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MEET THE MENTOR—UAE Spotlight

Saturday October 9th, 2017

Speaker: **H.E. Noura Al Kaabi**, Minister of State for Federal National Council Affairs, UAE

Moderated/Facilitated by: **Mohamed K. Al Neaimi**, Director, Education Affairs Office,
Crown Prince Court of Abu Dhabi, UAE

Summary Paragraph

How can the arts, culture and education sectors work together to ensure a flow of creative thinking and high-quality cultural education for students? The digital revolution has energized the global creative economy. More people consume more creative content in more ways than ever before.

Keywords: Creativity

Key Points

Her Excellency opened by stating that she has reached her position in life through her mentor—her mother—who was also a teacher and became a principal in the school. She spoke of the importance of teachers in developing young people, stating “the role of a teacher is significant. These are people who are serving their country and creating leaders of the future.”

Mohamed Al Neaimi asked, “There is an increased direction toward science and math, but how can we also leverage art and culture in education?”

Her Excellency responded that with the introduction of technology in the teaching profession, and potentially even robotics, there is a risk that the element of emotions and connection could be lost. Arts and music will thus be crucial to retain students’ emotional connection to the material and to each other.





She continued, “the idea of using art to deliver messages is quite important. A challenge to the teacher’s role is that every student comes with a different package from their home environment. It is challenging to standardize the background of students. The fewer students in the classroom, the better.”

She continued, “Introducing arts and culture and music is important, but what is more important is understanding how students see things. How can we provide children with methods to help them become more humane and accepting?”

She then spoke to the experience of educating young people at the Creative Lab, a camp for students from 13-16 years old that enables children to form an understanding of how they can work in media, from television to gaming. These trainings can promote self-confidence, and the students are also taught entrepreneurship and how to pitch products.

“We don’t talk to them as if they are children, we talk to them as if they are adults,” Her Excellency said. “Children have critical thinking, and they like to learn. Parents have to build on the function of the teacher, and they need to be in constant communication with the teacher to see where their children’s weaknesses are, so they can compensate at home.”

Her Excellency was asked how teachers should deal with the issue of children arguing with their teachers because they now have access to a wealth of information. She responded, “teachers must keep in mind that students might know better than they do. Children have become decision makers, they decide who their heroes are.”

“We need to find a new way of thinking about children. We have to teach them how to compete, and we need our teachers to create an emotional connection between the students. Within the classroom, a classroom is the kingdom of the teacher, the playground of the teacher, where the teacher can come into their own and use their own methodologies.”

The moderator asked, “How can students decide the source of their information?”

Her Excellency replied, “students need to be aware of reality. The Ministry of Education is combatting fake news and introducing digital literacy, primarily by asking students to confront news as individuals. For example, how can students tell fake from genuine news? We don’t want to just convey information, we must also teach them to validate it.”

In a question from the floor, Her Excellency was asked if she anticipated teachers’ roles to grow or shrink with the advent of more technology in classrooms.

She responded that teachers will be even more important, and their role more challenging. She advocated teachers’ using the greater energy of childhood and adolescence to have students do





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physical exercise and take extra lessons in their interest areas. She also spoke to the need for teachers to raise parents' awareness of their children's passions at an early age.

Main Takeaway: Teachers are the most important part of the UAE's new education strategy.

