

SIGNS OF OPTIMISM

ABQ Education Group's focus in 2022 will be on continued educational excellence, health and wellbeing of its staff and students, says Humayun Kabir, CEO, ABQ Education Group

The last two years have been quite transitional for several institutions globally. What were some of your key takeaways from the pandemic?

From an institutional perspective, the pandemic has been a story of human resilience, innovation, and accelerated change. The crisis has shattered a number of myths and redefined the boundaries of what is possible. It showed there is so much latent and unused human capacity that can be harnessed in the face of a challenge or crisis.

What were some of the steps you undertook to overcome the immediate effects of the pandemic to your business model?

Our immediate challenge was to re-invent the education delivery via a physical, online and hybrid model whilst simultaneously dealing with the unprecedented HSE challenges. We quickly decided to go big and bold with technology and gave a free Chromebook laptop to every student from KG to Grade 12. We invested in best in class online resources and platforms in addition to upgrading technology infrastructure for new bandwidth capacity. In some ways, that was the easy part.

The biggest challenge was to transform our 300 educators from a traditional in class teaching environment to technology savvy



online and hybrid practitioners. The training and support programmes, which were instituted, and the fabulous response from the teachers certainly affirmed faith in human ingenuity and capacity. The ABQ family-teachers, students, parents-rose to the challenge in a very short time and made our online/hybrid programme not just among the best in Oman but across the region.

Can you outline your outlook for 2022?

I personally feel the worst of the pandemic is behind us. The vaccine technology has taken the sting out

of the virus. All organisations and systems have built some defences and solutions to cope. We will probably still have disruptions but the intensity will be not what we faced 12 to 18 months ago. I feel that we will start to go back to the 'old normal' in the second half of 2022.

Do you think organisations are better toned today to weather another bout of lockdowns brought about by new mutations of the virus?

I would say the majority of organisations are better prepared and more resilient to face another potential lockdown but a significant minority are also running on dangerously low reserves and may not be able to withstand another sustained disruption.

How much more importance are you placing on framework contours such as business resilience, human resource development, and digital transformation for 2022?

All of these are certainly critical drivers and are almost entrenched in our organisational DNA. In addition, our focus in 2022 is on continued educational excellence, health and wellbeing of our staff and students, and embedding the learnings of the last two years in our go forward delivery model.