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BUSINESS LIFE

May 2022



Passion and Innovation in Education

A leader with a track record for
cultivating leadership energy
through passion and care



Lebanon.....LBP5,000
Saudi Arabia.....SR12
Kuwait.....KD1

U.A.E.....Drhm12
Bahrain.....BD1
Qatar.....QR12

Jordan.....JD2
Oman.....OR1
Cyprus.....C£1

Egypt.....EP5
Europe.....Euro4
U.S. & Canada.....\$4

Algeria.....DZD200
Libya.....L.D4
Morocco.....MAD33

Tunisia.....TND4
Yemen.....YR10
Syria.....SYP150

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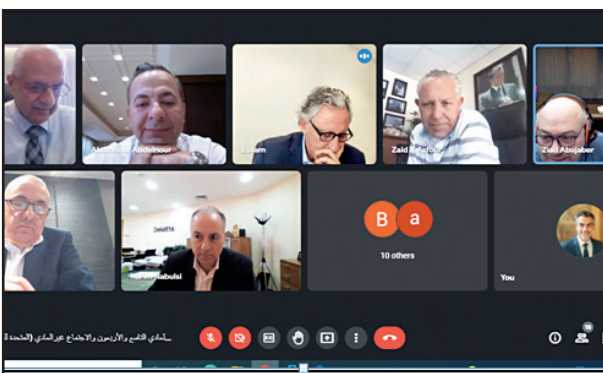
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Passion and Innovation in Education

A leader with a track record for cultivating leadership energy through passion and care

ABQ Education Group is the largest international school operator in the Sultanate of Oman.

With over 55 years of cumulative school operating experience and 275+ educators, ABQ has a wealth of knowledge and expertise within the group. The group continuously raises the bar and challenge its students to become the best they can be.

ABQ assures its students and parents a consistent and sustainable high-quality educational experience.

ABQ Education Group recognises the unique skills, talent and aptitude of each child. To this end, ABQ runs a unique Discovering You Program (DYP). It is a Mentorship program for Grades 3 to 12 which incorporates, depending on age, important elements such as academic performance, 21st century skills assessments, aptitude tests, career field aspirations, career workshops, subject pathways, university and scholarship goal setting, career role models, and more. The DYP has a 12-month action plan shared between mentors, parents, and students.

ABQ schools exemplify the community school model, by blending a consistent and dedicated focus on the community with a desire to protect and grow the academic environment. This creates a culture of connectivity and provides a powerful base for growth.

Humayun Kabir, Chief Executive Officer at ABQ Education Group is committed to achieving academic excellence by promoting innovative teaching methods and investing in quality staff and prime academic platforms. He is supported by a visionary Chief Learning Officer for all academic initiatives. The CLO uses intense data analysis to drive a personalized approach; ensuring that every child is able to maximize their potential.

Humayun provides great vision and awareness of the bigger business picture



Interview: Humayun Kabir, Chief Executive Officer at ABQ Education Group



Encouraging knowledge sharing: *Humayun Kabir, Chief Executive Officer at ABQ Education Group*

and he is able to relate the small details to the larger outcome. He has many positive traits but his ability to challenge ideas in a way that makes good ideas great, makes him a compelling visionary and a leader.

He has an enviable track record for ensuring superior outcomes under his leadership and he is now passionately engaged for the benefit of ABQ Education Group.

Humayun Kabir has a rich long experience in various important fields.

Chief Executive Officer at ABQ Education Group since Jun 2018 – Present – Muscat,

Oman; Managing Partner at Mindsol Inc from Jan 2016 - May 2018; General Manager and Chief Wholesale Banking Officer at National Bank of Oman from Sep 2009 - Dec 2015; General Manager and Chief Retail Banking Officer from Feb 2009 to August 2009; General Manager and Chief Financial Officer - Feb 2008 - Feb 2009; Managing Partner at Inforica Inc. from 2000 – 2007; Vice President at ABN Amro Bank Canada from 1997 – 2000; Senior Manager at Royal Bank of Canada from 1991 – 1997; Manager, MIS and Reporting at Samba Financial Group

from 1989 – 1999; Audit Manager at ERNST AND YOUNG RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA from 1986 – 1989

Humayun's rich international education background is a key success factor that enables him to adapt and successfully operate in the multiple business and cultural environments that he has been exposed to.

Education: 1994 – 1996- University of Western Ontario London, Canada where he received his Masters in Business Administration in General Management. Nominated by Royal Bank of Canada (on a fully paid basis

with one employee selected each year out of 54,000 employees) to Canada's #1 MBA program.

Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales: Chartered Accountant -1981-1986

Qualified as Chartered Accountant after completing Articles during 1981 to 1985 with Grant Thornton International (fifth largest accounting firm in the world) in London UK.

Personal: Canadian citizen. Lived in Canada, UK, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Oman. Avid golfer and lifelong cricket fan. Organized European Challenge Tour Grand Final. Enjoy business reading and music.

Karachi Grammar School: 1978 – 1980

Humayun Kabir sat down for an interview with BUSINESS LIFE on April 20 for a story on education and ABQ Education Group.

During the 60-minute conversation, he discussed his current and future plans, his unusual approach to the constant change and needs especially in the education sector in its various modes and his accomplishments, as well as his thoughts on cultivating independent thoughts and innovation, and academic excellence to the benefit of his students, Russia-Ukraine war and issues like the economy in the Sultanate and elsewhere.

BL: What are your aspirations and guiding principles as the leader of ABQ Education Group?

HUMAYUN KABIR: Our aspirations are embodied in our Mission and Vision statements. Our Mission is "To unlock the potential in our students to become innovators and thought leaders that help shape the future". And our Vision is "To become the K-12 education provider of choice in our communities".

We are guided by our values of Respect, Engagement, Care, Integrity, Perseverance and Excellence.

BL: ABQ is famed to be the largest international school operator in Oman. What distinguishes it from other schools in the Sultanate and in the MENA region?

HUMAYUN KABIR: First, I would say that the region is blessed to have a number of high-quality international schools and we are proud to be amongst this elite group.

What particularly distinguishes ABQ schools is the top-class educational outcomes and richness of experience at a price point that is unmatched in the region. Let me explain.

Our academic results are consistently in the Top 100 Cambridge schools in the world. We dominate the Cambridge Top in Country Awards in Oman. Our Omani GED results are second to none.

Beyond academics, it is our unique educational, extra-curricular, digital, mentoring, Parent/student care, and career counselling programs that makes us an amazing value for money proposition for our community.

In a nutshell, we offer a world class education that is accessible to a much wider community.

BL: Do you have any future plans to open branches in the GCC and in the MENA region or even abroad like in London or in Canada?

HUMAYUN KABIR: We are firm believers that we must have our unique IP to successfully venture outside our home market. Over the last 3 years, we have made significant progress in developing our own blueprint called "The ABQ Way" and, by the end of this year, we should be ready to explore new markets that fit our criteria.

BL: Humayun Kabir, you have been always a very distinctive and popular leader in the various industries that you worked for, what is your ambition?

HUMAYUN KABIR: My ambition is simple. I want to be a force of positive change. I enjoy seeing organizations and people realize their innate potential and be the best they can be. From that perspective, Education is a great industry to make a meaningful difference to the lives of so many. I am enjoying every moment of it.

BL: What is your management philosophy?

HUMAYUN KABIR: My management philosophy is as follows:

- Sustainable success can only be achieved with an engaged and passionate team
- Every human being wants to be part of a success, legacy, and a higher purpose
- Inspire them with a vision that wins their hearts and minds
- Do everything in your power to help them succeed and business will take care of itself

BL: What are your current and future challenges?

HUMAYUN KABIR: My first challenge is to sustain our current level of performance. We had set a very high bar for ourselves and achieved it with tremendous commitment and hard work from our staff. To maintain this level, our practices must become second nature and part of our organizational DNA. We have made excellent progress but there is more to be done.

My second challenge is to provide growth opportunities for our people. A lot of them have experienced tremendous personal growth as part of our transformation journey and we need to constantly engage and challenge them to retain our best talent. I hope to be able to so via our measured expansion plans.

My final challenge, as for everyone, is

the fast changing economic, social and technology landscape. But honestly, we relish this challenge as it enables us to constantly innovate and differentiate ourselves from our peers.

BL: How do you forecast the future of e-learning and education centers in general?

HUMAYUN KABIR: To quote Oliver Wendell Holmes – "A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its original dimensions." So, we believe that after the COVID driven fast forwarding of technology integration in education and the intense learning experience for all, live online education will be part and parcel of most educational offerings. All education centers will adopt this hybrid model in one form or another.

Not only that, but we will also use the same technologies to strengthen our communication and interactions with our student and parent bodies. In addition, we have also learnt to work and collaborate effectively with our distant teams and, this newfound capability will enhance our creativity and best practice sharing.

BL: What are the current and future plans for ABQ?

HUMAYUN KABIR: ABQ is primed for sustainability and growth. We want to enhance our leadership position in our home market as we mull over international expansion. We want to make sure that our numerous academic and extra-curricular programmes introduced in the last 3 years are sustained at a high level of quality. We want to be the schools of choice for our families and the employer of choice for our staff. And finally, we want to expand our franchise to offer quality education at reasonable prices for a wider community.

BL: Why constant change is the fundamental driver of evolution at ABQ Education Group?

HUMAYUN KABIR: To quote Charles Darwin "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change". Change is not only a constant but we live in a super accelerated world today. In this context, how can an education institution, responsible for preparing young minds to enter society, not be willing to adapt and evolve?

The inertia and the sluggish pace of change at educational institutions is one of the reasons that nations cannot produce graduates fast enough for jobs of tomorrow. At ABQ, with our Discovering You Programme (DYP), we are inculcating critical 21st Century skills in our children right from the early Primary stage. It's a journey but we keep the need to evolve and change very central to our thought processes.



Leading a massive group of schools: *Humayun Kabir, Chief Executive Officer at ABQ Education Group*

BL: What are the skills required to be competitive in a global economy?

HUMAYUN KABIR: Although there are a number of variants on what are the critical skills needed for the global economy, in our DYP Programme, we have adopted the OECD standard 21st Century Skills in our system. These are broken into 3 categories:

4Cs – Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Communication

IMT – Information Literacy, Media

Literacy and Technology Literacy

FLIPS – Flexibility/Adaptability, Leadership, Initiative, Productivity and Social skills

The idea is that irrespective of whether you want to be an architect or a teacher or an entrepreneur, these fundamental skills and literacies are needed to operate in the new global economy.

BL: How do you make sure that every teacher incorporates the development of the 21st Century Skills Program in his or her lesson plans?

HUMAYUN KABIR: The 21st Century Skills

programme is part and parcel of our educational philosophy which is a move towards a more student-centered learning model vs the traditional teacher led model. Our Chief Learning Officer is a firm believer and exponent of this approach.

Our educators have adopted the approach with enthusiasm as it allows them to use their creativity and expand their own horizons. With everyone's buy in, implementation became a lot easier and, during our planning process, all lesson plans are reviewed for incorporation of 21 CS and the usage in class is monitored during our quality and performance review class visits.

BL: What are your comments on the current economy in the Sultanate of Oman and worldwide?

HUMAYUN KABIR: From an economic perspective, Oman is going through a healthy upsurge with strong energy prices. We are also seeing a very responsible and balanced approach fiscal approach in which the oil price windfall is being used to reduce the national debt and invest in critical developmental projects.

The general mood amongst the consumers and business community has also improved as the pandemic fades and the economic outlook improves.

Regarding the global economy, I believe we are in uncharted waters and one can no longer speak generally about a global economy. There are significant regional differences and COVID and related fiscal and monetary policies have created a very uneven landscape. Key drivers are US monetary policy, the Ukraine war, supply chain bottlenecks, food supply, environment-driven changing weather cycles impacting economies and, more recently, COVID related blockages in China.

I think we need to tighten our seatbelts for a bumpy ride ahead.

BL: How far did the Russia-Ukraine war impact your industry?

HUMAYUN KABIR: Not directly at the moment but the effects will be felt all over the world with rising food process and commodity driven inflation in the short term and potential deceleration in developed economies in the medium term.

BL: Do you offer scholarships and social aids?

HUMAYUN KABIR: We do offer scholarships or financial support for our families who are going through any unfortunate change in circumstances. Our motto is "We Care" and we try our best to live up to it.