Educational Publishing Seminar

How Publishers Can Support the Ministry of Education's Vision of Innovative Education for a Knowledge, Pioneering, and Global Society

28-29 October 2019

Sheen Theater - Sharjah Publishing City

Emirates Publishers Association

Introduction

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the International Publishers Association (IPA), the Emirates Publishers Association (EPA) organized the Educational Publishing Seminar (EPS) for the first time in the UAE, on 28th and 29th October 2019. The Seminar aimed at discussing Emirati publishers' contribution to the Ministry of Education's vision to develop a national educational publishing ecosystem that contributes to the advancement of national curriculums, and supports the comprehensive development process based on science, knowledge and the heritage of the UAE.

The initiative comes in line with the UAE Vision 2021 and the Ministry's strategy to build and manage an innovative educational system for a society built on world-class knowledge.

Notable attendees included Hugo Setzer President of the IPA, Bodour Al Qasimi, Vice President of the IPA, and more than 22 local and international speakers, officials, experts and specialists, as well as 20 distinguished teachers. The Seminar resulted in a five-year roadmap to transform the educational publishing sector in the UAE into a sector that meets the aspirations of the Ministry of Education, within a specific timetable and objectives agreed upon by both parties.

Seminar's Activities

Day 1: Status quo and best practices

Welcome Address:

Ali Bin Hatem, President of EPA

The Seminar kicked off with a welcoming speech delivered by Ali Bin Hatem, President of the Emirates Publishers Association (EPA), in which he stressed that the Seminar paves the way for a constructive and creative dialogue on the national curriculums development, being a key element in the comprehensive development process based on science, knowledge and UAE heritage. He added that the event will help strengthening the national identity of the UAE development experience, and in promoting its capabilities to benefit from the experiences of other people and countries in line with local needs.

The EPA President pointed out that the various experiences have proved educational publishing is a powerful and influential driver of social development, stressing that the expansion of this kind of publishing will provoke the development of the educational ecosystem's capabilities by leveraging technological advances in supporting education, and designing curricula that contribute to enhancing students' skills and in motivating them to innovate and explore the world around them.

Keynote Speech:

Hugo Setzer, President of the International Publishers Association (IPA)

In his keynote speeh, Hugo Setzer, IPA President outlined three pillars for the development of education through educational publishing, the first being adherence to local curriculums as the foundation of any distinct educational system, and the second being the intensive collaboration between all stakeholders; the Ministry of Education, publishers and teachers. The third pillar is to be achieved by making use of open markets to provide a variety of educational tools and services that meet the needs of students and teachers and that keeps pace with global developments.

Sitzer stressed that the best resources of society lies in its poeple, making investment in individual knowledge, building the most effective way in the creation of an appropriate and balanced environment. He pointed out that educational policies should pay special attention to copyright issues so as to encourage educational publishers to provide their best educational products. Sitzer further noted that restrictions on freedom of publication in many countries could weaken and delay the process of curriculum development.

Opening Speech:

Sheikha Khulood bint Saqr Al Qasimi, Assistant Undersecretary for Control Sector, Ministry of Education.

Speaking at the event, Sheikha Khulood bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Assistant Undersecretary for Control Sector at the Ministry of Education, said: "The educational publishing industry is a strategic industry for any country aspiring to bring knowledge and science to its schools, and to society in general to accelerate the achievement of the knowledge-based economy. As the issue of educational publishing touches an important segment, the students, it is becoming increasingly important. The sucessful identification of education requirements of the updated curriculum and the building of an interactive system based on the publisher, teacher and educational expert, will ensure positive results and qualitative outcomes that will ultimately be reflected in the school and reflect on students excellence and creativity."

"The Ministry of Education looks forward to a more effective role for the publishing industry in our efforts to offer a world-class quality education," Sheikha Khulood added. "Publishers should have a prominent role in supporting curricula with smart learning programs, technology, and purposeful educational materials that meet student's cognitive needs, and contribute to keeping up with future skills. They should also consider bringing the best global knowledge and technology experiences to the UAE. "

Presentation:

The Ministry of Education

H.E. Dr. Hamad Al Yahyai, Assistant Undersecretary for the Curriculum and Evaluation Sector at the Ministry of Education, gave a presentation on the curriculums and strategic objectives, recent developments in the Ministry's attitude towards educational publishing, the current cooperation between educational publishers and teachers, as well as the aspects that lack local content or that are largely dependent on imported ideas.

The presentation also included a number of the Ministry's short-term educational plans and programs developed in line with its Educational National Srategy 2021 (and other long-term initiatves that are still underway. The strategy takes into account the overall transition from the traditional education system, which prevailed during the 50 years, and aims to establish a national framework capable of delivering educational outcomes in line with current and subsequent global developments.

The Ministry's presentation involved:

- ❖ A highlight on the importance of the publishers role in realizing the aspirations of the Ministry of Education as the main client in the publishing sector.

- ❖ A review of world-leading educational publishing experiences, particularly in the United States, China and India.

- ❖ An emphasis on the importance of publishers obtaining the views of the educational community (students, teachers and parents) about their publications.

- ❖ A call for publishers to report any forged books that may be found in school libraries.

- ❖ An assuarance that the Ministry deals transparently with publishers and gives priority to the UAE publisher.

- ❖ A call for publishers to take into account the curriculums requirements and to abide by the Ministry's policy in their educational publications.

- ❖ An invitation to create a digital platform or library that allows students, teachers and parents to review the books provided to the Ministry to help them understand, explain and facilitate the curriculum.

Presentation:

International best practices and cooperation between governments, publishers and teachers in the educational publishing process.

Wilmar Diepgrond, Chair of the International Publishers Association Educational Publishers Forum, and Richard Crabbe, International Textbook Policy and Educational Publishing Sector Development Expert, took part in the presentation, which included an introduction to the educational publishing system, and a highlight on several global leading international experiences, including; Germany, Netherlands, Finland, Singapore, Ghana, Poland and Hungary.

Recommendations:

- Developing a national educational book policy that takes into account publishing innovation and the competitiveness of publications.
- Defining IPA's vision in creating a successful learning environment.
- Ensuring the rights of teachers, students and providers of educational aids to choose the best curriculum.
- Providing more than one curriculum and giving teachers the freedom to choose the most appropriate educational materials for students depending on the region.
- The need for cooperation between the government and publishers to promote the quality of educational publishing and to support educational resources.
- Adopting transparent and clear procurement processes to enable all publishers to compete and thereby increase the quality of their deliverables.

- Clarifying the contracting policy between the Ministry and the publisher, in order to enable publishers to achieve financial stability and mitigate risks.

Panel Discussion:

Educational Publishing in High-performing Education Systems Discussion Leader
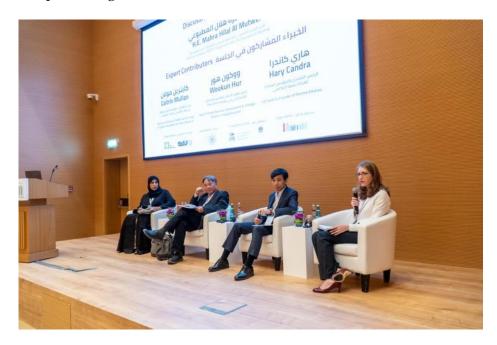
H.E. Mahra Hilal Al Mutaiwee, Director General of the Sharjah Regional Centre for Educational Planning at UNESCO, moderated the panel discussion that highlighted the experiences of educational publishers in China, Japan, Korea and Singapore, and addressed the leading role of educational publishing in supporting comprehensive educational reforms, with the aim of accelerating the social and economic development process.

Key participants of the Panel included Hary Kandra, CEO and Co-Founder of Pesona Edukasi, Wookun Hur, Head of Global Business Development & Strategic Alliance, Visang Education, Seoul, and Caitrin Mullan, Outreach Director at Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qassimi Foundation for Policy Research.

<u>Recommendations:</u>

- Developing a strong educational system run by the government to build a robust educational publishing system.
- Promoting the publisher's role as an expert in the development of appropriate content and ensuring its authenticity.
- Encouraging publishers to develop educational curriculum, adopt successful examples of curriculum change and development, and follow a competitive and motivating policy for male students to bridge the gap between male and female students.
- Focusing on publishing and telling stories relevant to the subjects, the students excel in, and thus contributing to the students excellence in subjects through literature.

- Encouraging feedback from publishers, consultants and associations to ensure that things are going the right way.
- Establishing cooperation between the government and publishers to develop future plans contributing to the promotion of the educational publishing industry in the State through paper publishing and utilization of digital publishing techniques.
- Addressing the challenges resulting from changing curriculum or means and tools of educational publishing.

Panel Discussion:

Innovating Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Educational Publishers to Contribute to the UAE's Development

Ali Al Shaali, founder of Al Hudhud Publishing and Distribution, moderated the panel discussion, which was attended by H.E. Dr. Hamad Al Yahyai, Assistant Undersecretary for the Curriculum and Evaluation Sector at the Ministry of Education; Isabel Abulhoul, CEO of the Emirates Literature Foundation, and Najla Al Midfa, General Manager of the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Centre (Sheraa).

The Panel provided an insight into the UAE's educational publishing market, and discussed current collaboration between publishers, the Ministry of Education and teachers, the current capacities and requirements of educational publishers, and the support required by the Ministry of Education to promote harmony with curriculum and objectives, as well as areas of collaboration with teachers and the Ministry.

<u>**Recommendations:**</u>

- There is a need to place students as a priority and to gain the best experiences and practices to make the local educational publishing market more open and competitive, in order to be able to better meet the needs of the educational system.

- In order to promote innovation and creativity in the publishing industry, all related curriculum support and extracurricular materials should continue to be added to bring on new experiences to students and to facilitate training of teachers, with a focus on the human element in the educational process.

- Capacity building and continuous development through publishers, providing new teaching and learning ways that satisfy the needs of the Ministry, while paying great attention to the visual and technical aspects of books such as font size, output, and printing.

- Given that the general trend of the local publishing sector focuses on culture and literature, the publishing areas should be expanded, and focus should be placed on the educational aspect, with publications considering the needs of students and teachers.

- Cooperating with the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Centre (Sheraa), to encourage publishers and entrepreneurs to work with each other to develop digital content and produce a word-class model.

- The Ministry of Education should train and educate publishers on how to prepare their literary publications in an educational style that is compatible with the curriculum.

- Considering that the Ministry of Education deals with almost 169 providers of curriculum such as Macmillan and Oxford, it may be useful to collaborate and exchange experiences between foreign publishers and their Emirati counterparts, and to work together in the educational publishing domain.

- Based on some of the leading experiences in educational publishing in the United States, Germany and France, it may be useful to use the services of specific publishers to provide schools with materials and curricula, as this will in the long run develop the expertise of these publishers and enable them to produce educational content consistent with the national standards.

- In order to enable Emirati publishers to compete and gain a share in the educational publishing market, speakers recommended that the Emirates Publishers Association provide services that help publishers increase the quality of their publications such as editing, proofreading, and publishing as well as to train them on such skills.

Panel Discussion:

On the Frontlines: Teachers' perspectives on teaching and Learning Materials

This panel, which was moderated by Maryam Fawzan, Educational Cluster Manager at the Ministry of Education, with the participation of Badria Al Ali, Manager of Lughati initiative, and Dr. Hanadi Al Suwaidi, Director of the Sharjah Centre for Learning Difficulties. The panel focused on the curriculum planning process and its current gaps, the importance of incorporating modern technologies in the educational process, and aspects that lack local content or that are largely dependent on imported ideas.

<u>**Recommendations**</u>:

- Disseminating and supporting Lughati initiative by linking it to the curriculum of the Ministry of Education.
- Developing curricula in Arabic and English for students with dyslexia.
- Aligning publications to address learning difficulties (large fonts, simple paragraphs and more pictures).
- Creating other programs and initiatives such as Lughati to help students.
- Train teachers to align the curriculum and incorporate training as part of the teacher's guide.
- Requiring teachers to adopt modern technologies.

Day 2: Developing future road map

The second and last day of the Seminar witnessed the organization of sessions involving four different groups of representatives from the Ministry of Education, educational publishers, teachers and members of the Emirates Publishers Association. The participants touched on the means of developing a five-year roadmap aimed at activating the mechanisms of cooperation between the Ministry of Education, teachers and publishers in order to align educational publishing with UAE Vision 2021.

Moderators of various groups included Abdullah Al Kaabi, Board Member of the Emirates Publishers Association; Sharifa Mousa, Director of Educational Resources and Educational Solutions, Ministry of Education; Ali Al Shaali, Founder of Al Hudhud Publishing and Distribution; and Anoud Ahmad Al Obaidli, Head of Ethical Education at the Ministry of Education. The sessions were facilitated by Richard Crabbe, International Textbook Policy and Educational Publishing Sector Development Expert.

Roadmap Development Group 1: Adoption of a 5-year roadmap that enables the Ministry of Education to strengthen cooperation with publishers and teachers

<u>Recommendations</u>:

- Launching the five-year plan of the Ministry of Education through its website so that it is available and clear to publishers to enable them support the Ministry and provide the best publications.
- The Ministry should clearly declare the criteria, the policy of selecting books and the results of submission. Publishers dealings with the Ministry should take place through a committee or department and not through individuals.
- The Ministry should forward a statement of the adopted criteria to the Emirates Publishers Association for circulation to its members. Publishers should provide feedback on the effectiveness of such criteria and the methods of selecting and evaluating books through a questionnaire.
- The Ministry, in cooperation with the Emirates Publishers Association, is required to organize training sessions and workshops for publishers to brief them on the standards and quality required for submission, and methods to develop the publications.
- The rest of the educational publishing community, including teachers and students, should take part in the process through a committee of not less than 50 people in order to provide feedback or revisions of the publications submitted.
- The Emirates Publishers Association should act as a liaison between publishers and the Ministry and keep communication channels open between publishers and the Ministry, periodically.
- Qualifying publishers and giving them an opportunity to improve the publications, and raising their awareness about what can be produced to cover the gaps declared by the Ministry, including:
    o Science Fiction Books.
    o Teacher's Guide.
    o Young Adult Books (over 15 years).

Roadmap Development Group 2: Adoption of a five-year roadmap that enables educational publishers to strengthen cooperation with the Ministry and teachers.

Recommendations for Publishers:

- Producing books that focus on Arabic calligraphy skills and how to learn different Arabic calligraphy depending on age group.
- Producing, with each textbook, print and e- books covering teacher's activities.
- Informing publishers about the educational curricula and creating student booklets and quizzes.
- Adopting paper and board games as educational material.
- Producing special pamphlets/booklets for outstanding students to develop high thinking skills and be a reference for the teacher.

Recommendations for the Ministry:

- Providing courses for teachers on the evaluation of books within specific criteria and the development of proposals and recommendations.
- Creating a special link for teachers for each educational material through which the teacher can evaluate the content of the curriculum.
- Creating a special link on the Ministry's website for teachers and publishers to serve as a focal point between them to make the most important proposals and recommendations.

Recommendations for the Emirates Publishers Association:

- Working with the Ministry of Education to coordinate publisher's visits to schools to meet with the teachers of each subject and get acquainted with all the needs of the teaching materials to produce books suitable for each subject.
- Coordinate with the Ministry to organize periodic meetings for publishers to learn about the feasibility of the books approved, their weaknesses and strengths.

Roadmap Development Group 3: Adoption of a five-year roadmap that ensures teachers more effectively collaborate with the Ministry of Education and publishers

<u>Recommendations for Publishers:</u>

- Introducing new and distinct content.
- Emirates Publishers Association is to inform the Ministry about publishers' ideas and contractual aspects.

<u>Recommendations for the Ministry:</u>

- Dealing with publishers as partners.
- Establishing a clear and transparent cooperation and communication mechanism, while keeping channels of communication open between the Ministry and publishers periodically.
- Providing a clear plan with declared standards on the Ministry's website and make it available to all publishers.
- Ensuring an impartial evaluation committee is formed in line with the standards and ethics of the profession.
- Providing a clear submission system, with a transparent and impartial process for announcing the results, and establishing a modern mechanism to learn about the reason for rejection.
- Qualifying publishers and giving them the opportunity to improve and develop their publications, and raising their awareness about what can be produced.
- Adapting the content to local needs, while providing all measures to protect intellectual property.
- Adoption of the tender system with an internationally recognized pricing mechanism, and changing files purchasing mechanism.
- The Ministry should give publishers the opportunity to present composite content through a presentation.
- Receiving feedback from teachers regarding content, curriculum and educational objectives.
- Forming a committee comprising all parties of the educational publishing community (publisher, teacher, author, painter, lawyer, and neutral person) to communicate monthly with the Ministry.

Roadmap Development Group 4: Adoption of a five-year roadmap that ensures Emirates Publishers Association supports to the Ministry of Education, Publishers and Teachers

The Ministry of Education called upon publishers to:

1. Improve the prospects of future education locally and internationally and to review successful international models to benefit from them.
2. Brief themselves on the strategy of the Ministry of Education and the National Agenda.
3. Review the Curriculum Chart in the Ministry of Education and to contribute to its development and success.
4. Incorporate UAE culture and heritage in publications to help raise a generation familiar with the country's past and present.
5. Take into account the target groups; students, teachers, parents and the quality of books, for special education, activities etc.
6. Produce content that serves the educational ecosystem in the country.
7. Upgrade local educational publishing standards to international levels, and to make the educational system competitive at both Arab and international levels.
8. Hire educational publishing experts to take advantage of their experiences in the child development domain, and to meet the needs of age groups and provide easy educational content that satisfies student needs in different age groups.

Strategic Partnerships:

- The Ministry stressed that the criteria for selecting educational resources are available on its website to all stakeholders, so publishers can use them and act accordingly to move forward in the development of the educational publishing sector.
- Participation of experienced publishing houses in the development of educational curricula should take place through desgniated committees in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.
- An e-platform should be provided for the Ministry to allow publishers and specialists to follow the progress in the educational publishing sector, with the need for publishing houses to take part in the various conferences and seminars organized by the Ministry.
- There should be cooperation between the Ministry and publishers to adopt talented students in areas that benefit educational publishing such as writing, drawing, and reading. In addition, a program for incentive awards for students, teachers and parents should also be launched.

Concluding Recommendations:

- ❖ It is important to strengthen the partnership and cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Emirates Publishers Association, and to hold regular meetings between the two sides, in the presence of a group of publishers concerned with educational publishing.
- ❖ Publishers should be adequately trained to develop the educational publishing sector, whether through workshops, seminars, educational conferences, specialized events, and other initiatives and ideas.
- ❖ Thematic committees should be formed for evaluating educational textbooks and their content, obtaining feedback on these textbooks from students, teachers and parents, and providing publishers with such feedbacks to enable them to improve their publications.
- ❖ There is a need to ensure that the content produced by UAE publishers is capable to satisfy the needs of the community and the Ministry's aspirations, while adhering to the values and principles compatible with the UAE National Agenda.
- ❖ Transparent, clear and declared criteria must be provided regarding the selection of books, with a specific approach adopted for the announcement of the results of submission clearly and impartially, as well as the reasons for rejection of publications so that publishers can take the same into account.
- ❖ Action plans should be developed with clear standards and conditions, and they should be continuously updated, so that all publishers can learn about the bases of engagement and contribute efficiently to the provision of the Ministry's needs, including books and educational resources.
- ❖ There should be cooperation between the Ministry, EPA, and publishers to produce books and educational resources tailored for people of determination and students with disabilities and special needs, as well as those with learning disabilities.
- ❖ EPA should pay more attention to quality of content, publishing and printing, and to provision of electronic or digital versions, as a key to access the regional and global educational publishing sector.