



EDUCATION INITIATIVES DESIGNED TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS

World Innovation Summit For Education Highlights Qatar Foundation's Commitment to Innovation among Young People

6 December 2014

Doha, Qatar – The sixth World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) once again reinforced the dedication by Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development to encourage innovation in education, particularly among young people.

The annual event, which recently concluded in Qatar's capital city of Doha, tackled a number of education issues on a global level. Through a series of unique programmes that address key areas in education, WISE has grown in stature to help prepare students to become leaders within their communities.

An initiative of Qatar Foundation under the leadership of its Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza bin Nasser, WISE has demonstrated over the past few years how it has played a pivotal role in bringing together global thought leaders and educational practitioners with one aim of creating a better education environment for all.

WISE is a testament to QF's commitment to supporting the Qatar National Vision 2030, and the country's journey toward establishing a knowledge-based economy. As an on-going platform for debate and purposeful action aimed at building the future of education through innovation and empowerment, the WISE Summit brings together international experts, educators, opinion leaders, and decision-makers from all over the world to connect, discuss and share ideas, and form partnerships.

In recent years, WISE has established itself as a global reference in new approaches to education through a series of on-going initiatives, including the Learners' Voice Program. Launched in 2010, it is designed to equip young people aged 18 to 25 with the relevant soft skills, tools, and know-how to address global education issues. In addition, it provides students with opportunities to explore barriers to education, and create innovative, yet realistic and achievable, solutions.

"Throughout the year, the programme hosted multiple interactive sessions and workshops on leadership, entrepreneurship, and creativity," said Qatari participant Sarah M. Kamal Al-Emadi, a graduate of Qatar University. "The programme helped us tackle our own personal issues, which enabled us to move forward with our concepts."



Sarah's project, 'Duende,' uses art to reintegrate children born during the conflict of war in Uganda, into society.

An integral part of the year-long Learners' Voice Program is bringing together people from different backgrounds and cultures to tackle a universal issue, an element which proved popular among all the participants.

"The Learners' Voice Program has been a life-changing experience," said Khalid Al-Saegh, a Qatari student at Texas A&M University at Qatar. His locally-targeted project, 'iSTEAM,' aims to bring 3D printers to the classroom.

"I have really enjoyed working with the other participants. I have made friends for life. I never imagined that I would meet students from as far away as Guatemala and Haiti, right here in Doha. And I never thought I would develop such strong friendships with people in such a short space of time; my group has become a family."

Pakistani born Ahwaz Akhtar is a student at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar. His group's project, 'Orenda,' is designed to help people who have been displaced from their homes due to natural disasters or war, specifically Afghans in Islamabad.

"The Learners' Voice Program was responsible for connecting people who, like me, are passionate about education," he said. "The initiative provided me with the opportunity to work with an incredible set of individuals, while equipping me with the tools to help me develop my own ideas."

Collaboration is a fundamental tool to the success of the Learners' Voice Program, and this is further demonstrated by the role of the mentors. Each group is assigned at least one professional to help with the development of the projects. These individuals are specifically chosen from the WISE community to provide the teams with feedback and advice.

The Learners' Voice Program culminates with students presenting their projects at the WISE Summit. Through the conference the students seek support for their initiatives and eventually create solutions. "We are hoping to gather support for our initiative, donors, funders, even mentors," said Noor Saad Al-Kobaisi, a Qatari graduate of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

Her project, 'Passion to Profession,' aims to create an online career counselling platform to encourage teenagers in Bangladesh to continue studying. "At the moment, we are in the project phase. Moving forward from the conference we can hopefully transition into the operational phase," she said.



The students' passion for influencing change globally is clear. "Our main objective is to keep this project going, to make sure it is implemented," said Noor. "There are Learners from 2011 here today, and one of the projects from last year is actually moving forward. These factors really motivate us to continue working towards our goal."

This year, 34 young men and women were chosen from hundreds of promising applicants to take part in the 2014-2015 Learners' Voice Program, launched at WISE 2014 with a series of workshops. The students had opportunities to meet with previous years' participants to seek knowledge and advice, and share ideas.

"We met with some of the previous Learners, and they gave us some really good advice," said Ahmed Fahad Al-Qahtani, a Qatari student at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar. "Last year's participants also presented at the Summit, which created another learning opportunity for us."

Now in its fifth year, the Learners' Voice community comprises of over 100 Learners. The students are from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, from around the world.. They share a passion for education, and together they represent a unique perspective within the WISE community.

In addition to the Learners' Voice, WISE aims to provide opportunities to individuals of all ages involved with established projects' in an early stage of development. This year, the Summit served as the official launch of the WISE Accelerator, a tailor-made mentorship programme to support high potential, scalable projects that address education challenges through innovative technology.

The programme will connect participants with qualified mentors and partners from within the WISE community who will provide the project leaders with strategies and concrete support to ensure the development of their projects.

In its inaugural year, five projects were selected to take part in the programme, including 'Ustad Mobile.' Based in the United Arab Emirates, Ustad Mobile is an application that enables educators to make their own mobile learning content, including audio, video, quizzes, and games. It is a learning platform that targets emerging or low-income countries.

Mike Dawson, co-founder of Ustad Mobile, commented on the benefits of the initiative: "Over the next few months, we are hoping to apply some of the skills and tools we gained at WISE. Specifically, we are hoping to connect with mentors who can answer our questions from an expert perspective, as well as tap into the WISE network to try and accelerate the adoption of our project."

Among the other projects chosen for the inaugural WISE Accelerator were 'Ideas Box' and 'Kytabu'. Based in France, 'Ideas Box' is a portable media centre that provides an enhanced learning environment that can be adapted to any situation. 'Kytabu', created by a team in



Kenya, is a mobile textbook subscription application on Android and Windows platforms that aims to provide students with access to affordable learning content.

The WISE Accelerator is a further reflection of Qatar Foundation's dedication to building human capital and unlocking potential that will help create evidence-based solutions that benefit the local community and the wider world.

Image Caption:

Image 1: Students and mentors from the 2013-2014 Learners' Voice Programme at WISE.

Image 2: Noor Saad Al-Kobaisi, a participant from the Learners' Voice Programme, describes her group's project, 'Passion to Profession', at WISE.

Image 3: Ahwaz Akhtar, a participant from the Learners' Voice Programme, describes his team's project, 'Orenda', at the Summit.

Image 4: 'iSTEAM', part of the Learners' Voice Programme, presenting their project on 3D printing at WISE

ENDS

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organisation that is supporting Qatar on its journey from a carbon economy to a knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world. Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercialising solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>