

THE SCHOOL OF ZAYED

During the centenary year of Sheikh Zayed, founding father of the UAE, we celebrate his vision on the importance of education for all.

With his own childhood education consisting of generally reading, writing and instructions in Islam, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan went on to lay the foundations of today's knowledge-based nation.

The founding father of the UAE federation, Sheikh Zayed was a strong advocate of education. One of his first wide-scale initiatives for the newly formed UAE was the provision of education to all citizens. This sweeping education reform resulted in schools and learning centres being built all over the country, staffed by teachers from all over the Arab world to provide education to the younger generations.

That was just the beginning. Before long accredited institutions, like the UAE University, the Higher Colleges of Technology and Zayed University, opened their doors. Police academies were established and the UAE also became home to an increasing number of local and international private universities and colleges.

Sheikh Zayed held a deep belief in education as a weapon to defeat future challenges – and it's a message that reverberates today as the UAE continues along the path of creating a first-rate education system that allows Emirati students to become the best in the world.

The Ministry of Education Plan 2017 – 2021 outlines out the UAE's vision for “innovative education for a knowledge, pioneering





Above: HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan touring schools in Ghayathi and Liwa, 1979

“A country’s greatest investment lies in building generations of educated and knowledgeable youth”

and global society”, while education is also one of the four main pillars of the UAE Centennial project, which sets out to make the UAE the best country in the world by 2071. Therefore our educational system will continuously evolve in this modern world, as children are prepared for future job roles that may not even exist at this moment in time.

Speaking at the recent World Government Summit, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Education and Human Resources Council, UAE, said the country needed to “break the mould” by re-evaluating the skills children need and changing the way they learn,

with a particular focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

“We should rethink education in an unprecedented manner,” Sheikh Abdullah told the summit. “We need a new system of education that looks into the future, competitiveness and the country’s economic requirements. Educational institutes need to have new models to follow that are constantly evolving and adaptable to changes around them. Basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics won’t be sufficient at all,” he added. “Knowledge of technology, engineering and finance are far more important and human capital is the main factor in this revolution.”

Sheikh Abdullah also urged parents to encourage children to embrace future careers in science, technology, mathematics, arts and literature, rather than choose traditional career choices in economy or business management for job security in the public sector.

Launched last month, Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority’s new ‘Rahhal’ platform allows students to enjoy greater learning opportunities, anywhere and anytime. It provides

“The education of our people is a great wealth. We are proud of our educated nation because through knowledge and science we will open the horizons of a glorious future”

an alternative approach to education through a framework that can be customised to the needs of each specific learner.

Dr Abdulla Al Karam, Chairman of the board of directors and director-general of KHDA said: “We are taking a big leap away from the traditional model of education and experiencing the future of learning. Rahhal is all about giving students a chance to experience their full potential and benefit from learning both within and outside the school. This marks a milestone for all working in the education sector.”

Through Rahhal, students who wish to study at a mainstream school and part-time elsewhere in the community will be able to do so. The pilot phase is being launched by KHDA as part of 10x, a Dubai Future Foundation initiative. Students at Indian High School, in Dubai, will be among the first to experience the platform and benefit from out-of-school learning opportunities.

Dubai’s Knowledge and Human Development Authority also recently welcomed over 300



teachers from more than 95 schools to a special event to commemorate the Year of Zayed. Teachers exchanged views and discussed ideas to draw inspiration from the life of Sheikh Zayed and create new ways of learning to extend life-lessons into classroom settings. Some of the school-led sessions focused on critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, teaching generosity and tolerance to children and creating hope.

Dr Al Karam said: “The diversity of Dubai’s education sector gives us a chance to inspire a young generation of learners by imparting teachings from the life of Sheikh Zayed. The legacy of Sheikh Zayed will live with us forever and it enriches our lives and desire to work towards greater progress in the future.”

Sheikh Zayed’s impact on educational development was also recognised at the 21st meeting of the UAE’s Education and Human Resources Council, in March. At the meeting, Sheikh Abdullah said: “We are living an exceptional year in which we celebrate the legacy of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan, who laid the foundation of a country that has become a shining example for leadership and excellence in all fields. The school of Zayed will continue to always inspire us and future generations.”

Selected quotes taken from *Father of Our Nation: Collected Quotes of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan*, published by Books Arabia.

Above: HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan with Dr Abdullah Omran Taryam soon after the establishment of Oxford Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum

“Progress and renaissance are not measured by buildings of cement and steel but by developing people and everything that makes the citizen happy and secures him a decent life”