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## MEET THE MENTOR—UAE Spotlight

**Sunday October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Speaker: **H.E. Jameela bint Salem Al Muhairi**, Minister of State for Public Education, UAE

Facilitated by: **Hessa Al Awadhi**, Section Head, Innovation Incubation Programs, Ministry of Education, UAE

### Summary Paragraph

*Which are the most important lessons learned from implementing the comprehensive plan to overhaul public education in the UAE? In the context of 'Teaching for Tomorrow', which are the most effective ways to create support systems for teachers? In the UAE, regulators and teachers have worked together to adapt the quality and standards of education to meet the evolving need for skills and to balance the need for monitoring and evaluating teachers' progress and school goals with the needs of students.*

Keywords: UAE Agenda

### Key Points

Her Excellency stated her support and admiration for teachers in no uncertain terms: “in everyone’s life story, you will find a reference to teachers. One of the principals who played a big role in my life forced me to speak out, stand on my own feet, and made me a prominent personality in the school. She used to put us up to challenges. I spent all my school life at the same school, and that principal was like a mother to me. In grade seven, though I was very small, she insisted on sending me to Jordan. At that time, it was unbelievable to send a girl alone to another country. I challenged myself to go. She convinced my parents, and I was a student in the delegation, and I still remember how it made me independent.”

Teachers are vitally important to the UAE, she continued, because “education is a matter of interest for every sector of the economy.” She explained that the leadership want the country to





lead in education within a very short timeframe, and that teachers were without a doubt the ones who would lead what she called ‘this important national mission.’ After all, “we can change the people responsible for education as a Ministry, but it will still come down to the teacher.”

She explained that when the Ministry found the UAE PISA placing was not where the country aspired to be, they studied the top five countries: China, Finland, Japan, Singapore, and Canada. They found that, beyond any technological innovation, all of the top five countries valued what she called ‘the human side’ - teachers in these countries loved their countries, loved their work, and wanted their countries to be in the top rank. They were personally invested in it.

“In this country,’ she continued, “if each and every teacher thinks of how to reach this level, we will achieve that high ranking. Am I blaming the teacher? Yes, I am.”

“How can we make teachers invested in change?” she continued. “It’s about how people accept change themselves. When you change, you can do the impossible. The strategy of change starts from inside each of us. One has to speak with oneself. One has to be honest about one’s limitations. One has to look for the possibility of something different.”

Her Excellency gave an example from her own life of dealing with change. While working for a government entity, she arrived one morning to find all of the desks gone, including her own. She had to rethink where to put her bag, store her stationery, and hold her meetings, which greatly affected her work style due to the routines she had established. Eventually, she moved between tables in the entire building, eventually feeling that the whole place was hers, as supposed to only her desk space.

She encouraged teachers not to think of themselves as ‘victims’ of change, and related how a teacher once asked her, “why do you keep changing everything? Everything was stable.”

Her Excellency reminded the teacher that change is the only constant. Motivation to change comes not from directives from the Ministry or the principal, she went on. It comes from provocative questions such as, “if you didn’t teach, what would be the impact on the students?”

“We don’t know what is coming,” she continued. “Every six months, there is a new wave in technology that requires us to rethink. As His Highness Sheikh Abdullah said, our students are better than us. The teacher’s role is to provide students with skills to think differently, and to employ technology to make it interactive. Unless you change, the times will change you. We are preparing the next generation, so we will not allow traditional teachers to stay.”





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**Main Takeaway: Teachers are the key to improving the nation's education system, and it will succeed or fail based on their efforts.**

