

Press Release



WORLD LEADERS IN POLITICS, BUSINESS AND EDUCATION GATHER FOR TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT 2012

Inaugural event launched with addresses from ADEC Director General HE Dr Mugheer Khamis Al-Khaili and former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown

Abu Dhabi, May 8, 2012: His Highness Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court, today opened the inaugural Transforming Education Summit, which will address the need for holistic change in education systems across the world. Under the patronage of His Highness General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and Chairman of ADEC, the summit is to address the need to deliver relevant education in a rapidly changing global society as international government, business, academic and civil society leaders share lessons from their home countries.

The opening of the ceremony was also attended by HE Humaid Mohammad Obaid Al Qutami, UAE Minister of Education, and HE Dr. Majid al Nuaimi, Minister of Education of Bahrain, in addition to a number of diplomatic representatives from around the world, university officials and regional heads of education from around the UAE.

The summit, being held at the Emirates Palace from May 7-9 and comprising a series of keynote speeches, panels, brainstorming sessions and case study presentations from countries that have experienced top-to-toe transformation in their education systems, was opened by H.E. Dr. Mugheer Khamis Al-Khaili, ADEC Director General. His speech was followed by a keynote speech by the Former Prime Minister of the UK Gordon Brown.

In his opening address, Dr Al-Khaili set the scene for the following two days. He said: "If anyone had any doubt of the essential value of education to any society, Abu Dhabi's journey over the last decades would assure them."

"When oil was discovered here in 1961 there were only 20 schools serving 4000 students. Today, Abu Dhabi's schools serve over 300,000 students, and it is in the midst of one the most comprehensive education transformations in its young history, centered around a new school model that delivers 21st century skills focused on building problem solving and critical thinking"

"At the Transforming Education Summit, we look forward to sharing our experiences with you, our international counterparts, and we are very eager to hear about different education transformations that

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have been implemented across the globe that may help us achieve our goals. We hope that TES offers valuable insight into our shared goal of education transformation,” added Dr. Al Khaili.

Following His Excellency’s address, Mr Brown, UK Prime Minister from 2007-2010, was joined by Andy Hargreaves, the respected professor and author who is considered a global authority in education transformation, in the first keynote session of the summit. The keynote, entitled “Thinking Ahead” analysed the role of the leader in anticipating the need to shape education systems to meet the needs of economic, societal and technological changes. Mr Brown said that ‘transformation leaders’ must create deliverable strategies and planning models, rather than ‘quick fixes’ that are not sustainable.

In his keynote address, Gordon Brown congratulated Abu Dhabi on holding TES, saying, “What will distinguish nations in the future is not simply the ownership of resources, as the founder of this great country knew. It is the quality of the people—there will increasingly be an education premium, the ‘value added’ that comes from the education and skills of your people.”

He devoted a large part of his address to the Millennium Goal of universal primary school education: “We have to persuade people that education is the only way to combat poverty. It is the key to unlocking the future...I say to you now that it is an absolute scandal that there are millions of children who will not go to school today simply because there is not a school for them to go to.”

He urged the formation of a global fund for education with a “single focus for fast-tracking support to where it is most needed, in the same fashion as the global fund for health, which this country is part of. We need a work plan to take this forward so it is not just an abstract idea but a germ of a global education reform movement. We’ve got to be practical, [but] we could be the first generation in history where we could say by the end of our time that every single girl and boy was able to develop their skills and potential through universal education.”

After the opening sessions, Dr Rafik Makki, Co-General Chair of the Summit, said: “ADEC’s Director General’s introduction and the address by Mr Brown and Mr Hargreaves set the scene for a unique opportunity to explore the need for change in the world of education and how it can be affected. TES explores the ‘how’ of education reform rather than just the ‘why’. I am looking forward to a series of debates and interactive sessions that we hope will lead to conclusions and actions that will have a lasting impact around the world.”

The keynote was followed by a panel chaired by Barbara Ischinger, the OECD’s Director of Education, and including government, business and academic leaders from around the world. They discussed the needs and aspirations for education in different societies, how leaders must define visions and strategies for educational change and the challenges that stand in the way of education reform.

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The second keynote of the day was delivered by Mary Hanafin, the Irish Minister for Education and Science from 2004-2008, and John Dennehy, Ireland's Department of Education and Science Secretary from 1998-2005, and addressed the summit on the theme 'Delivering Within'. The session explored how a leader's role is to effectively implement ideas and oversee the department or organization they preside over. This was followed by a panel entitled 'Delivering Within – Managing the Journey: What is the Leader's Role?'. Chaired by Tim Sebastian, ex-BBC Hard Talk Presenter and moderator of the Doha Debates and the New Arab Debates, the session explored how effective leadership must empower individuals within an organization and how effective systems must be in place to 'deliver within'.

The final day of the summit, May 9, is due to begin with a keynote delivered by Tarja Halonen, the Former President of Finland from 2000 until earlier this year, and Muhyiddin Yassin, Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education. Speaking on the theme 'Leading Across', they will address how leaders must transcend the boundaries of their own organisations and influence other stakeholders in government, education, the private sector and the general public. Ms Halonen will touch upon how different political parties pulled together during Finland's recession of the 1990s to create a consensus and save the country's universities from funding cuts.

The keynote will be followed by a panel, made up of international business and education leaders, exploring the importance and feasibility of continuing with education initiatives in times of economic hardship.

The final keynote speaker, Engineer Ziad Al Siksek, CEO of Health Authority Abu Dhabi, will tackle the issue of how effective leaders must engage the private and third sectors in order to make effective transformations. A panel analyzing how changing education systems must attract the active participation of parents and students will follow.

TES is hosted by ADEC in partnership with the Directorate of Education of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), leading global management consulting firm Booz & Company, and the Advanced Technology Investment Company (ATIC), the technology investment arm of Mubadala.

Following the summit, Booz & Company is to compile a post-conference report in partnership with ADEC containing the recommendations from the various panels and sessions. The report is one of a range of initiatives to be implemented over the coming year as a result of TES, to ensure the summit has a lasting impact. A series of working groups made up of participants from across the world will also be launched and will meet periodically to assess specific challenges in their home countries.

For more information, please consult the conference website: www.tes-abudhabi.org.

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About Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC):

Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) was established in accordance with law No. 24 of 2005, issued by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the UAE President, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the Ruler of Abu Dhabi. The Chairman of ADEC is His Highness General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and the Vice-Chairman is H.H. Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Minister of Presidential Affairs. The Council seeks to develop education and educational institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, implement innovative educational policies, plans and programs that aim to improve education, and support educational institutions and staff to achieve the objectives of national development in accordance with the highest international standards. For more information visit www.adec.ac.ae.