.

He is also working to foster a more inclusive and safe learning environment to increase girls' performance in school. For example, he is planning to create a girls' corner, install separate bathroom facilities and have a library space available for girls in the school. He is also looking into securing more mattresses and toys for the day care service.

Woretta secondary school is one of the participating schools of the project. The gender-responsive pedagogy training benefitted teachers, class monitors and girls in the school. Specifically, out of the 200 teachers of which 61 are women, 4 women and 8 men were trained on gender-responsive pedagogy and took part in experience-sharing workshops. Class monitors of grades 11 and 12, and 50 girls, aged 15 to 18, who are members of school clubs, were also sensitized on the gender-responsive approach.

The project in Ethiopia aims to enhance the quality and relevance of education for adolescent girls, and ensure that all girls have access to and transition through the full education cycle successfully. It is implemented by the UNESCO Liaison Office in Ethiopia, under the UNESCO-HNA Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education. As part of the project, the UNESCO Institute for Capacity Building in Africa provides technical backstopping in institutional capacity-building for gender mainstreaming in education, gender-responsive pedagogy and teacher training.



2

THE STORY OF MY LIFE

Helen Keller is remembered as an advocate for people with disabilities. She was the first deaf and blind person to write a biography, *The Story of my Life*, which she wrote at the age of 22. The memoirs covered Keller's transformation from a child to a 21-year-old college student. Most importantly, she was the first deaf and blind person to earn a college degree, at the age of 24. She graduated from Radcliffe College and also wrote 12 books and several articles.

Per the website *Biography.com*, which captures the most gripping, surprising, and fascinating stories about famous people, Keller was born with her senses of sight and hearing and started speaking when she was just six months old. She started walking at the age of one.

Keller lost both her sight and hearing at just 19 months old. In 1882, she contracted an illness—called “brain fever” by the family doctor—that produced a high body temperature. The true nature of the illness remains a mystery today, though some experts believe it might have been scarlet fever or meningitis.

Within a few days after the fever broke, Keller's mother noticed that her daughter didn't show any reaction when the dinner bell was rung, or when a hand was waved in front of her face.

During this time, Keller had also become very wild and unruly. She would kick and scream when angry, and giggle uncontrollably when happy. So extreme case of Keller that many family relatives felt she should be institutionalized until Anne Sullivan came into her life as her teacher for 49 years, from 1887 until Sullivan's death in 1936.

On March 3, 1887, Sullivan went to Keller's home in Alabama, and immediately she began by teaching six-year-old Keller finger spelling, starting with the word "doll," to help Keller understand the gift of a doll she had brought along. Other words would follow.

At first, Keller was curious, then defiant, refusing to cooperate with Sullivan's instruction. When Keller did cooperate, Sullivan could tell that she wasn't making the connection between the objects and the letters spelled out in her hand. Sullivan kept working at it, forcing Keller to go through the regimen.

As Keller's frustration grew, the tantrums increased. Finally, Sullivan demanded that she and Keller be isolated from the rest of the family for a time, so that Keller could concentrate only on Sullivan's instruction. They moved to a cottage on the plantation.

In a dramatic struggle, Sullivan taught Keller the word "water"; she helped her make the connection between the object and the letters by taking Keller out to the water pump, and placing Keller's hand under the spout. While Sullivan moved the lever to flush cool water over Keller's hand, she spelled out the word w-a-t-e-r on Keller's other hand. Keller understood and repeated the word in Sullivan's hand. She

then pounded the ground, demanding to know its “letter name.” Sullivan followed her, spelling out the word into her hand. Keller moved to other objects with Sullivan in tow. By nightfall, she had learned 30 words.

SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Keller tackled social and political issues, including women’s suffrage, pacifism, birth control, and socialism.

After college, Keller set out to learn more about the world and how she could help improve the lives of others. News of her story spread beyond Massachusetts and New England. Keller became a well-known celebrity and lecturer by sharing her experiences with audiences, and working on behalf of others living with disabilities. She testified before Congress, strongly advocating to improve the welfare of blind people.

In 1915, along with renowned city planner George Kessler, she co-founded Helen Keller International to combat the causes and consequences of blindness and malnutrition. In 1920, she helped found the American Civil Liberties Union.

When the American Federation for the Blind was established in 1921, Keller had an effective national outlet for her efforts. She became a member in 1924, and participated in many campaigns to raise awareness, money and support for the blind. She also joined other organizations dedicated to helping those less fortunate, including the Permanent Blind War Relief Fund (later called the American Braille Press).

Soon after she graduated from college, Keller became a member of the Socialist Party, most likely due in part to her

friendship with John Macy. Between 1909 and 1921, she wrote several articles about socialism and supported Eugene Debs, a Socialist Party presidential candidate. Her series of essays on socialism, entitled “Out of the Dark,” described her views on socialism and world affairs.

It was during this time that Keller first experienced public prejudice about her disabilities. For most of her life, the press had been overwhelmingly supportive of her, praising her courage and intelligence. But after she expressed her socialist views, some criticized her by calling attention to her disabilities. One newspaper, the *Brooklyn Eagle*, wrote that her “mistakes sprung out of the manifest limitations of her development.”

In 1946, Keller was appointed counselor of international relations for the American Foundation of Overseas Blind. Between 1946 and 1957, she travelled to 35 countries on five continents.

In 1955, at age 75, Keller embarked on the longest and most grueling trip of her life: a 40,000-mile, five-month trek across Asia. Through her many speeches and appearances, she brought inspiration and encouragement to millions of people.

During her lifetime, she received many honors in recognition of her accomplishments, including the Theodore Roosevelt Distinguished Service Medal in 1936, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964, and election to the Women’s Hall of Fame in 1965.

Keller also received honorary doctoral degrees from Temple University and Harvard University and from the universities of Glasgow, Scotland; Berlin, Germany; Delhi, India; and

Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. She was named an Honorary Fellow of the Educational Institute of Scotland.

Keller learned to communicate through lip-reading, finger-spelling, Braille and using a typewriter.



3

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

The following is from a *Guardian* news article posted on March 24, 2019.

A science teacher from rural Kenya who donates most of his salary to help poorer students has been crowned the world's best teacher and awarded a \$1m prize, beating 10,000 nominations from 179 countries.

Peter Tabichi, 36, a maths and physics teacher at Keriko secondary school in Pwani Village, in a remote part of Kenya's Rift Valley, has won the Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize 2019.

Tabichi, a member of the Franciscan religious order, received his prize at a ceremony in Dubai hosted by actor Hugh Jackman.

Tabichi gives away 80% of his income to help the poorest students at the poorly-equipped and overcrowded school who could not otherwise not afford uniforms and books.

More than 90% of his pupils are from poor families and almost a third are orphans or have only one parent. Drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, dropping out early from school, young marriages and suicide are common. Students have to walk 7km along roads that can become impassable in the rainy season to reach the school and the area can be affected by drought and famine.

Despite only having one computer, a poor internet connection and a student-teacher ratio of 58:1, Tabichi started a “talent nurturing club” and expanded the school’s science club, helping pupils design research projects of such quality that many now qualify for national competitions.

His students have taken part in international science competitions and won an award from the Royal Society of Chemistry after harnessing local plant life to generate electricity.

Tabichi and four colleagues also give struggling pupils one-to-one tuition in maths and science, visiting students’ homes and meeting their families to identify the challenges they face.

Enrolment at the school has doubled to 400 over three years and girls’ achievement in particular has been boosted.

Accepting the prize, Tabichi said: “I am only here because of what my students have achieved. This prize gives them a chance. It tells the world that they can do anything.”

The Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta, said in a video message: “Peter, your story is the story of Africa, a young continent bursting with talent.”

Now in its fifth year, the prize was set up to highlight the vital role teachers play in society.

Sunny Varkey, founder of the Varkey Foundation, said he hoped Tabichi’s story would encourage others to enter the profession and “shine a spotlight on the truly inspiring work teachers do to make tomorrow brighter than today”.

Tabichi said Africa’s young people would no longer be held back by low expectations. “Africa will produce scientists,

engineers, entrepreneurs whose names will be one day famous in every corner of the world. And girls will be a huge part of this story,” he said.

“I believe science and technology can play a leading role in unlocking Africa’s potential. It’s morning in Africa. The skies are clear. This is Africa’s time.”

The Varkey Foundation believes in a quality education for every child.

They work to build the status of teachers to ensure that the quality of teaching is enhanced, and outcomes will improve.

The Varkey Foundation’s vision is a quality education for every child—through boosting the capacity and status of teachers around the world.

Teachers matter. Every day, in classrooms around the world, teachers do amazing things. But too often, their work goes unrecognised and unrewarded. Research by the Varkey Foundation carried out in 2013 and 2018 (Global Teacher Status Index) found that few people see teaching as a high-status job and few think pupils respect their teachers. Relatively few parents say they would encourage their children to be teachers.

There is a shortage of teachers across the world—with 69 million more teachers needed to provide universal primary and secondary education by 2030. And too often, teachers are not trained or supported to be effective—and that means pupils are not learning. One recent study from the World Bank showed that only 9% of teachers in sub Saharan Africa had the minimum required knowledge of pedagogy to effectively teach the curriculum, and only 7% could correctly mark a year 4 test on spelling and comprehension.

The foundation work with governments and partner organizations to build new programs that will deliver better school leaders, better teachers in classrooms and better results across the board. The foundation is driven by one simple belief: teachers matter.



4

AKSHARALAKSHAM

You may have difficulty in pronouncing this chapter's title, *Aksharalaksham*, which could roughly be translated as the practice of chanting, and there is a nice story behind this which you may find interesting.

According to an NDTV News article posted on October 31, 2018, a 96-year-old woman Karthiyani Amma of Alappuzha district in Kerala has proved that age is just a number. She has not only cleared but topped a test under Kerala's literacy program '*Aksharalaksham*', scoring 98 out of 100 marks of 4th grade exam. She was the oldest candidate to take the test under the program, launched to eliminate illiteracy in the state that boasts of over 90 per cent literacy, the highest in the country.

In the exam, her reading, writing and basic mathematical skills were tested. Approximately 42,933 people cleared the test this year, taking the state closer to its aim of 100 per cent literacy.

On April 18, 1991, the state was declared fully literate, which means attaining 90 per cent literacy, as per UNESCO norms. Even though the state is the flag bearer of literacy in the country, around 18 hundred thousand people remained illiterate, the 2011 Census revealed, prompting the state government to launch the "Aksharalaksham" program on January 26, 2018.

The motto of the program is to eradicate illiteracy among marginalised communities like tribals, fisher folks and slum-dwellers.

“Our motto is to eradicate illiteracy completely and achieve 100 per cent literacy in the state by all means,” Literacy Mission director PS Sreekala had said before the program was launched.

According to the survey conducted under the “Aksharalksham” project of Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority (KSLMA), the literacy rate in the state has made a significant increase of almost 3% from 93.91% in 2011 to 96.69% in 2018.



5

HARVARD GRADUATION

INVITE ME TO YOUR HARVARD GRADUATION

A story full of emotions and compassion, published on May 26, 2018, at CNN, is worth mentioning here.

A sixth-grade teacher from Yuma, Arizona, Toensing made a strong impact on one of her students 21 years ago.

At the end of the school year in 1997, Mrs. Toensing, wrote a note on the student's report card: "It has been a joy to have you in class. Keep up the good work! Invite me to your Harvard graduation!"

Now, the student, Christin Gilmer graduated from Harvard as a doctor of public health.

Gilmer who is now 33, was only 12 at the time, but she kept the message all these years.

"It meant a lot to me to know that outside my mom, someone who knew me so intimately believed in my dreams and my ability to accomplish them," Gilmer said.

Gilmer, who wrote a thank you note prior to her graduation, said Toensing was the first person to encourage her in the journey of studying public health.

“Ms. Judy Toensing, taught me about current events, global health, and human rights. She was the first person who passionately conveyed the plight of people living with HIV/AIDS to me,” the letter said.

This letter quickly grabbed the attention of school administrators, who decided to honor Toensing by inviting her to the 2018 Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health’s convocation, at no cost to her.

Thanking the “immeasurably important” work by Toensing and all public school teachers, Dean Michelle Williams said; “You don’t just teach young people. You inspire them, and you propel them along a path of fulfillment and service to others. Your work is what makes our work possible.”

This came to a surprise to Toensing, who felt “shocked, flabbergasted, humbled” when she received the invitation from Harvard, which was personally delivered to her by Gilmer.

“I have high expectations of all my students, so to hear that Christin Gilmer had achieved this goal did not surprise me in the least, I feel honored that Harvard chose to tell Christin’s story, her journey, and that I was a small part of that journey,” Toensing told to the CNN.

Gilmer who got her master’s degree in public health at Columbia University, says that Toensing always encouraged her students to think of ways to help others.

“She lit a fire in me that helping people is a powerful tool, and through education, you can better serve populations in need. I will never forget her passion for others.”

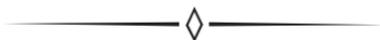
As a student in Toensing's class, she and others wrote a 100-page advertisement, interviewed the mayor and envisioned how recycling could work in their town 15 years before it actually happened, and helping others is something she plans to focus on.

"I would love return to southern Arizona to work in health, politics, and community development," Gilmer said. "I wanted to learn from the best institutions in the world so that I could bring back the knowledge and skills I have obtained and share them with the communities from which I came."

Toensing, who says this experience revitalized and energized her to become a better teacher for her students, praised all the hard work Gilmer has done and believes this is just the beginning of a great future.

"She has many more miles to go, I know with her tenacity, her dedication, and her passion for helping humanity, she will be highly successful and that we will all be the better for knowing her," Toensing said.

Toensing, who taught Gilmer all her sixth-grade subjects, now teaches sixth- and eighth-grade Social Studies.



6**YOUNG AND ENERGETIC ZONDO****DO TO OTHERS WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU**

Recently I saw a clip of an interview with Raymond “Ray” Zondo, a South African judge who currently serves as Deputy Chief Justice of South Africa. During his interview in April 2017 with the Judicial Services Commission (JSC), Zondo shared a moving story, giving a brief outline of his background.

A story of hope and humility connects a retired Port Shepstone businessman Suleman Bux and the country’s deputy chief justice.

Following is the story that relates to a loan for food which Bux, who owned a supermarket in Ixopo, offered a then 17-year-old Zondo in 1977. “When I finished matric I was confident I would get an exemption and qualify to go to university. I was confident I was going to get a bursary too but my problem was at home the situation was quite bad. My mother lost her job two years before my matric,” he said in the clip.

Zondo continues to say that by the time he finished Grade 11, his mother had exhausted all her savings.

“Somehow I felt that the community had seen how my mother struggled to raise us on her own and expected me to look for work after matric to support her. I wanted to go and do law

and was determined but I felt I couldn't do that unless I made arrangements to ensure my mother and siblings would have something to eat."

That was when he approached Bux and asked for a loan. "Very interestingly he didn't ask many questions and agreed to help me. He said he can't give me money but will give me a voucher to give to my mother for groceries. Each month my mother would collect groceries up to the value of 1.4 USD at his shop until I finished my degree."

The oral agreement continued for three years and in the clip, an emotional Zondo said he was touched by Bux's humility when he refused to accept repayment for the loan.

"When I asked him what arrangements we could make so I repay him, he said don't worry. Do to others what I have done to you. I thought that was very important and in my own small way I try to do that," said the judge.

The Weekend Witness tracked down Bux, who said he remembered the young and energetic Zondo. "He often visited my shop and from all the students I interacted with, he was the only one who wanted to be an attorney."

Bux said he was touched when Zondo approached him for the loan. "I told him if I gave him money it would probably get used somewhere else so I would rather give him grocery vouchers for a certain amount for his family to collect monthly."

Bux said he had been happy to help where he could. "When he came back to repay it [the amount] as per our oral agreement I said to him "Raymond the best way you can repay me is by helping another struggling student." he said.

When the video surfaced, Bux said he saw Judge Zondo's face and immediately remembered him. "I remembered his face as a youngster. He hasn't changed much. I was touched and overwhelmed with emotion when I watched the video. When we help people, we do not expect anything in return."



7

I AM MALALA

I Am Malala is a book written by Malala Yousafzai, who is considered one of the most inspiring women in recent times and will always remain so because of her brave efforts to champion the right to education for girls. *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* is the story of eleven-year-old Malala, who risked her life and took a stand against the Taliban to fight for the freedom of education for girls, which was being denied in Pakistan. Malala's book tells the remarkable story of a family who experienced the heat of global terrorism in the fight for girls' education; a story of a father, a teacher, who encouraged his daughter to learn and be an independent woman; and a story of brave parents with an extreme love for their daughter in a society that praises sons!

When Malala was born in 1997, her father named her after an audacious woman who led troops into battle against the British in 1880. Malala's parents came from a very remote area in Pakistan called Shangla, who later moved to Mangora, a small town in the Swat Valley district (just a hundred miles away from Afghanistan). Though her mother was illiterate, her father was a teacher and a great speaker. He opened a school for both girls and boys with his friends and business partners at a time when most women in the region were illiterate. Things were going well before the arrival of the Taliban, who completely changed the picture in the region. They began

misguiding people by telling them to burn their books, CDs, and other study materials to keep girls away from the schools. During this time, Pakistan had just been affected by a terrible earthquake, floods, and many other natural disasters. Many people believed that they were being punished by God, and so they started listening to the Taliban. However, Malala and her father continued to promote education and women's rights in their speeches. In early 2009, at the age of 11, she wrote a blog for the BBC website describing life under the rule of the Taliban.

Despite receiving numerous threats and seeing people killed every day by the Taliban, her father continued to encourage his daughter; in turn, Malala continued using her voice. Because of her sincere efforts, she was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize in 2011 and was awarded Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize. During the time that her efforts were being recognized everywhere, the Taliban, of course, did not favor her awards. Unfortunately, on Tuesday, October 9, 2012, she was shot by the Taliban while on her way home from school, and very few people expected her to survive. She was taken to the local hospital, but her condition deteriorated, so she was sent to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, UK to have surgery and recover from her wounds. By God's grace, Malala recovered from her injuries, and together with her father, founded the Malala Fund, which promotes the right to education for females around the world. Since then, she has given many speeches at the UN and other international organizations to promote women's right to education. In addition, she has won the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and received an award from the European Parliament, and in 2014, at the age of 17, she became the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Peace

Prize. She spent her prize money on education by building a secondary school for girls in Pakistan.

There is no doubt that she has brought about a positive change to the world with her peaceful yet enthusiastic approach in the field of education for girls. Her organization's next goal is to provide 12 years of free, safe, quality education to every child. What a wonderful goal!



8

SUPER 30

Here, I am going to include a remarkable story for those who haven't heard stories of hard work done day in and day out to uplift talent from economical weaker section. Anand Kumar, an Indian mathematician and columnist brought up in Patna, Bihar, was featured in *Time Magazine* on May 13, 2010 for his stupendous work. Let's get to the nitty-gritty of it.

Being a post office clerk's son, he studied in Hindi medium government school where he gained his deep interest in mathematics. During graduation, he submitted papers on number theory.

Although Anand gained admission to Cambridge University, he could not persevere studies there because of his father's death and his monetary situation. Kumar studied mathematics during the day and sold papads [a crisp Indian flatbread] in the evening with his mother to earn bread and butter for his family. To earn extra money, he mentored students in math.

Since Patna University library did not have foreign journals, to supplement his own study, he would travel every weekend on a six-hour train journey to Varanasi, where his younger brother, learning violin under [famed Indian violinist] N. Rajam, had a hostel room. Thus, he would spend Saturday and Sunday at the Central Library, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and return to Patna on Monday morning.

According to an article in *Time* magazine, every year, some 230,000 students take the notoriously difficult exam for a spot in one of the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology, but only 5,000 pass. In 2009, 30 of them came from one coaching center in Patna, capital of the impoverished north Indian state of Bihar. That may not seem like many, but for the Super 30 center, it's a pass rate of 100%. What makes that feat even more remarkable is that these students are the poorest of the poor, who would otherwise never be able to afford full-time coaching.

Super 30's founder, local mathematician Anand Kumar—who himself missed a chance to study at Cambridge because he didn't have enough money—gives full scholarships, including room, board and travel, to every batch of 30 students he accepts. They pass a competitive test just to get into Super 30 and then commit themselves to a year of 16-hour days. Since 2003, 182 of a total 210 students have made it to one of the institutes.

For them, it's more than just an academic accomplishment. "People who never acknowledged us before started smiling and nodding at us," says Rahul, the son of a print worker and a successful Super 30 alumnus. The project has even won the notice of then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who met with Kumar in February to hear his plan to launch a national program for talented rural children. In a country that has struggled to offer those students even basic education, Super 30 is an example of what's possible when human potential is tapped. It's a lesson Kumar teaches his students every day. "Education is their only weapon," he says, "to rid themselves of poverty and social exploitation."

Anand's work is now well received from all over the world. USA's president obama read about Anand in TIME magazine and sent a special envoy to check the work done by him and offered all the assistance which Anand didn't accept.

Discovery Channel did broadcast a one-hour-long program on Super 30.



9

SILENT FIGHTER

Today is July 26, 2019. I am writing this page after reading a heartbreaking news story in the *Colombo Telegraph*, a Sri Lanka newspaper.

It was days ago that the nation received the distressing news of the sad demise of Irfan Hafiz, a differently abled ‘keyboard warrior’ as he was referred to, about whom most came to know and discovered how talented he was, only fairly recently. It was not many months ago that Irfan rose into prominence when the local media and social media highlighted his inspiring story- a silent fighter, who despite being completely bedridden suffering from a rare disease called Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) for the past twenty six years, typed entirely on his iPhone with just the little strength in one finger and authored three books- Silent Struggle and Moments Of Merriment (Stories of children) and another— his third book Silent Thoughts. Sounds unbelievable and stunning! but it was true; a life episode of an amazing young man, who was God conscious, persevering and who never gave up amidst life’s hard struggles. The story certainly lifted many distressed hearts, raised eyebrows and provided many motivational lessons and a healing touch of renewed faith particularly to thousands if not millions, of youth both in Sri Lanka and even beyond, who may be losing hope in a gloomy world with depleting opportunities for them to forge ahead. Irfan sadly lost his long battle with the disease and passed

away very peacefully at the age of 37, having answered the Call from His Creator, leaving his fast expanding fan and admirer network in deep grief and extreme sadness. To God we belong; to him shall we Return.

I thought of writing some reflections from a greatly uplifting life story of Irfan, who has left an indelible mark in the annals of time, by surmounting many obstacles to reach an enviable pinnacle of achievement in the area of authorship and writing, of Himalayan proportions.

Irfan, was born in Matara in 1981 and was the third child of eight children. His father Hafiz Issadeen is a retired Principal, an administrative officer and an Editor of “Arumbu” Educational Magazine. Mr. Issadeen, the dad was an inspiring figure too, and did not give up on his mission to help others afflicted with this dreaded disease DMD. He was the president of Parent Project MD-Sri Lanka and was instrumental in organising the first ever National Muscular Dystrophy Parents Convention in Sri Lanka, at which event, all important latest developments in the medical research on DMD and other MD diseases were shared.

Irfan maintained a regular flow of motivational ideas and shared inspiring facets out of his hard struggle on his FB Page under the name ‘Silent Fighter’. They capture the immense struggles he has been going through which indeed are really inspirational. Some of them I wish to share here. He said,

‘Since it was informed that DMD had no permanent cure, my parents were going through a very complicated period. Our neighbours and relatives had started to drive us mad with their various suggestions and advice. My parents had no option but listening to some of those suggestions. I was taken to native

doctors, spiritual healers and even to a sorcerer but every effort went in vain. I had to miss many months of schooling while I was getting treatment from a native doctor’.

‘I became chair-bound at twelve years old and since then my life became very boring and some kind of frustration crept in to my mind. My movements were restricted and the things I wanted to do became almost impossible. It made me very irritated. However, I did not realize that I had developed an inner frustration in my mind but it came out in my behaviour.’



PART 3

CAPACITY BUILDING IN EDUCATION

CHAPTER 1

Capacity Development For Education

1

BUILDING TEACHERS' CAPACITY TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

According to UNESCO, since 2015, two complementary projects are supporting African and Asian countries to accelerate progress towards gender equality in education, with particular focus on teacher training and professional development in gender-responsive pedagogy. The projects are part of the UNESCO-HNA Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education (2015-2020).

The objectives of the partnership are to:

- Improve and expand access to all levels of education through targeted policies and interventions, with a particular focus on adolescent girls who are hardest to reach
- Improve the quality and relevance of basic and secondary education to ensure that girls, especially adolescents, stay, achieve and transition through all levels of education and into the world of work
- Make learning environments accessible and safe for all children, and eliminate school-related gender-based violence

TWO PROJECTS IN SEVEN COUNTRIES

The first project seeks to strengthen global and regional advocacy, networking and communication to ensure girls' right to education, and develop national capacities for gender-responsive education in Ethiopia and Ghana. It is coordinated by UNESCO Headquarters and with technical support from UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa.

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

- In Ghana, the project supports the Girls' Education Unit (GEU) of the Ghana Education Service and aims to increase girls' participation in science-related subjects. This includes capacity-building training for GEU staff members and the organization of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) Clinics, one-day events that have inspired over 1,550 girls to follow STEM courses and careers through hands-on activities and interactions with female role models in STEM fields.
- In Ethiopia, the project aims to build human and institutional capacities in three Higher Learning Institutions and 12 upper and secondary schools in gender-responsive pedagogy; improve adolescent girls' life skills; and create a gender-responsive and safe learning environment at schools through community engagement. As part of the project, over 5,000 pre- and in-service teachers are building their capacity to teach with a gender lens; and more than 7,000 girls have been empowered to promote gender equality and girls' rights through mini-media and girls' club activities.

The second project aims to develop national capacity in the formulation of gender-responsive teaching policy and to build the capacities of teacher trainers and trainees, school leaders and teachers to promote gender-responsive teaching and learning environments in Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan. It is coordinated by the UNESCO Regional Bureau in Bangkok.

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

- In the five countries, a gender assessment in teacher education systems has been conducted using a set of six tools (link is external). The key findings and recommendations have been disseminated to relevant stakeholders in each country, raising awareness on existing gender issues within teacher education policies, curricula and teaching and learning materials. Representatives from ministries of education and teacher education institutions in Asia-Pacific have been introduced to the six tools at a regional workshop in May 2018 in Hanoi, Vietnam, to encourage countries to foster gender-responsive teacher education policies, pedagogy, curriculum and textbooks.
- A training manual on gender mainstreaming in teacher education in Asia has also been developed to help mainstream gender in the areas of teacher preparation and development at the national level. Education policy-makers, planners and teacher educators at central and provincial levels from the project countries have gained knowledge and capacity in mainstreaming gender in teacher policies, plans, training and budgeting.



2

EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

VVOB—Education for Development is a nonprofit organization founded in 1982 that focuses mainly on sub-Saharan Africa and the Least Developed Countries (LDC group), which is in line with Belgium’s national development policy.

VVOB defines a good quality education as “one that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. The learning outcomes that are required vary according to context but at the end of the basic education cycle must include threshold levels of literacy and numeracy, basic scientific knowledge and life skills including awareness and prevention of disease. Capacity development to improve the quality of teachers and other education stakeholders is crucial throughout this process.”

SIX CRUCIAL DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

VVOB believes that education leads to empowerment: a process of strengthening individuals, organizations and communities so they get more control over their own situations and environments. Quality education is a crucial factor in combating poverty and inequality in society. In

quality education, VVOB distinguishes six dimensions that all interventions of the organization need to meet.

1. **Equity** - The VVOB definition refers to “all learners”. This term refers to non-discrimination and equity. Equity in education means that personal and social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to achieving educational potential and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. VVOB in particular focuses on gender equity.
2. **Contextualization and Relevance** - Quality education cannot be based on a blueprint that is applicable in all situations. Solutions and adaptations of education systems must be based on the real needs of a country and/or community. To guarantee this, VVOB evaluates its interventions.
3. **Child-friendly Teaching and Learning** - Quality education puts the child in the center and helps it to reach his or her full potential. Quality Education requires children’s active participation.
4. **Sustainability** - Educational change processes often need time to be realized. By enhancing the capacities of local education authorities, VVOB aims to institutionalize these processes.
5. **Balanced Approach** - Quality education aims at developing a balanced set of capabilities of children they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being.

6. Learning Outcomes - After completing a certain level of education, children must have developed a minimum standard of skills. Quality education requires a results-oriented approach.



3

PROMOTING POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR SCHOOL STAFF

The following is excerpted from the book *Working and Learning Together: Rethinking Human Resource Policies for Schools* published by the OECD.

The staff working in schools are probably the most important resource for today's education systems—both educationally and financially. There is a solid evidence base indicating that teachers are key in improving learning opportunities for students, likely more than anyone else in children's lives outside their families. School leaders, in turn, play a pivotal role in raising school quality and creating the environments in which teachers continuously improve their competencies to support student learning. Beyond teachers and school leaders, there are many other types of staff whose contribution to the holistic learning of students and the overall improvement of schools is increasingly recognized across OECD school systems.

Based on the experience of the countries participating in the OECD review, below are a set of six policy approaches that may help countries address these challenges.

Policy 1: Designing career structures with opportunities for professional growth

Policy 2: Establishing salary scales that attract new entrants and reward growing expertise

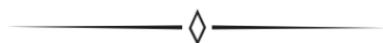
Policy 3: Reviewing the staff mix and working time arrangements in schools

Policy 4: Ensuring an effective and equitable distribution of school staff

Policy 5: Adopting a broad vision of initial preparation for teaching and school leadership

Policy 6: Supporting continuing professional learning and collaboration

While the report highlights the need to consider all adults who work in schools and contribute to their effectiveness, the systematic analysis of these policies focuses on teachers and school leaders due to the limited availability of information on other staff. It is important to keep in mind that effective human resource policies are shaped by national, local and school contexts and those initiatives that work well in one context are not necessarily transferable. Nonetheless, the experiences of different countries can help distil useful ideas and lessons learned from systems that have sought for better ways to support the individual and collective impact that school staff can have on students' learning and well-being.



4

**HOW TO ACHIEVE A
QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL**

The following is from a report by the World Economic Forum posted on March 20, 2015.

Of all of the investments needed to achieve sustainable development, none is more important than a quality education for every child. In a knowledge-based world economy, a good education is vital for finding decent work; achieving good health; building functioning communities; developing the skills to be a dependable parent; and growing up to be an engaged and responsible citizen. In advance of adopting the SDGs, at the Conference on Financing for Development in July, the world has the chance to put real resources behind the Education SDG. The three major types of partners convening in Addis Ababa—governments, philanthropists, and top companies—should pool resources to enable impoverished countries to scale up education, especially at the pre-K and secondary levels. The time has come to create a Global Fund for Education to ensure that even the world’s poorest children have the chance to receive a quality education at least through secondary school.

This is how malaria, AIDS, and vaccine-preventable diseases have been battled successfully in the past 15 years. The United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, and other governments teamed up with the Bill and Melinda

Gates Foundation, private companies like Novartis, GlaxoSmithKline, Ericsson, Sumitomo Chemical, and others to ensure that life-saving vaccines, medicines, and diagnostics could reach the poorest of the poor. The results have been remarkable: millions of lives have been saved, and economic growth has been boosted.

We must now do the same for education. Though access to primary schooling has expanded dramatically over the past two decades, a transformative breakthrough in quality learning and secondary education has remained out of reach—until now. The spread of computers, mobile phones, and broadband coverage to the poorest regions of the world could—and should—ensure that every child in low-income countries has access to the same trove of online information and quality learning materials as children in high-income countries.

Scaling up the use of information and communications technology (ICT), together with improved access to educational innovations, trained teachers and village education workers, and better measurement of learning outcomes, would enable low- and middle-income countries to create high-quality education systems within the next 15 years. In the meantime, students in impoverished rural schools that currently lack books, electricity, and trained teachers would be connected online—via solar panels and wireless broadband—to quality educational materials, free online courses, and other schools, thereby closing a resource gap that, until recently, seemed insurmountable.

The world even has the organizational leadership to make this possible. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a worldwide coalition of governments and NGOs that has

been working for more than a decade with the world's poorest countries to help them scale up quality education.

Yet, despite the GPE's tremendous success in encouraging poor countries to mobilize their own budget resources to expand the reach and quality of their educational programs, rich countries have not adequately supported this effort by closing the financing gap these countries face. The GPE should be supported to help build a true Global Fund for Education to ensure that every low-income country that puts in place an effective national strategy and domestic financing would have international support to accomplish its goals.

The additional financing required is modest. UNESCO recently estimated the annual education "financing gap" of low- and lower-middle-income countries—to cover education up through lower secondary school—to be around \$22 billion. Ensuring the scale-up of upper-secondary school and ICT access might raise the needed annual sum to around \$40 billion, with detailed cost estimates still to be made. Such aid would be needed only until today's poor countries achieve enough economic progress to cover the education bill on their own.

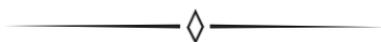
That \$40 billion might seem like a lot of money, but consider this: The world's richest 80 people have an estimated net worth of around \$2 trillion dollars. If they would devote just 1% of their net worth each year, they would cover half the global financial need.

Facebook, Google, Ericsson, Huawei, Samsung, Microsoft, Cisco, and other ICT giants could cover at least another \$10 billion per year, in cash and in kind. A few forward-looking governments could then close the remaining \$10 billion

gap. As we have seen with immunization, this is the kind of partnership that is needed to take the SDGs from rhetoric to reality.

The beauty of a new Global Fund for Education is that, once it got underway, it would quickly attract supporters from around the world. Arab governments would want to ensure that all Arabic-speaking children receive a decent ICT-backed education; Brazil and Portugal would surely contribute to ensure that Africa's many Portuguese speakers benefit from scaled-up education systems. Innovative high-tech companies would scramble to put their learning tools in front of the world's children. Local universities would train teachers and villagers on how to maximize the potential of these new technologies.

The stars—the SDGs, the ICT giants, mobile broadband, online learning, and philanthropists—are aligning for such a scenario. A Global Fund for Education, announced at the Conference on Financing for Development, would be the best news possible for today's children everywhere and a dazzling inauguration for the SDGs.



5

WORLD EDUCATION

World Education, Inc. is “dedicated to improving the lives of the poor through education and social and economic development programs. World Education’s programs promote individual and collective change.” Per the organization’s website:

They use experiential and engaging teaching techniques to help people and organizations develop skills that build on the learners’ context (cultural, linguistic, geographic, and economic), and include vital information about life and livelihoods—health, agriculture, small business development—that learners can put to immediate use.

Founded in 1951 to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged, World Education has worked in over 50 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as in the United States. Working in concert with private, public, and nongovernmental organizations, World Education initiatives support effective local management and promote partnerships between local organizations.

Let’s examine one of their most fascinating programs, which is actively run by mothers’ groups creating systemic changes to education throughout Benin and improving the lives of countless children.

Since 1994, World Education has been working in the Republic of Benin to improve education, especially for girls.

World Education's programs foster literacy and women's empowerment in a country where the average adult has only 2.7 years of schooling and 76% of women are illiterate.

MOTHERS IN BENIN ARE COMMITTED TO FIGHTING ILLITERACY

In 2003, World Education launched a program organizing and empowering women through School Mothers' Associations. The mothers' associations enhance women's civic participation and provide opportunities mothers to actively engage with local schools.

Mothers' associations create new opportunities for women to become more involved in education and for girls to be supported and retained in school. World Education's work with mothers' associations across Benin has led to improved school management, the creation of school health and feeding programs, and higher general enrolment and achievement.

IMPROVING GIRLS' EDUCATION

World Education works with mothers' associations to help girls stay in school. Mothers' associations register girls for school, monitor their attendance, and help them overcome obstacles that prevented them from going to school.

Mothers receive training to provide social support for vulnerable children in their communities, and advocate against child marriage and gender-based violence.

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Mothers' associations meet with school directors to discuss absence-related issues or other problems that children are

encountering. They educate community members about the education challenges caused by teacher absences and help with the funding and construction of local teacher housing so that teachers can live in the community instead of having to travel long distances.

School lunch programs are enhanced by setting up cooperative school gardens to provide condiments, and even staples, in the absence of a government feeding program at their school. Daycare arrangements have also been established, so that older children are not removed from school to take care of younger siblings. School directors are also involved in these discussions to make sure that school clean-up tasks are equitably divided between boys and girls and that teachers call on girls as much as boys in class.



6**QUDWA**

Qudwa is an Arabic word meaning “an example to follow or imitate.” According to their website, Qudwa is “a forum that seeks to elevate the teaching profession in the UAE and improve the future of education. Qudwa sees teachers as the change agents of our education system and draws on their expertise to spur innovation, creativity, and collaboration. In that sense, it is an event for teachers, by teachers.”

The following information is taken from the official website of Qudwa:

Organized by the Education Affairs Office of the Crown Prince Court of Abu Dhabi, Qudwa is held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

Qudwa connects teachers with decision-makers to discuss the education practices that will have the greatest positive impact on students in the UAE. Qudwa is an important part of the UAE’s forward-thinking, multicultural educational environment, and of its ambition to become a global leader in education with a future-ready education system.

ABOUT QUDWA 2019

Under the theme of “Teaching for Global Competence”, the third edition of Qudwa continues to place teachers at the heart of the conversation about making our schools future-ready.

The ability of students to thrive in a rapidly changing global context increasingly depends on the capacity of their teachers to impart a new set of skills for global competence, such as the ability to seek and evaluate information, weigh different points of view, and apply critical thinking to make a difference in their communities. To foster these skills, teachers in the UAE will need to become lifelong learners themselves—role models who continuously update their own skills and knowledge.

Qudwa 2019 promotes a vision of Continuous Professional Development for teachers as an essential element of quality teaching, and the UAE strives toward an educational environment where teachers are valued, supported knowledge workers who have opportunities to grow professionally and work collaboratively. Building on a series of focus groups held in 2019, the Forum seeks to create a culture of collaboration among teachers to support teaching for global competence.



7**EDUCATORS WITHOUT BORDERS**

Educators Without Borders is a group of passionate, experienced, and qualified educators working together to provide quality educational services and programs for the children and contribute effectively in social development areas in which international standards are adhered to. The organization offers a variety of services such as providing educational, psychological, behavioral, and social support and services; designing educational frameworks for curriculum, assessment and policies; and building schools, classrooms, libraries, and other facilities.

The aim of the organization is to promote and provide educational services to the affected groups locally and internationally through:

1. Providing educational and rehabilitation services for students
2. Teacher training to improve students' outcomes
3. Providing literacy programs
4. The construction of schools, classrooms, libraries, and other facilities that may be required by each location
5. Teaching the principles of tolerance through educational integration and promoting the values of equality, pluralism and mutual respect

6. Employing non-academic activities like sport, the arts and music to build children's personality and enhance their self-confidence
7. Finding technological solutions to networking teachers and distance learning
8. Provide schools with educational resources such as books, curricula, resources for learning and basic teaching tools
9. Providing educational, psychological, behavioral and social support services
10. Open the fields of volunteering for all educators and others to support the objectives of the institution
11. Build effective partnerships with institutions that support the organization's goals



8

FREE BOOKS

UAE citizen Najla Al-Kaabi, a technical and specialized programmer in management and technical sciences, and her husband, Yasser Ibrahim, an advisor in technical sciences, volunteered to provide free books to high school students and universities in 180 countries by developing and transferring their materials in an easy and attractive way. The following is excerpted from an *Emirates Today* article:

Al-Kaabi told *Emirates Today* that the materials currently available can be found through free applications, which can be downloaded on Android phones, adding that each application is a book in English in a specific subject, such as physics, psychology, sociology, algebra, differentiation and integration, Economics, and a number of other basic subjects that every student needs to study in all schools and universities of the world. Follow-up that the project will not stop, and will continue to download more materials successively.

Al-Kaabi said that it contributes to solving the problem of the high costs of textbooks in high school and university levels, stressing that this problem is not exclusive to developing countries, but rather includes developed countries. And in the United States, the university student spends 500 to 1500 dollars a year on textbooks, which represents a huge burden on the student with limited income, and pushes him to borrow, or is forced to work during the study, which affects

his educational attainment, and reduces his average score, he added. The work prohibits him from continuing education, noting that the student's inability to purchase books may force him to change the specialty that he dreamed of.

Regarding the financial cost required to transport these materials, Al-Kaabi stressed that the cost is cheap compared to the goal and reason behind implementing this project, explaining that the cost is limited to the effort and time required daily, in light of preoccupation with other scientific, life and functional projects, explaining that the project is charitable and humanitarian, and does not depend on offering money and alms, and keeping pace with the development of the times and its innovative tools.

Al-Kaabi said that during her studies abroad she witnessed the experiences of many students who suffer from the problem of obtaining textbooks, which led her to think about this project, which has a humanitarian and charitable nature, as well as a way to spread knowledge, and reach the largest segment, so she and her husband decided to search for a solution for the problem of students with limited financial income, especially those living in Africa and Asia.

She added that they took advantage of the presence of complete copies of most books on the websites of several universities, so they developed the scientific material with a high quality similar to the materials in the textbooks, summarizing it and presenting its information in an attractive way that makes it easier for students to benefit from, because the university sites display it in a dry way on the "PDF" file Internet connection is required.

She explained that the application is an interactive platform, which contains attractive tools, that helps the student to

understand the scientific material, and each chapter follows a short exam, tests the student's understanding of the terms and information he has read, adding that these tools are not present in the copies of books available on university sites.

According to Al-Kaabi, the number of downloading the application package reached 700,000, which made the five applications most downloaded to "Google Play" during the past months, due to the popularity of students who use it in various parts of the world. She added that downloading the applications was not limited to the youth and students category, as it was found that there are categories over 65 years old that downloaded the materials and applications.

She added that about three years since the project was launched in February 2017, the number of downloads has reached 700,000 times, which means providing 700,000 books with a value of 70 million dollars, confirming that the impact does not depend only on financial savings, but extends to the positive impact on Environment and protect the trees from cutting to provide the paper required for printing books.

Al-Kaabi considered providing these applications a means of assistance for students in the UAE as well, because the way information and exams are presented makes it easier for them to understand and study better, noting that the applications got an evaluation by their users with a score of 4.5 out of 5, which means that there is a high satisfaction rate for the content and formulation the information.

She stated that the largest percentage is students who downloaded applications in Nigeria, India and the United States, followed by students in countries in Africa and Asia, pointing out that the materials in the application are located

under the name QuizOver.com, as well as being available on a website called www.borderless-education.org.

Al-Kaabi summarized the features of the application in five points, the first is free, and the second is that it can be used without the Internet, and the third is that it does not require registration and entry through a user name and a secret code, and the fourth contains exams samples that help students measure the extent of their mastery of the material, and the fifth is creating a community whose members interact with each other to discuss their scientific and life concerns, and collaborate in solving each other's problems through the interaction space and comments within applications.



9

USED BOOK FESTIVAL

The 7th used book festival was held in February 2020, organized by Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services (SCHS) with the theme “Get a Book, Light a Path.” The event was held at Al Nakheel Park on the shores of Khalid Lake, Sharjah from February 26–29, as part of the activities marking Sharjah as World Book Capital. The idea of the event is based on collecting the largest possible number of diverse (non-school) books from various topics and languages that people and institutions donate with their credible in the SCHS, and investing their return and income toward supporting SCHS’s projects dedicated to People of Determination.

In addition, the book project fell under the context of the cultural and knowledgeable approach set by His Highness Shaikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, especially in Sharjah Emirate and along UAE in general.

FESTIVAL GOALS

- Enhancing the value and importance of books by encouraging reading and curiosity
- To develop and enhance the spirit of volunteerism among members of society in all age groups
- Promoting cultural and social values among members of society

- Establishing recreational and cultural activities that attract all nationalities and all age groups
- Paying attention to the creativity of persons with disabilities and other groups of children and youth
- Providing financial revenues for Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services in an innovative, moral and cultural return

The 7th Used Book Festival witnessed great attendance of school students and community members.

The students of Sharjah Public School, Al-Basayer Private School, and Al-Shula Private School for Girls presented artistic, literary, and informative acts on stage. Festival visitors interacted positively with it. Moreover, there were a group of cultural and artistic workshops such as theatrical art, children's book breaking, little writer, storytelling, calligraphy, and coloring workshops, among others.

Sharjah Municipality has participation with a special pavilion called the Al-Warif Library. Sheikha Kholoud Al Mualla, Director of Document Management, emphasized the importance of participation by receiving school students in the library, allowing them to read stories, then asking questions and giving some motivational prizes.

As the Used Book Festival is a destination for volunteers, more than 250 volunteers from schools, universities, public and private organizations and SCHS volunteered in sorting and pricing books as well as assisting visitors in finding the books they were looking for.

The festival is special because of the provision of a special corridor for people with physical disabilities who use

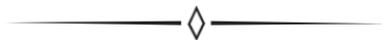
wheelchairs, as SCHS was keen to make the place accessible for everyone, including the elderly and mothers who accompany their children using baby strollers. It is a profound message to society aiming at facilitating the participation of persons with disabilities in public events.

The presence of persons with disabilities and their voluntary participation in the festival and accompanying activities is an opportunity to highlight their capabilities in several creative and artistic fields in addition to being an informative message to promote their inclusion in society. In addition, this is an effective role in serving society intellectually and culturally through recycling books in a voluntary manner.

A MILLION BOOKS

The used book festival, organized since 2006, included one million books this year (2020). It was indeed a great opportunity to buy books at reasonable prices starting from two up to twenty dirhams. SCHS allocated the revenues of the festival to support its services, programs, and activities offered to persons with disabilities.

Visitors confirm year after year that the Used Book Festival is one of the most important cultural events in Sharjah that aims to encourage voluntary work and provide books at low prices.



THE WAY FORWARD

*“Education is learning what you didn’t even know
you didn’t know.”*

Daniel Boorstin, American Historian

Quality education is essential to escaping poverty and achieving many other Alleem Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, we are still a long way from achieving inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning.

Let me share with you some of the latest figures and facts published by the United Nations about quality education. Globally, an estimated 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age—more than 55 percent of the global total—lacked minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics in 2015. Non-proficiency rates are highest in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia, where more than 80 percent of children of primary and lower secondary school age were not proficient in reading.

Let me ask you, what would you do for education? Do you have any plan in place? Well, I have selected for you two inspiring stories of children who wanted to make a difference and

continue their education under very tough environments and circumstances. Their stories might leave you in veneration.

STORY #1: ZIPLINING OVER A CANYON

In 2011, WISE—World Innovation Summit for Education—produced a documentary on the children of Los Pinos, Colombia. Los Pinos’s school was closed due to a lack of funding, leaving students with two options to get to the next nearest school. These young children could either walk two hours both ways, or ride a zipline across a deep canyon to get to school.

According to an article posted by *Global Citizen* on January 19, 2018, “for families living atop an isolated mountain high above the Rio Negro River in Colombia’s rainforest, steel cables provide the most efficient route to reach other communities. The zipline phenomena traces back centuries. Natives used to rely on hemp ropes to journey across the canyon. While soaring through the air on their way to school, ziplining students can reach speeds up to 40 mph.”

STORY #2: THE TREACHEROUS CLIFFS

There is one more story of traversing over treacherous cliffs for a commute that I would like to share with my dear reader. In the mountains of southwest China’s Sichuan province, a group of children must descend an 800-meter (half mile) cliff to reach their school. There are no buses for school kids. There aren’t even roads. Instead, students scramble up a series of rickety wooden ladders propped against sheer cliffs. After photos of children making the perilous trip went viral, the Chinese government funded the construction of steel ladders

secured to the mountainside. As per a news article posted by CNN on October 26, 2016, “the world’s most terrifying school run is about to get a little less hair raising as now a steel ladder is being built to make the treacherous journey from the isolated cliff-top village of Atule’er easier.”



ALLEEM RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CENTER

WHO WE ARE

Alleem R&D is a UAE-based center that aims to meet the global need for more, cleaner, and affordable water and energy solutions in ways that are economically, environmentally, and socially responsible.

OUR MISSION

To work with individuals and innovative organizations in order to improve social, economic, and environmental living conditions worldwide, thus helping to improve the quality of life for hundreds of millions who have not yet seen the benefits of sustainable development and inclusive growth.

WHAT IS OUR LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY?

The ability to continuously strive to establish and manage a creative climate of continuous learning in which associates and teams are empowered and self-motivated to build true and lasting success in an environment of mutual trust, collaboration, and respect.

OUR CORE VALUES

1. AUTHENTIC AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Authentic leadership at the Alleem Research & Development Center is built on an ethical foundation and promotes openness. It is defined by the courage to seize the right opportunity/initiative and to welcome responsibility, as well as being accountable for the same. It is about “seeing the bigger picture” and having a clear vision of the Center’s aims and objectives—and, of course, building a strong business and celebrating diverse talent.

2. EMBRACING EXCELLENCE

Excellence is a continual quest at the Alleem Research & Development Center. We join hands to achieve world-class standards in all aspects of operation. We have a dedicated team of “Quality & Excellence,” which encourages the convivial and passionate pursuit of excellence and improvement through a formal system of benchmarking and assessment.

3. PASSION FOR WINNING

Driven by our overarching desire to improve and continually achieve greater and greater success, we are determined to be the best in everything that we do. We love to celebrate accomplishments. Each employee gets a chance to be coached and mentored, which in turn enables them to achieve positive results.

4. EVERY IDEA COUNTS

At Alleem R&D, everyone has a voice, and each individual's contribution is respected and valued. Our success depends on encouraging the knowledge, skills, and creativity of the employees, and instilling in them the sense of being admired and appreciated. There is no such thing as a "silly" idea; rethinking the familiar is "innovation and being creative."

ALLEEM 21 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

By drawing examples from a number of countries, Dr. Rashid teased out the diverse, but intersecting domains of sustainability, emphasizes strategies, organizational characteristics, and personal qualities for action, and established concrete yet achievable targets for the future: Alleem's 21 Sustainable Development Goals.

The following provides an overview of the Alleem 21 Sustainable Development Goals:

GOAL 1: QUALITY EDUCATION

It is appalling to realize that nearly 103 million youth and children worldwide lack basic literacy skills, 60% of whom are women. Dr. Alleem believes firmly that education is a powerful weapon that can help change the world; however, that education must be 'Quality Education.' He states that one must learn, and once you have learnt, teach others in turn, because education is the source of true happiness. He believes that quality education will help bring remarkable developments at all levels of the system, nurturing leadership skills and literacy excellence.

GOAL 2: CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

According to Dr. Alleem, creativity is the ability to develop something new, while innovation is the execution of these creative ideas. He states that every individual in this world has an exceptional gift that is consistent with his philosophy, which rests on his self-coined term, “the CRITICAL thinking.” This unique blend of “critical and lateral” thinking will not just help people achieve the best version of themselves, but also of their colleagues. He believes that although everyone is gifted or creative, the key focus remains on one’s perception.

GOAL 3: TECHNOLOGY, RESEARCH, AND DEVELOPMENT

Technology has become an indispensable part of our lives, as it pervades almost every aspect of our work as well as personal lives. Undoubtedly, without technology, life would be quite toilsome and onerous. The development of new technology today has helped people in many aspects; it not only saves lives, but also helps people make work easier, and the world a better place in which to live. Technology has opened new avenues in nearly every sector, including education, healthcare, research and energy studies, environment, and travel.

GOAL 4: PEACE AND SECURITY

The world has become chaotic since 2008, with a deterioration of 2.44 percent in the average country Global Peace Index score. Dr. Alleem believes that it is important that we educate our young generation about the Institute for Economics and Peace’s eight pillars for positive peace to create a utopian world that is filled with love, peace, and passion. These Eight pillars include a government that functions well, sound business environment, equitable distribution of resources, acceptance

of the rights of others, good relations with neighbors, free flow of information, high levels of human capital, and low levels of corruption.

GOAL 5: TOLERANCE

Millions of people today who live in different parts of the world have been suffering from hate crimes attributable to their caste, color, and creed. Human trafficking is also on the rise and people have stopped feeling the sense of belongingness to the place in which they live. In this growing unrest, we fail to understand that tolerance is acceptance—accepting and rejoicing in differences—and undoubtedly the UAE is one of the major examples of tolerance. In 2016, it created the 1st Ministry of Tolerance in the world and also designated the year 2019 as the “The Year of Tolerance.”

GOAL 6: HAPPINESS

Over the centuries, people have agonized over the question—What is happiness? Is it simply feeling good about oneself? Being rich or being able to afford everything in life? Dr. Alleem, who is often recognized as the Ambassador of Peace and Happiness in the Arab world, defines happiness as the feeling of being relatively content with yourself and satisfied with every aspect of your life. He has contributed immensely to the happiness of the UAE and created a motivational work environment in his organizations. Under his leadership, SEWA was recognized as one of the happiest places in which to work. He believes firmly that in addition to GDP, each country should have the GNH—Growth National Happiness, following the footsteps of Bhutan, which takes the happiness of its population as its growth policy.

GOAL 7: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Health is an important facet of sustainable development; hence, to spread awareness of good health and wellbeing, the Alleem R&D center has organized the Rashid Alleem Premier League, or RPL, every year since 2016. This engaging tournament has gained great acceptance now by corporations. In 2020, the RPL was announced as the GCC's largest corporate cricket tournament.

GOAL 8: WATER SUSTAINABILITY

Water scarcity has reached a critical level. According to UN statistics, only 2.6 billion people have gained access to improved drinking water sources since 1990, while 663 million still have no access to it. Further, at least 1.8 billion people all over the globe use a drinking water source that is contaminated with faeces. Dr. Alleem has worked with various international organizations to find innovative and high-quality solutions for this perilous challenge that the world faces today. To spread awareness of water sustainability on a larger scale, Dr. Alleem organizes Water & Energy week, in which more than 300 participants engage every year. For his pioneering contributions to this sustainable goal, he was also bestowed with the Friend of Singapore Sustainability Award 2017 by the government of Singapore and became a member of the advisory board of the Singapore World Water Council.

GOAL 9: AFFORDABLE ENERGY

With the growing population, the demand for affordable and clean energy sources has also been on the rise. As climate change has affected energy resources, it is vital that

we change our ways to achieve this sustainable goal and save our planet. To achieve this, Dr. Alleem was able to position Sharjah globally as a city of conservation. He introduced peak hours between 02:30 to 03:30 p.m. on July 1 every year, and to spread awareness of this initiative, messages were provided through the media urging the public to avoid using appliances that consumed more power during those peak hours. SMS messages were also sent to encourage the people to contribute and participate in this initiative. They created an innovative character called Peak man for the children to take pictures and become involved in this excellent initiative. The ultimate goal of this campaign was to reduce the energy demand by 30 percent during the peak hours. Under his leadership, SEWA has set international records and is recognized proudly as one of the most authentic organizations in the world.

GOAL: 10 ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCE SECURITY

Understanding the direct pressures placed on the natural world, including the water crisis, climate change, and many more, companies across the globe have incorporated the “Go Green” concept as one of their organizational policies, and SEWA is not far behind. Under Dr. Alleem’s astute leadership, consistent with international standards, SEWA adopted the green bill strategy to provide easier online services to its 1.5 million customers. Since January 1, 2017, SEWA began to issue electronic rather than paper bills with the slogan “My bill is environmentally friendly.” This strategy has saved more than 600 trees per annum. To pledge its allegiance to the environment, and engage its employees to leave a legacy by planting trees, SEWA also decided to give back to the environment by planting 600 Prosopis cineraria trees across Sharjah.

GOAL 11: CLIMATE CHANGE

Over the past several decades, the earth's average temperature has increased by 0.750C, causing heat waves, droughts, wildfires, storms, and so on that hasn't just killed people, but animals and plants, across the globe and led to damages amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars. To contribute to global warming and climate change solutions, UAE has created a full-fledged ministry, the Ministry of Climate Change, and has signed international agreements, including the Paris agreement.

GOAL 12: FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISES

If we reminisce about history, financial crises have had profound effects on people. As it happened to our grandfathers during the great depression in 1929 and that in 2008 we have witnessed grave social effects that resulted in the loss of millions of jobs across the globe. Dr. Alleem states that during such crises, it is important that we change the way we think and work. All leaders across organizations must demonstrate steadfast integrity, maintain personal credibility, and possess the ability to confront reality. In short, we must rethink thinking—rework our work. According to him, financial and economic crises can be controlled and overcome using good, authentic leadership and quality directorial skills.

GOAL 13: COMPETITIVENESS

According to the World Economic Forum, competitiveness is the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity. The 12 pillars of competitiveness that determine the level of productivity in a country include institutions, infrastructure, macro-economic environment,

health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labor market efficiency, a developed financial market, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation.

GOAL 14: INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT

According to Dr. Alleem, if we wish to achieve a peaceful world, a better tomorrow, and sustained global relationships, we should elevate the business bar and make better deals. One of the ways to achieve this is by creating Free Zones. The UAE has 34 free zones across its seven emirates that have been able to attract Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) from more than 200 countries.

GOAL 15: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Every child in this world has the right to have continuous access to basic services and resources, such as safe water, sanitation, adequate nutrition, good health, quality education, clean air, and energy. According to the International Labour Organization, 218 million children worldwide between the ages of 5 and 17 years are employed and among them, 152 million are victims of child labor. It is important that we ensure children's rights to education, health, and protection from abuse and exploitation.

GOAL 16: FOOD SECURITY

Agriculture is the single largest employer in the world, providing livelihoods to 40 percent of today's global population. In developing countries, 500 million small farms worldwide, largely still rain-fed, provide up to 80 percent of the food consumed. It has been noted as well that energy

poverty in many regions is a fundamental barrier to addressing hunger and ensuring that the world can produce sufficient food to meet future demands. To address this issue of food security, the UAE has established a food bank to reduce food waste and feed needy people in the region and abroad. Here excess food from hotels, supermarkets, restaurants, and farms is collected, stored, and packaged for distribution. Similarly, to preserve seeds, Sharjah has initiated the Sharjah Seed bank with the goal to preserve the genetic origins of terrestrial plants through seed genes.

GOAL 17: EXTREME POVERTY

This goal is consistent with the UN's strategic vision to eradicate poverty worldwide by 2030; although global poverty rates have been reduced by more than half since 2000, one in ten people in developing regions still lives on less than US\$ 1.90 a day.

GOAL 18: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Women's empowerment and autonomy and the improvement of their political, social, economic, and health status is a highly important end in itself. The UAE believes firmly that progress on issues related to women's rights is essential to build a tolerant and modern society. Since the initial foundation of the UAE on December 2, 1971, the UAE's leaders have recognized women as equal partners in national development.

GOAL 19: EMPLOYMENT SKILLS AND HUMAN CAPITAL

While employment skills are transferrable skills that an individual requires to be employed, human capital refers to

the collective skills that can be used to create economic value for individuals, their employers, or their community to build a better tomorrow for its citizens and ensure that they have the correct and necessary skills, tools, and knowledge.

GOAL 20: SUSTAIN INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Inclusive growth signals a process by which economic growth is generated and distributed in ways that are based broadly and allows people to create economic growth. Inclusion also affects social stability and peace in a country. Hence, after extensive research, the Alleem R&D Center developed a model for inclusive growth that consists of five pillars: leadership; import knowledge; high savings; infrastructure; and financial institutions. According to Dr. Alleem, to ensure the success of the inclusive growth model and guarantee sustained growth, the following four actors' roles are important: government sector; private sector; civil society, and individuals.

GOAL 21: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The final goal of the Alleem 21 sustainable development goals is International Cooperation. Through his Alleem Brilliant Networking project, Dr. Alleem has been involved with various international organizations and meets various visionary business and state leaders who are eager to collaborate and co-create to find new ways to promote the achievement of strong, inclusive, and sustainable green growth worldwide.

To achieve this ambitious and magnanimous vision, the Alleem R&D Center is proud to have collaborated with over 100 like-minded local, regional, and global brands to cooperate, co-create, and meet the Alleem 21 Sustainable Development goals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I'd like to thank the Alleem R&D center for excellent work, a team of tireless staff members who manage the whole project and provide a wealth of information. A special thank you goes to Shabih Fatima, the Alleem R&D Senior Officer, for spending the time with me to share her insights on the very beginning of the project and its completion.

I also want to express appreciation to our partners from whom we constantly learn and draw inspiration.

Most importantly, I am grateful to my family, whose ongoing support makes everything possible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Rashid Alleem is ranked third among the 25 most influential CEOs in the Gulf Cooperation Council and is considered one of the 100 most influential CEOs in the Middle East. Recently, the Academic College of Oxford, United Kingdom, honored Dr. Alleem with the title of “Honorary Professor” in recognition of his scientific, administrative, and humanitarian efforts and contributions, especially in the field of sustainable development. He is a passionate writer; an environmentalist; a sought-after thought leader; the creator of CRITICAL Thinking, a unique blend of “critical and lateral” thinking; and an internationally respected transformational leader. The founder of Alleem Knowledge Center, Dr. Alleem is a dynamic leader who has worked with prestigious governmental, semi-governmental, and nonprofit organizations. He is an entrepreneur par excellence with a flair for effective, strategic decision-making by means of innovative thinking. Dr. Rashid was recognized as “The Knowledge Ambassador of the UAE” by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum—the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and ruler of the Emirate of Dubai—and as “Environmentalist of the Year 2012” by the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad.

Dr. Alleem earned a Ph.D. from the University of Salford, in Manchester, UK. Being a “sustainovationalist,” he has received five honorary doctoral degrees from different universities: Atlantic International University (USA), in recognition of his achievements in the socioeconomic fields; Somalia National University, for his humanitarian services; American Global International University (USA), for his global business contributions and numerous academic achievements; Indian Peace University, from which he received a Doctorate in Philosophy for his exceptional contributions, dedication, and social services to society; and Doctor of Philosophy (D. Phil) from Amity University, in recognition of his exceptional vision, deep commitment to the environment, professionalism and direction in the pursuit of excellence and his strategic vision and inspirational leadership in steering his organization towards continuous growth and dedication to the good of humanity.

Dr. Alleem was recently recognized as The Global Green Ambassador by DMG. Under his leadership, SEWA received the Voluntary Cancellation Certificate for excellence in energy-saving and the reduction of CO2 emissions by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2017. He was bestowed with the Friend of Singapore Sustainability Award 2017 by the government of Singapore, and he became a member of the advisory board of the Singapore World Water Council. He has received the prestigious title of “The Ambassador of Peace & Happiness in the Arab World” by Voice of Kerala Radio Station.

As a highly sought-after keynote speaker, presenter, and teacher, Dr. Alleem is well-known for delivering compelling

and practical messages to audiences of more than 200,000 people per annum, including at some of the largest regional and international venues.

Last but not least, he is one of the most interviewed and published charismatic media personalities in the region. A prolific writer both in English and Arabic, Dr. Rashid Alleem is the author of several books on management and leadership. His newest book, *The SEWA Way*, showcases 15 winning principles, providing a roadmap for achieving success both on an organizational and a personal scale. Aiming to improve social, economic, and environmental living conditions worldwide and helping to improve the quality of life for hundreds of millions who have not yet seen the benefits of sustainable development and inclusive growth, he has written four books on the topic of sustainability: *My Green Journey in Hamriyah*; *Sustainability: The Fourth Wave of Economy*; *I Am Committed: 17 Global Goals*; and *Alleem Sustainable Development Goals*.

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