

GLOBAL Leaders TODAY

Issue 2 | Volume 4 | Apr - Jun 2024



Education Trailblazer

Dr. Grace Pinto

Also Inside

**Becoming
Michelle Obama**
A Story of Leadership,
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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

I'm excited to bring you the April-June 2024 issue of Global Leaders Today focused on "Education Trailblazers: Charting the Course for Educational Leadership." We explore the pioneering leaders reimagining learning for the 21st century and beyond. From early childhood to higher ed, these trailblazers are harnessing technology while championing equity and access.

In our latest issue, we dive into the exciting innovations that are reimagining education. Our cover story features Dr. Grace Pinto, the forward-thinking Managing Director of the Ryan International Group. She has brought world-class teaching to thousands across India, empowering young minds to reach their potential.

We also showcase pioneers like Sal Khan, whose simple online videos launched the Khan Academy phenomenon. And Sir Michael Barber, guiding transformations at Pearson after leading UK reforms. Their stories reveal how a bold vision and entrepreneurial drive can reimagine learning at scale.

But it takes more than just tech to lead change. We explore how visionaries are bridging industry and academia, equipping graduates with skills for the real world. And how equity and inclusion remain central to their missions.

The pace of progress is breathtaking. From personalized learning platforms to immersive VR classrooms, education is being reinvented before our eyes. These trailblazers inspire us with what's possible when creativity and human-centered design unleash new ways for students to thrive.

Thank you for joining us on this journey of charting the course for the future of education.

Warm Regards,

Elena Arnaiz

Editor-in-Chief

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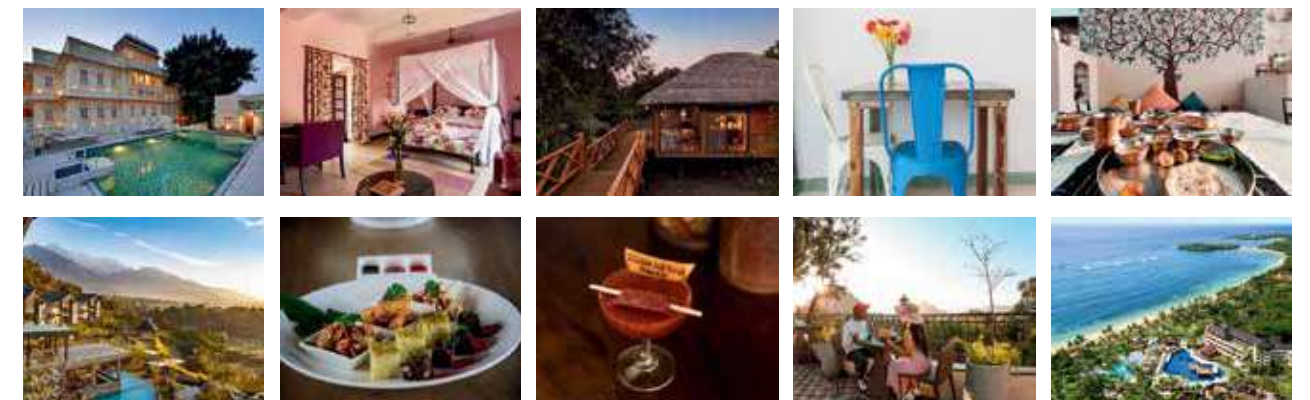
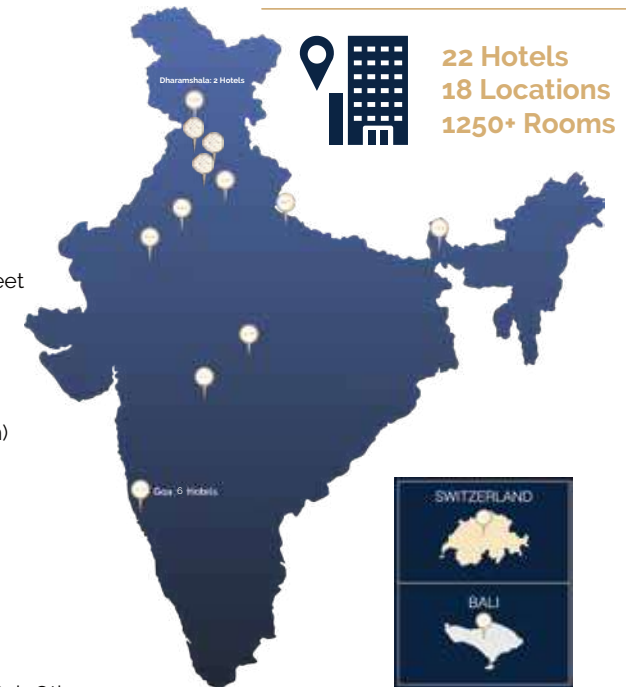
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Introducing the Global Leaders Today PHOTO GALLERY

This new section showcase offers an inspiring window into the rarefied world of today's most influential figures and organizations. It spotlights the true faces of leadership—the esteemed visionaries, trailblazers, and decision-makers featured across the covers of Global Leaders Today.

But the impact doesn't stop there. Through our exclusive media partnerships, get an insider's glimpse behind the curtain at prestigious international events. Witness candid, unguarded moments of global CEOs, policymakers, philanthropists, and innovators proudly displaying their copy of the magazine dedicated to exploring the most complex leadership challenges of our times—an unfiltered glimpse at the inspirational change-makers charting the course for our future.



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Attorney Wil Washington with GLT President, Virginia, USA

Education Trailblazers:

Charting the Course for Educational Leadership

The scale of disruption and opportunity in education is immense. Analysts estimate the total global education market could swell to \$8 trillion in value by 2030, up from \$6 trillion in 2023. Within this, education technology or 'edtech' spending is projected to grow at an even faster clip - expanding from \$250 billion in 2023 to \$620 billion by the decade's end as digital tools become more accessible and scalable.

However, leadership in education goes far beyond embracing the latest tech trends or flashy initiatives. At its core, transformational educational leadership demands an unyielding commitment to equity, inclusion, and expanding access to high-quality learning for all. The leaders we profile exemplify this people-first approach - treating teachers as facilitators, empowering students as self-directed learners, and ensuring no child gets left behind.

One area ripe for disruption is early childhood education. A growing global middle class and rising rates of women in the workforce, especially in emerging markets, are expected to drive annual growth of nearly 3% in pre-K spending to \$400 billion by 2030. Savvy trailblazers recognize both the importance of early education and the shortages of qualified teachers - developing innovative approaches, from AI tutors to VR-based immersive learning, to fill gaps.

The K-12 segment remains the largest and fastest-growing, set to claim 54% of total education spending by reaching \$4.3 trillion in value by 2030 with around 4% annual growth. Factors like rising populations and incomes in the developing world, the resilience of the private education sector, and increased spending on supplemental services like tutoring fuel this expansion. Here, too, leaders are seizing opportunities, delivering next-gen tools to improve everything from student engagement to operational efficiency.

Looking ahead, the future of educational leadership will require an entrepreneurial mindset and a spirit of constant innovation. The rapid pace of technological disruption and globalization mean the skills students need are continuously evolving. Rigid, slow-moving institutions simply won't be able to keep up.

Instead, we need nimble, forward-looking leaders capable of harnessing emerging tools and adapting best practices from other spheres to craft responsive solutions uniquely suited to regional contexts. According to one report, global online education alone is forecasted to expand more than 10% annually as newly accessible virtual models proliferate. Leaders must be ready to ride this wave.

They must also inspire a culture of lifelong learning not just for students but for entire organizations willing to reinvent themselves continually. Corporate training and workforce upskilling is projected to become a \$850 billion market by 2030, with a nearly 4% annual growth rate driven by accelerating demands for reskilling and upskilling. The most effective leaders will build bridges between academia and industry.

In the April-June 2024 issue of Global Leaders Today, we explore the trailblazers driving transformation in the Education industry. From cutting-edge AI and virtual reality applications to new personalized learning models and globally connected classrooms - we have highlighted visionary leaders dismantling traditional systems and charting an innovative course forward. The education pioneers we have spotlighted show us what's possible when leaders embrace change with courage and creative thinking.

But their work is far from done. Developing holistic, globally competent citizens prepared to tackle humanity's most significant challenges will demand more such trailblazers - in school administration, teaching, policymaking, and beyond. The future of education leadership starts now.

Cover Story

The Ryan Revolution: Dr. Grace Pinto's Journey to Redefining Educational Excellence

Dr. Grace Pinto is the dynamic Managing Director of the renowned Ryan International Group of Institutions, overseeing a nationwide network of over 150 vibrant schools spread across 18 states in India. With a student body of nearly a quarter of a million, Dr. Pinto provides strategic direction and ensures the effective imparting of quality education.

By **Sherlyn Gomes**

In this interview, Dr. Pinto shares how Ryan International goes beyond imparting academic knowledge to nurture students. Through experiential learning, a diverse range of extracurricular activities, and opportunities for self-discovery, they foster holistic development. She believes true excellence lies in shaping confident, compassionate individuals ready to make a positive impact, not just in academic prowess but the world.

Join us as we explore her visionary leadership and commitment to transforming education and society through holistic, values-based learning.

Could you share the pivotal moments in your career that shaped your vision for the institution and the education sector?

Since 1976, the Ryan Group of Institutions has been driven by a singular vision - to spread quality education across India. Founded by the pioneering educationist Dr. A. F. Pinto, Ryan has become one of India's largest private education networks.

Starting with just 36 students in 1976, the Ryan family has grown on a foundation of reinventing education. We have embraced technology while staying

rooted in timeless values. Most of all, we have kept our focus on helping all students realize their limitless potential.

With a footprint across 18 states and over 40 schools, Ryan Group began its journey educating students through state board curricula and expanded to cities like Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Nashik, and Aurangabad. Driven by a zealous commitment to excellence, we expanded to the UAE, empowering thousands of students through world-class international curricula. But we are more than just classrooms and lesson plans. Our motto says it all: "Excellence in Education and All Round Development."



It is an honor to be recognized for my lifelong passion for providing quality, holistic education and shaping compassionate leaders of tomorrow

At Ryan, academic rigor is paired with co-curricular activities, real-world experiences, and opportunities for self-discovery. We nurture not just minds but spirits. Our diverse campuses and global outlook shape confident, compassionate citizens ready to lead in the 21st century.

Through God's divine plan, we are blessed with devoted teachers and caring parents who trust us with their most valued gifts - their children and enable us to fulfill our mission.

How have you modernized the educational system at Ryan International Group, ensuring its relevance in today's dynamic and rapidly changing world?

At Ryan Group, learning goes beyond textbooks and classrooms. For over four decades, our groundbreaking initiatives

have ignited students' limitless potential. We believe true excellence lies in all-round development. Our motto is not just words but a philosophy that guides everything we do. Here are some of our initiatives at Ryan International:

International Children's Festival (ICF): Ryan Group pioneered India's largest school theatre festival. ITF has united 12,000 students from 30+ countries for two decades to build cultural awareness and lifelong friendships through the arts.

Indian Model United Nations (INMUN): Since 2001, we have spearheaded INMUN, India's longest-running student-led UN simulation. Here, 1000+ students embrace diplomacy and address real-world issues through debate, negotiation, and crisis response.

The World Scholar's Cup (WSC): We introduced this prestigious global event to India, raising the bar in collaborative learning. In 2013, Mumbai hosted the largest-ever WSC regional round, engaging 1400+ students in literature, science, art, and more.

International Cultural Exchange (ICE): For over 40 years, we have fostered global citizenship through exchanges with 60+ countries. Students

gain perspective through immersive workshops, including at the renowned NASA.

Ryan TV: As India's only school with an in-house studio, Ryan Group pioneered media education. Ryan TV empowers student filmmakers and journalists through hands-on programs and an annual ad film festival.

Sports: Ryan Sports Club provides world-class training and a platform to nurture talent. Our students have excelled at District, State, National, and International levels, including Arjuna Awardee Chirag Shetty, International Tennis player Karman Thandi, National Level Badminton player Simran Singhi, Mountaineer Arjun Vajpai, Professional Alpine Ski Racer Jiah Aryan, Professional Footballers Rahul Beke and Nikhil Prabhu, and Table Tennis Player Arnab Karnavar. Fostering a sports culture in schools develops physically and emotionally fit youth, paving the way for future champions.

Social Responsibility: This initiative drives supporting the elderly, health, and the environment to build an ethos of service. Students gain hands-on experience creating positive societal change.



What sets Ryan International apart from other schools, distinguishing its unique characteristics in the world of education?

At Ryan Group, we focus on transdisciplinary, experiential learning to develop tomorrow's critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers. Students collaborate on projects that integrate multiple subjects, allowing them to apply knowledge innovatively.

This approach fosters the 21st-century skills students need to thrive: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, entrepreneurship, and leadership. By learning through doing, they gain practical experience bringing ideas to life. Our experiential approach enables smooth transitions into higher education and careers where students can pursue their talents and interests.

With an extensive network, how does Ryan International Group provide students with global exposure and foster collaborations?

We believe education should expand horizons and foster global citizenship. For decades, our pioneering programs have enabled students to collaborate and exchange ideas across cultures. Our flagship International Theatre Festival



brings together passionate young artists from over 30 nations like the USA, UK, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and more. Over 20,000 students have built bonds through theatre.

Through immersive cultural exchanges with 60+ partners worldwide, innumerable Ryan students have experienced the uniting power of art, music, and ideas. Annual workshops at NASA ignite scientific curiosity.

Strategic partnerships have also secured scholarships for several students at top universities in countries like the US,

UK, Australia, Singapore, and more. Our collaboration with PennHub has also facilitated learning for hundreds of students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Could you share some notable achievements or endeavors of Ryan International Group alumni that reflect the school's impact on shaping future leaders?

For over 40 years, the Ryan Group of Institutions has been driven by a vision to provide holistic education that empowers

students to achieve their full potential. Our alumni have made meaningful contributions across diverse fields such as IT, banking, medicine, sports, media, engineering, and more. At the 2023 Asian Games, Chirag Shetty secured the gold medal in badminton doubles. Parneet Kaur topped the podium in archery, while Aishwarya Mishra captured silver in the relay event. On the tennis court, Karman Thandi competes internationally. Simran Singhi takes her badminton skills worldwide. Aarya Desai and Aaradhya Yadav captained their U19 state cricket teams. Football stars Rahul Bheke, Nikhil Pujari, and Nikhil Prabhu represent India on the national squad.

Beyond sports as well, our alumni have made a significant impact. Piyush Jain leads Impact Guru as CEO. Jatin Sapru reports on sports for TV. Roopam Sharma develops groundbreaking technology to aid the visually impaired.

While proud of our legacy, we remain focused on empowering students to keep reaching higher.

Beyond education, you are deeply involved in social projects, particularly women's empowerment and supporting the underprivileged. Could you shed light on some of the initiatives you are most passionate about?

At the core of Ryan Group's vision is a commitment to nurturing socially responsible, values-driven global citizens. Our holistic approach emphasizes activities that advance societal welfare, instilling in students a service mindset. Cleanliness drives, rehabilitation efforts, health awareness campaigns, and elderly care initiatives fill our school calendar. As an environmentalist, our founder spearheads tree planting and cleanliness efforts across all Ryan schools. We proudly partner with HelpAge India in serving vulnerable senior citizens.

Mother Teresa is my role model, whose life reflects our Lord Jesus Christ and motivates us to empower women through quality education. This mission is embodied at Anubhav School, providing opportunities to underserved communities, including slum dwellers and widows' children.



By cultivating strong values and social responsibility from a young age, we aim to groom global citizens who will contribute to building a just, compassionate, and sustainable world. Our holistic approach prepares students not just for personal success but also for serving the greater good.

Your contributions have significantly impacted education and social welfare. How do you envision continuing your legacy, ensuring the principles and values you have instilled endure for future generations?

We see education as more than a profession - it is a calling. Our role is not simply to instruct but to influence and transform lives. We work hand-in-hand with teachers, staff, parents, and stakeholders to shape the future through holistic, values-based learning.

As Henry Adams says, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." For decades, Ryan's impacted generations by empowering students to reach their full potential. We

nurture nation-builders with talents and skills to shape the future, not merely unfold it.

Our focus remains on delivering quality education that develops the whole child. And our efforts have not gone unnoticed, as evidenced by recent accolades:

- Education Excellence Awards 2024 in Dubai
- Most Respected Education Brand Award 2023 by Mid-day Newspaper
- Most Influential School for Holistic Development 2023 by AsiaOne Magazine
- Navabharat CSR Awards for advancing education and child upliftment
- Best Education Brand 2023 by The Economic Times
- Ranked among the top schools nationally by Times Education Survey and Mid-day Survey 2023.

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The Knowledge Philanthropy of Marshall Goldsmith: A Coaching Giant's Gift

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith has been recognized as one of the Top Ten Business Thinkers in the world and the top-rated executive coach at the Thinkers50 ceremony in London since 2011. With nearly 40 years of hands-on experience, Marshall Goldsmith is the leading expert on leadership and coaching for behavioral change. Dr Goldsmith also appeared in the inaugural issue of Global 100 Inspirational leaders. His singular ability to get results for top leaders has drawn over 150 CEOs and their management teams to address change in the workplace.

By Kyle Goldberg

Marshall Goldsmith's remarkable journey began in a small town in New Jersey. Few could have predicted the global impact he would go on to make in the world of leadership coaching. Yet from modest beginnings, the seeds were sown for the wisdom and compassion that would define Goldsmith's teachings.

"Much of my life is thanks to great mentors," Goldsmith reflects. After earning his Ph.D. in organizational behavior, he learned from renowned mentors like Peter Drucker and Frances Hesselbein. "I hoped to emulate their wisdom and impact. More or less, I think I have," he says.

Equipped with this profound knowledge, Goldsmith set out to make his mark in the world of coaching executives and leaders. Among his most significant endeavors is creating 100 Coaches - an

elite community bringing together the world's top executive coaches aligned with Goldsmith's transformative methodology.

100 Coaches: Elevating Global Coaching Standards

As Goldsmith's coaching practice expanded, his quest to share wisdom took on bold new dimensions with 100 Coaches. The organization quickly became a thriving hub for collaboration, lifelong learning, and development among the upper echelon of professional coaches. It elevated the standard for coaching globally, realizing Goldsmith's aspiration to match, even amplify, the wisdom of giants like Drucker. 100 Coaches connected clients with Goldsmith-approved coaches of the highest caliber. But it went further, fostering



Everything I teach is simple yet challenging,

knowledge sharing and collective growth among its experts. This coaching incubator extended Goldsmith's reach far beyond his personal client roster, propagating his methods broadly.

Yet, despite decades of success, Goldsmith found himself wondering - what's left to accomplish? "My goal is to empower people worldwide by giving away what I have learned in over 40 years of coaching," says Goldsmith. The world's #1 executive coach aimed to democratize access to the transformative personal growth techniques he had honed with elites.

It was an unlikely new direction for someone of Goldsmith's stature. He had achieved every accolade – globally top executive coach, inducted into the Thinkers50 Hall of Fame, and bestselling author. "But I asked myself, what's left to accomplish?" Goldsmith recalls.

Knowledge Philanthropy: Goldsmith's Mission to Empower All

The pivotal moment came during a workshop his friend, designer Ayse Birsal, held. When Birsal asked Goldsmith to name his mentors, he mentioned legends who generously shared wisdom. "She said, be more like your heroes. Give your knowledge freely."

This sparked Goldsmith's vision for knowledge philanthropy – empowering anyone to access his coaching tools. "I wanted my techniques not just for elites but everyday people," he explains. Goldsmith began organizing his decades of teachings into a framework coaches worldwide could adapt. "It's like Lego – build what you want from these pieces," he describes. His knowledge philanthropy portal offers open-source access to a methodology honed over an entire career. "Everything I teach is simple yet challenging," Goldsmith notes. "The key is pairing simplicity with consistency."

Techniques like his daily questions and "feedforward" process promote the personal growth mindset Goldsmith instills in executives. "I hope people take these tools and make them their own," he says.

Goldsmith insists adaptation is crucial for local impact. "People know their own communities better than I do. My role is empowering them to tailor this approach."

He excitedly describes knowledge philanthropy's organic, collaborative nature. "Coaches worldwide are sharing implementations, learning from each other. That collective energy will create real change."

The Earned Life: Goldsmith's Approach to Purpose and Fulfillment

Driven by this desire to pay forward the mentorship he had received, Goldsmith did not stop there. He steadily grew his reputation and influence over decades of working with top CEOs, amassing over 50 years of accrued wisdom. Then, Goldsmith shared the principles distilled from his extensive coaching journey with the world through his book *The Earned Life*. After a career of empowering elite leaders, he looks to make his teachings accessible to all who strive for purpose and meaning.

In *The Earned Life*, the world-renowned executive coach and bestselling author offers a potent but straightforward approach to accommodating our need for achievement and life's unfairness. Goldsmith implores readers to avoid the "I'll be happy when..." mentality. He provides practical advice and exercises to help shed obstacles preventing a fulfilling life.

He firmly believes a fulfilling life has few demands. Refrain from being caught measuring

self-worth by arbitrary societal metrics. Instead, focus inward on higher purpose and growth. Every breath provides the chance to start anew.

Goldsmith embraces a core Buddhist tenet - the 'every breath' concept. Each inhalation brings forth a new version of yourself. Let the past dissolve like mist. The future is but a dream. Continually renew yourself in the sanctity of the present.

For him, each moment offers a chance to be one's best self. Despite decades of coaching others, he still works diligently on his own growth. "I still need help," Goldsmith says with disarming candor. His humility allows compassion towards others to flow from self-compassion.

In conclusion, his advice rings true - treat yourself and others compassionately. Maintain perspective. Celebrate the journey. Focus on small daily joys—nurture relationships. Aspire beyond achievement or results. Continually renew each moment.



GLT President Prof Jeevan D'Mello presenting a copy of Global 100 2022 issue to Dr Goldsmith.

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Becoming Michelle Obama:

A Story of Leadership, Education, and Global Impact

First Lady **Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama** is a lawyer, writer, and the wife of the 44th President, Barack Obama. She was the first African-American First Lady of the United States. Through her four main initiatives, she became a role model for women and an advocate for higher education and international adolescent girl's education.

By **Sherlyn Gomes**

Michelle LaVaughn Robinson was born in Chicago's South Side, a predominantly colored neighborhood. Her father, Fraser, worked for the city's water filtration plant despite suffering from multiple sclerosis. Her stay-at-home mother, Marian, built their family's world around education, hard work, and integrity.

Growing up, Obama watched her disabled father make the arduous commute to work every day to support their family. "I saw how my father carried himself with dignity," Obama recalls. "No matter how tired he was after swinging the sledgehammer at work, he always made time for us.

She adds, "My parents showed me I had a right to speak up. They never silenced me." Though the South Side endured racism and economic depression, Obama's parents nurtured her belief in the promise of education. "My foundation was solid, with discipline and order ruling the day," says Obama.



||

If girls worldwide have the tools to learn and lead, our shared future will shine brightly.

Princeton and Harvard: Navigating Identity and Pursuing Academic Excellence

Obama graduated as a salutatorian from Whitney M. Young Magnet High School. She explored her identity at Princeton University as a colored student at a predominantly white Ivy League school. Michelle graduated cum laude in 1985 with a B.A. in Sociology.

She built on her academic success by attending Harvard Law School. After graduating in 1988, Obama returned to Chicago for the next phase of her journey.

Obama's career as an associate at the law firm Sidley Austin took off. But it was meeting fellow Harvard Law graduate Barack Obama in 1989 that changed her life. "Barack was serious but not somber," says Obama. "He helped me see how we could have a committed relationship and pursue ambitious careers."

As Obama considered raising a family with Barack, she questioned what fulfilled her. So, she switched from corporate law to public service. "I wanted to have an impact beyond just making money," she explains.

She worked on economic development under Chicago's first black female mayor. Later, she ran Public Allies Chicago, empowering youth leadership and community service. "I witnessed lives changed when people believed their voice mattered," says Obama.

Her most transformational role came as associate dean at the University of Chicago. There, she pioneered its first community service program, connecting students with locals in need. "It became a model for universities nationwide on engaging communities," Obama says.

Obama married Barack in 1992. While



raising their daughters Malia and Sasha, Barack was elected U.S. Senator in 2004 and then the first black President in 2008.

First Lady Michelle Obama: Redefining the Role and Advocating for Vulnerable Groups

As First Lady, Obama redefined the position as a pulpit for advocacy, particularly for vulnerable groups. "I entered the White House understanding its power to change perspectives," she says.

Her defining initiative as First Lady was Let's Move!, which addressed childhood obesity through healthier school lunches and greater access to nutritious produce. "Nourishing our children properly gives them their best chance at a healthy future," says Obama.

She also launched Joining Forces, supporting military families through jobs programs, and Reach Higher, encouraging youth to pursue college. "Striving for an education opened my eyes to my limitless potential," explains Obama. "I want that for every girl and boy."

Since leaving the White House in 2016, she has continued impacting lives. Obama released the bestselling memoir *Becoming*, highlighting her journey. She also founded the Obama Foundation, supporting young emerging leaders.

Michelle's Passion for Girls' Education: Partnering with Leaders and Non-Profits

But her biggest passion is as a global ambassador for girls' education. In 2018, she launched the Girls Opportunity Alliance. Its programs in developing countries help adolescent girls access quality education. "I want every girl on this planet to have the same opportunities I've had. But more than 98 million adolescent girls

worldwide are not in school. That's an injustice that affects all of us. We know that girls who attend school have healthier, happier lives, and the world benefits when that happens. That's why the Obama Foundation started the Girls Opportunity Alliance — we work to lift the grassroots organizations and leaders worldwide already doing the important work of clearing away hurdles to girls' education in their communities. Every single girl deserves the chance to pursue her passions and fulfill her boundless potential," Obama passionately expresses.

The Girls Opportunity Alliance has already uplifted the lives of girls worldwide, with multiple testimonials like Kiran's, who could not attend school after losing her mother in Northern India. But through Dr. Urvasi Sahni, supported by the Alliance, Kiran was accepted to an all-girls school, providing her with an education.

In Vietnam, Mang Thị Hay can learn in a classroom, a rarity for girls in her village, thanks to the Rock-Paper-Scissors Children's Fund backed by the Alliance. Thuba Sibanda, a young soccer coach for girls in Namibia, is now pursuing university while participating in the Obama Foundation's Leaders Program. For Obama, these girls personify why fighting for every girl's right to learn remains vital.

She partners with world leaders and non-profits, raising awareness and funds. "When we give girls access to schools, we transform entire communities," Obama says.

She insists her unlikely path from Chicago schoolgirl to globally revered woman was paved by education. "If girls worldwide have the tools to learn and lead, our shared future will shine brightly."

Democratizing IT Education:

Vinay Ratnapu's

Vision for Tutorac's Global Marketplace

We had the privilege of sitting down with **Vinay Ratnapu**, the Founder and Director of Tutorac, a pioneering online education platform revolutionizing IT training in India. With an impressive background spanning over two decades in the technology and education sectors, Vinay's vision is to democratize access to world-class IT instruction through a global marketplace model. Through this interview, we gain insights into Vinay's vision for transforming IT education and his strategies for driving impact through technology and innovation in the education sector.

By **Sherlyn Gomes**

Could you share some early influences that steered you toward the education industry?

As a software developer and the founder of an IT consulting company in the US, I encountered a challenge finding the right resources to train our employees on various IT processes. This led to creating an ecosystem where tutors could provide live online training classes to students, catering to their specific needs and requirements.

I was the founder and managing director of an IT consulting company, and as part of our day-to-day activities, we had to train many of our employees on IT processes. We often struggled to find the right trainers or tutors for these IT courses.

This experience inspired the idea of building a platform where tutors could come together to conduct live online training sessions with all the necessary features and tools. The goal was to create an accessible solution for students, even those in remote or small-town locations, who could now find and choose tutors based on their specific IT interests and career aspirations.

What sets Tutorac apart from other online learning platforms?

Tutorac is a first-of-its-kind global marketplace for IT training powered by an uncompromising commitment to quality. This robust platform allows learners to discover a wide range of high-quality courses created by top industry experts - people who have

honed their skills at companies like Amazon, Uber, and beyond.

Let me give you an example to illustrate the power of this model. Say there's a Python course being offered by an instructor named Rashi. The course duration and curriculum may be similar to what another tutor provides on paper. But when you look at Rashi's profile, you see she's an ex-Amazon and Uber engineer with years of real-world experience. The value she brings to the table is immense - yet she's offering the same course for just 30,000 rupees, compared to the two lakhs that other providers might charge.

Our robust Learning Management System (LMS) underpins this seamless student-tutor interaction. It allows both parties to track progress, access



"This robust platform allows learners to discover a wide range of high-quality courses created by top industry experts - people who have honed their skills at companies like Amazon, Uber, and beyond."

materials, and manage the entire learning journey from start to finish. It's a comprehensive ecosystem designed to deliver unparalleled customization, flexibility, and transparency.

But it's not just the students who benefit. Our platform also provides tremendous work opportunities for tutors. Instructors can create and list their courses, showcasing their expertise and attracting interested learners. It's a win-win scenario where top talent can monetize their skills while making quality training accessible.

For example, a student posts a requirement to learn AWS. Our marketplace will enable AWS experts to discover this opportunity, submit proposals, and land a high-paying training contract. It directly connects supply and demand, empowering both sides to thrive.

We're pioneering a new model of IT education—one that empowers learners and tutors alike.

What sets your tutor vetting process apart from the competition?

We understand that quality control is paramount when building a marketplace of this caliber. That's why we've implemented a stringent vetting process to ensure that only the top 1% of IT experts and seasoned educators are admitted to our platform. Candidates undergo rigorous technical assessments to validate their subject matter expertise, industry experience and proven instructional abilities.

Our benchmarked standards allow us to onboard a rarified tier of tutors –

seasoned professionals from prestigious tech titans like Amazon and Uber. What makes our offering unique is its global reach and borderless connectivity. While headquartered in Dallas, Texas, our platform operates internationally, allowing students and tutors to transcend geographic boundaries. A learner in the US can as easily receive world-class training from an elite instructor in India, and vice versa.

Could you elaborate on any innovative teaching methodologies Tutorac employs to enhance student engagement?

At the core of our platform is a robust marketplace model that empowers tutors and students to take control of the learning experience. Any qualified IT professional can join our ecosystem and host live, interactive training sessions on the topics of their expertise. Students can directly connect with these industry-expert tutors to craft a customized curriculum that fits their specific goals and schedules.

But what truly sets our platform apart is the seamless, secure payment structure we've built in. Unlike hiring a freelance tutor directly, where you risk losing your investment if the training is

incomplete, our platform safeguards both parties through a milestone-based payment model.

When a student enrolls in a course, the full tuition is held in an escrow account—it's only released to the tutor once the student has completed the promised curriculum. This ensures that students get the total value they paid for while also providing tutors with the security of knowing they'll be compensated for their work.

What advice would you give aspiring entrepreneurs looking to impact the education sector?

My advice for entrepreneurs seeking to launch their next big venture would be that the thoughtful implementation of AI should be at the forefront of their strategy.

Without a robust, well-integrated AI foundation, even the most innovative product or service can struggle to captivate and retain customers in today's hyper-competitive marketplace.



Bridging The Textbook Gap in Sub-Saharan Africa Through Digital Libraries

- Written by contributing writer *Dr. Maja Zelihic*

About the Author:



Dr. Maja (Maya) Zelihic serves as the Dean of the Forbes School of Business and Technology (FSBT) at the University of Arizona Global Campus. Beyond her role as Dean, she holds esteemed positions as a Fulbright Specialist, Full Professor, and a GLOBE Researcher. Dr. Zelihic's influence extends as she chair of the FSBT's Board of Advisors, guiding strategic directions for academic excellence. Furthermore, Dr. Zelihic's impact resonates on a global scale as she served as a Global Dialogue Partner at NAFSA, the Association of International Educators.

Dr. Zelihic has completed three Fulbright research projects, assuming roles as both primary investigator and co-investigator in Zambia and Uganda. Her dedication to education transcends borders, evidenced by her involvement in e-learning development and implementation across various regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, the Middle East, and the Balkans.

Dr. Zelihic's commitment to global research is evident in her role as a GLOBE research project Country-Co-Investigator, contributing invaluable insights to the extensive study of cultural practices, leadership ideals, and interpersonal trust conducted by GLOBE across 160 countries.

Digital libraries have the power to transform the global education landscape. While institutions face fierce competition to ensure their graduates successfully transition to the job market, universities seek ways to replace lecture-driven teacher-centric approaches and focus on incorporating technology-inspired opportunities. The trick is ensuring that students can use technology to accelerate their learning. Taking advantage of technology can be challenging in developing regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, where they lack essential learning resources. As most current educational articles focus on artificial intelligence and the challenges and opportunities, returning to a basic premise of education is critical, ensuring each student can excel.

The sub-Saharan region needs more relevant textbooks in many disciplines, including business, which has impacted student success. UNESCO Institute of Statistics indicated that, out of all regions, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest education exclusion and

inequity rate. UNESCO's Office for Africa International Institute for Educational Planning echoes this concern. Books are not readily available for each student, and in some cases, one textbook is shared by the entire class.

During the 2022 gathering of African education ministers-ADEA Triennale, the Spotlight series report in partnership with the GEM Report, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, and the African Union showcased the current state of affairs based on the reports from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Senegal. Additionally, case studies throughout the region revealed devastating stats which indicate that one textbook is shared by three children on average. The same research showed that literacy rate scores increase by 20% when students have their own textbooks.

In the comprehensive study Education Funding and Learning Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa, the authors discussed

the findings from several studies on the knowledge economy and the learning crisis impacting the sub-Saharan region, which coincides with the 2018 World Development Report correlating the lack of resource funding to failure to achieve learning outcomes ridden with misplaced educational interventions.

Addressing Fundamental Educational Resources

Addressing the textbook shortage by providing alternative tools to students and educators would be a game-changer, impacting the educational landscape at first, but more than that, a 21st-century workforce. The World Bank's 2023 report indicated that economic growth in the sub-Saharan region decelerated to 2.5% in 2023 due to energy and transportation bottlenecks from 3.6% in 2022. Additionally, Andrew Dabalen, World Bank Chief Economist for Africa, indicated that 12 million young people enter the job market annually, craving stability and opportunities for better jobs.



BLOEMFONTEIN, SOUTH AFRICA APRIL 18, 2013: Students use the library at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Education can create those opportunities if we can accelerate ensuring access to quality textbooks. The World Bank report clearly stated those improvements within the educational sector, targeting not school attendance alone, but making learning more effective and quality driven. Focusing on all variables that cannot be addressed momentarily or wholly is unproductive. However, one clear solution for the critical education crisis variable within the sub-Saharan educational system is textbook shortages.

That solution can come in digital libraries, as defined by Pearson. Working in sync with federal and state governments, private corporations can be crucial as more countries realize the importance of textbook access within all layers of the educational framework, ensuring future economic progress. Significant changes in the education setting are associated with the significant shift in course delivery from a traditional to an online modality.

E-libraries do go hand in hand with online education, but they are not the exclusive privilege of online students. Many traditional schools have e-libraries as one of their components. There may be several concerns about the implementation of e-libraries within the sub-Saharan educational arena including lack of funding, training issues, comfort level with the online modality, and Internet access.

Meeting the Educational Requirements of the Growing Working-Age Majority through Digital Libraries

According to S&P Global Rating, by 2050, with only the exception of small-island economics, the Sub-Saharan region will account for 68% growth of the working-age population, becoming the world's leading driver for working population growth. Students should not have to enter the 21st-century workforce without having access to textbooks written in the last few decades of the prior century.

The young population of the sub-Saharan region does not lack motivation and passion for entering the workforce under the best possible circumstances. Furthermore, the area has dedicated teaching talent. Nevertheless, for the most part, the entire region needs more appropriate learning resources, hindering nations' full potential fulfillment.

Investment in traditional libraries has historically been a very high-priced demand in most developing economies, not to mention the resources and time required to create a functional conventional library. In comparison, e-libraries can address the needs of the masses in a very short time and with much less time/human resource investment. There is also a segment of the teaching population in need of some additional training. Still, considering the current progress many sub-Saharan institutions are making in the online and distance learning arena, that should be a manageable obstacle. According to the Africa e-learning market report,



its e-learning market reached \$3.1 billion with projections of doubling by 2032, which is a growth rate of 9.4%. In addition, most students entering the educational system are now digital natives with at least some skillset geared towards quickly adopting e-libraries.

The last area of opportunity within the realm of e-library is addressing the issues with Internet access due to power outages, technical difficulties, and sporadic availability in some rural areas. This is discussed sufficiently through ICT solutions offered by many prominent e-library providers, with an Internet component not required if students access previously downloaded textbooks. This solution enables students to access their learning material from the comforts of their homes while traveling and without Internet access. This revolutionary concept is equivalent to a student having a physical textbook library with relevant, current, and easily accessible resources. Even with access to a physical library, students could not replicate the same ideal conditions due to the shortage of relevant textbooks.

In the past few decades, the world has seen the emergence of an environment in which people learn and adapt to



e-learning change rapidly. Defined as a powerful tool for Revolutionizing Education In The Digital Age, e-learning is the most impactful education catalyst. Modern technologies have enabled access to information at a speed never previously observed in human history. The textbook shortage within sub-Saharan Africa must be addressed after some time. However, as with other areas of opportunity, the region is uniquely positioned to "skip a few steps" by leveraging emerging

technologies and ICT advancements. African educators can choose to avoid addressing the shortages within the traditional school and public libraries at all. That venture would be too costly and, frankly, somewhat pointless with the emergence of online education and new digital solutions. Addressing the shortages through the robust online/e-library platforms would provide an expeditious approach to the problem area, addressing it within a few months versus years.

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We had the honor of speaking with **Dr. Raul Villamarin Rodriguez**, an esteemed leader in higher education innovation. Dr. Rodriguez currently serves as Vice President of **Woxsen University** and brings a wealth of global experience to this role. With an illustrious career spanning cognitive technology, research, and advisory positions across institutions worldwide, Dr. Rodriguez stands at the forefront of shaping the future of education. He lends his expertise to organizations like EFMD Global, RRBM, GRLI, and PRME, championing responsible research and leadership.

Expert Opinion

Dr. Raul Rodriguez's Visionary Approach to Higher Education

By Sherlyn Gomes

His invaluable perspectives offer a window into the vision shaping the universities of tomorrow.

The future of **higher education** is filled with transformative trends that promise to shape the industry's trajectory.

You have an impressive and diverse career, from your role as a Vice President at Woxsen University to your positions on various advisory boards. How has your career evolved, and what key experiences have shaped your approach to leadership in higher education?

Throughout my career, I have held various leadership roles, including serving as Vice President at Woxsen University and offering my expertise on several advisory boards. These experiences have been transformative, profoundly shaping my leadership approach in higher education. I have navigated complex organizational dynamics and spearheaded strategic initiatives,

each pivotal moment contributing to my growth as an educational leader. My approach prioritizes innovation as a driving force, collaboration as a cornerstone, and change as a constant. These fundamental principles continue to guide my growth and development in this dynamic field.

Your role as the Vice President of Woxsen University focuses on new-age higher education. Could you share some innovative initiatives or approaches Woxsen University has taken to redefine the education landscape?

Woxsen University stands at the vanguard of redefining higher education through a steadfast commitment to innovation and excellence. With an unwavering dedication to innovation and excellence, we are redefining how students learn and grow. Our cutting-edge approach to education is driven by advanced learning methods and immersive experiences that leverage technology to create a truly transformative educational journey. By cultivating industry partnerships and offering an interdisciplinary curriculum, we equip our students with the practical skills and expertise they need to succeed in today's dynamic job market. At Woxsen, we are passionate about empowering our students to reach their full potential and achieve their dreams.

Your expertise lies in converging cognitive psychology with cutting-edge technologies such as machine learning, deep learning, and quantum computing. How does this interdisciplinary approach enhance the learning experience for students at Woxsen University?

At Woxsen University, we passionately embrace the transformative power of interdisciplinary learning. Integrating cognitive psychology insights with cutting-edge technologies like machine learning and quantum computing, we forge dynamic environments igniting critical thinking and agile problem-solving abilities. Beyond knowledge, our approach cultivates innovation, adaptability, and out-of-the-box thinking, empowering students to thrive amidst the complexities of the digital age. Interdisciplinary learning sparks a vibrant culture of intellectual curiosity and human-centric technological mastery. We empower our students to unlock extraordinary possibilities by converging human cognition and technological prowess. This reshapes the educational experience, unleashing new frontiers.

Your commitment to responsible research aligns with organizations like RRBM, GRLI, and PRME. How does Woxsen University ensure responsible research practices and instill a sense of social responsibility in its educational programs?

At Woxsen University, we believe that pursuing knowledge should never come at the cost of social responsibility. We are committed to fostering a

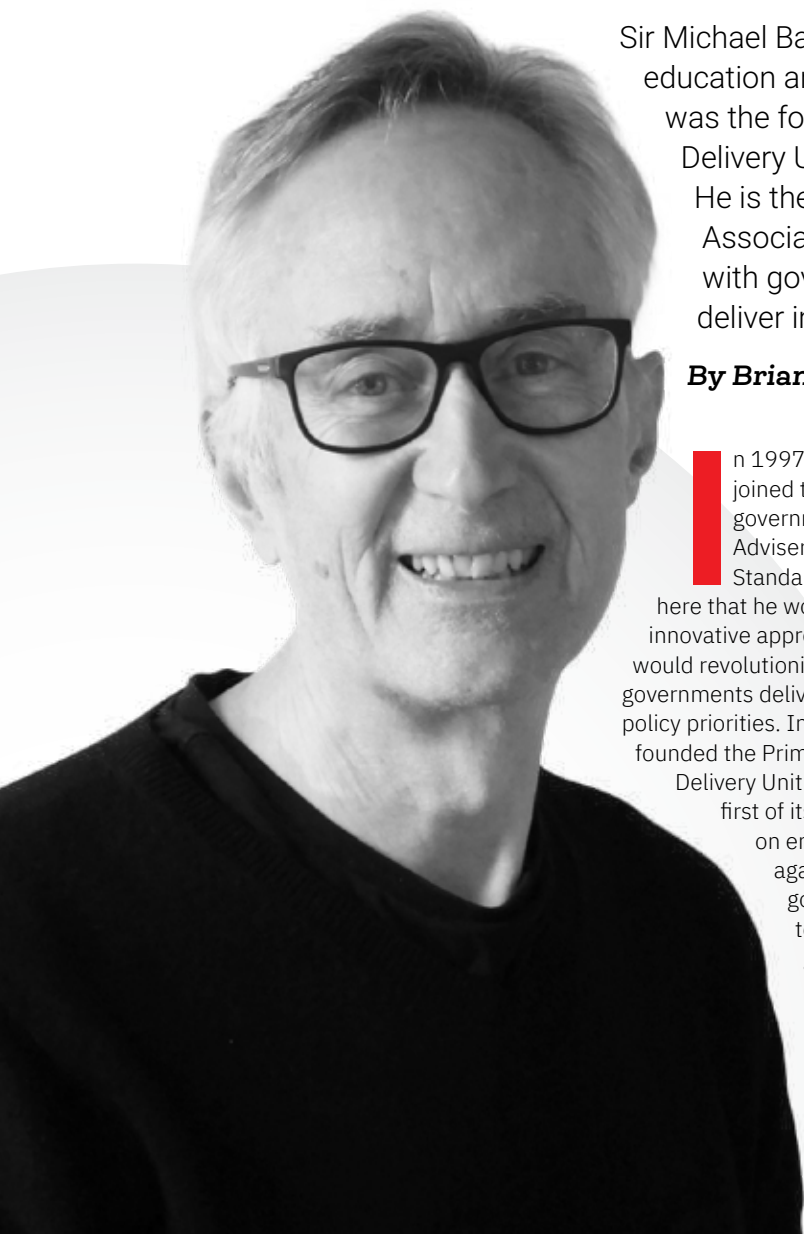


culture of ethical research practices and sustainable development initiatives in partnership with esteemed organizations such as RRBM, GRLI, and PRME. Our curriculum is designed to instill a deep sense of social impact and ethics in our students, empowering them to become thoughtful and responsible leaders committed to positively impacting their communities and beyond. At Woxsen, education is not just about acquiring knowledge but also about making a difference in the world, and we are proud to be at the forefront of promoting responsible research practices and social responsibility.

Given your extensive experience and involvement in shaping the future of education, what trends do you foresee in higher education, especially in the context of emerging technologies and global challenges?

The future of higher education is filled with transformative trends that promise to shape the industry's trajectory. With the rise of personalized learning experiences and an increased emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration, students will have access to innovative and dynamic educational opportunities tailored to their individual needs. Additionally, as ethical considerations continue to play an increasingly important role in research and education, our collective endeavors will be guided by a strong sense of purpose and societal impact, propelling us towards new frontiers of knowledge. These trends provide a glimpse into a future that is both thrilling and promising as we strive towards making a positive difference on a global scale.

Ambition, Focus, Rigor: Sir Michael Barber's Formula for Large-Scale Impact



Sir Michael Barber has worked for over 20 years in education and government reform and improvement. He was the founder and first head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit under UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. He is the co-founder and chairman of Delivery Associates, an advisory firm focused on working with governments and organizations to help them deliver improved outcomes for citizens.

By **Brianna Da Cruz**

In 1997, Sir Michael joined the UK government as Chief Adviser on School Standards. It was here that he would pioneer innovative approaches that would revolutionize how governments delivered on their policy priorities. In 2001, he founded the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) - the first of its kind focused on ensuring results against the government's top domestic goals in areas like health, education, transport, and crime. Headed

by Sir Michael, the PMDU team brought rigorous processes, sustained follow-up, and a relentless focus on measurable outcomes. "We showed that through good data, great teams, and disciplined follow-through, you can make meaningful progress towards even the most ambitious targets," he says. This systematic methodology for driving delivery was a significant innovation and has since been replicated globally. After leaving government in 2005, Sir Michael was knighted for his services to education and public service reform. He joined McKinsey as head of their worldwide education practice, advising governments in developing countries on comprehensive education transformation programs. He also played an instrumental role in shaping Pearson's global strategy for increasing access to quality education

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Fundamentally, it all comes back to the same key tenets - ambition, focus, rigor, and continual learning

in fast-growing emerging markets and the world's poorest communities. "Education is vital for equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to thrive in our rapidly changing world," Sir Michael emphasizes.

Literary Contributions: Sir Michael's Books on System Change and Leadership

Throughout his career, Sir Michael has authored seminal books capturing his learnings on large-scale system change, public service delivery, and leadership. His first book, *Instruction to Deliver*, outlined the proven practices for government execution gleaned from his time in the UK's delivery unit. Since then, he has published several best-selling titles, including *How to Run a Government*, *Accomplishment*, and *The Global Education Delusion*. *Accomplishment*, in particular, identifies the common patterns behind breakthrough achievements across sectors like government, business, sports, science, and the arts.

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Course Correction and Adaptability: Navigating the Real World

At the core of his philosophy is the notion that governments can unlock dramatic progress when they are bold in their vision yet meticulous in planning, crystal clear on priorities, and harness evidence to guide decision-making and improvement. He says, "It's not tremendously exciting, but it's vital, getting the priorities, the definitions of success, the trajectories, the data, the routines to monitor progress, and then the ability to solve problems as they arise." No matter how thorough the initial planning, Sir Michael emphasizes continual course correction is essential, since "the real world never works out exactly as you anticipate. So having routines to correct and adjust the plan all the time is important."

He recognizes that education serves a greater purpose beyond just preparation for the workforce. "History, Music, Drama, Sport, and Literature should be enjoyed and loved for their intrinsic worth - as well as for opportunities to lead and shine and to become knowledgeable," Sir Michael says. A well-rounded education cultivates knowledge, creativity, leadership abilities, and passion for lifelong learning.

Education has remained constant throughout. Sir Michael continues to promote the transformative power of learning through roles such as Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Chancellor at the University of Exeter. "Great education equips every person to lead fulfilling, purposeful lives as constructive citizens," he says.

Now in his sixties, Sir Michael remains on a lifelong quest to elevate the standards of public leadership and service. With his wealth of cross-sector wisdom and first-hand experience, he is uniquely positioned to guide leaders and organizations in turning bold visions into tangible results that create meaningful change. "The challenges we face as a society have perhaps never been more complex," he observes. "Yet governments that plan purposefully, follow the evidence, work across boundaries, and relentlessly execute will build a brighter future for all."

"While the principles for getting big things done cut across domains, the nuances of execution always depend heavily on context," Sir Michael notes. Customizing his insights has been the focus of Delivery Associates, the consulting firm he founded in 2011. Under his leadership, the organization has partnered with public and social sector leaders worldwide to tackle large-scale challenges.

This has included advising national and regional governments in countries like Ethiopia, Canada, Australia, Pakistan, and Peru on executing their strategic priorities. Their work has spanned critical agendas such as strengthening education systems, healthcare access, environmental protection, and more. For example, they helped formulate Pakistan's reforms to improve learning outcomes for 50 million children. The team has also worked with dozens of mayors across the US to drive progress on climate change, COVID-19 response, and equitable economic development.

Other high-profile engagements include delivering a seminal report for the UK Treasury on maximizing public value and, from 2017-2020, serving as the founding Chair of England's university regulator - the Office for Students. "Fundamentally, it all comes back to the same key tenets - ambition, focus, rigor, and continual learning," says Sir Michael.

Becoming A More Effective Leader Across Nations

- Written by contributing writer Jose Ucar

About the Author:



Jose Ucar is an international influence and communication expert, with over a decade of experience working with businesses such as Procter & Gamble, SEAT-CUPRA, and Amazon. He is a Tedx Speaker, trainer and coach, who helps business leaders to build strong and successful international relationships with customers and colleagues alike. Jose's mission is to enable organisations to communicate effectively internationally in a way that gives them a competitive edge. Jose's new book *Global Influence* is an essential read for leaders looking to amplify their global impact and create meaningful connections with others, regardless of culture.

In an era where leadership transcends borders and cultures, "Becoming a More Effective Leader Across Nations" delves into the multifaceted approach necessary for guiding diverse teams to success.

Drawing on the insights from my book "Global Influence", this article explores the critical roles of the human explorer, learner, and stretcher, alongside the

strategic frameworks of the SIMPLER model, and the 3Cs of Global Influence.

Through these lenses, the aim is to equip leaders with the tools and perspectives needed to foster understanding, innovation, and growth in a world rich with cultural diversity.

The Human Explorer, Learner and Stretcher Traits:

In the journey to becoming a more effective leader across nations, embracing the roles of the human explorer, learner, and stretcher is crucial. This approach underscores the necessity for leaders to venture beyond their familiar territories, demonstrating curiosity and an eagerness to understand diverse cultures and perspectives.

- **The human explorer** symbolizes the leader's quest for knowledge in the vast landscape of global business, fostering an environment where curiosity leads to discovery and innovation.
- **As learners**, leaders must adopt a mindset of continuous education, recognizing that the complexities of global leadership demand an ongoing commitment to understanding the nuances of different cultures, economies, and political landscapes. This learning extends beyond academic knowledge, embracing the lessons learned from direct interactions and experiences within various cultural contexts.
- The concept of **the stretcher** further emphasizes the need for leaders to push beyond their comfort zones, challenging themselves and their teams to grow and adapt in the face of new and often unexpected challenges. This aspect is about stretching one's capabilities and resilience, adapting leadership styles to be more inclusive, empathetic,

and effective across different cultural contexts.

Linking these three roles forms the foundation for a leadership style that is both globally aware and adaptable. It sets the stage for the application of the SIMPLER model and the understanding of the 3Cs of Global Influence, which further elaborate on the practical steps and strategies leaders can employ to enhance their global influence effectively. Through this holistic approach, leaders are better equipped to navigate the complexities of international leadership, fostering environments of mutual respect, learning, and innovation.

The SIMPLER Model:

The SIMPLER model offers a strategic framework designed to enhance communication and leadership across cultures. It encapsulates seven key principles: Slow down, Intention, Multicultural lens, Preconceptions, Language, Energetic engagement, and Review and reframe. Each principle serves as a step towards more effective and impactful communication in a global context.

1. **Slow Down:** Emphasizes the importance of thoughtful communication, urging leaders to be accurate, brief, and clear.
2. **Intention:** Focuses on being mindful of the desired impact and outcome of communication, stressing personal responsibility in the process.
3. **Multicultural Lens:** Encourages viewing interactions through a lens that is respectful of cultural differences and similarities, promoting curiosity and openness.
3. **Preconceptions:** Challenges leaders to move beyond stereotypes and assumptions, advocating for a focus on individual uniqueness.



4. **Language:** Advises on adapting language to the listener's proficiency level to ensure clarity and understanding, especially in English, the language used most frequently in business.
5. **Energetic Engagement:** Highlights the importance of positive energy and engagement in creating meaningful connections.
6. **Review and Reframe:** Suggests reflecting on interactions to learn and improve, and reframing perspectives to enhance relationships.

This model provides a comprehensive approach for leaders to refine their communication skills, ensuring they are more effectively understood and can foster stronger relationships across different cultures. By applying the SIMPLER model, leaders can navigate the complexities of global leadership with greater empathy, clarity, and impact.

The 3Cs of Global Influence:

The 3Cs of Global Influence—Conveyor, Coach, and Challenger—enrich the concept of global leadership by promoting a balanced approach to communication and influence. Leaders who embody these roles can navigate the complexities of global interactions with agility and insight.

- **As Conveyors**, they provide clear instructions and guidance, ensuring that their teams understand the expectations and objectives.
- Adopting **the Coach** style, leaders encourage autonomy and self-reliance, fostering a culture of growth and development.
- **As Challengers**, they provoke critical thinking and innovation, challenging assumptions and encouraging new perspectives.

These roles, when used strategically, enable leaders to empower their

teams, enhance engagement, and drive meaningful change across cultural and geographic boundaries, aligning seamlessly with the SIMPLER model for effective international leadership.

Effective leadership across nations demands more than just a traditional skill set; it requires the understanding of cultural nuances, an unwavering commitment to continuous learning, and the ability to communicate with clarity and empathy. The exploration of the human explorer, learner, and stretcher roles, the application of the SIMPLER model, and the embodiment of the 3Cs of Global Influence, offer a holistic blueprint for leaders aiming to make a profound impact on the global stage. In embracing these concepts, leaders can transcend cultural and geographical boundaries, creating environments where diversity is celebrated, collaboration is encouraged, and collective success is achieved.

From Apartheid to Leadership: Dr Phakeng's Impactful Journey

Dr Mamokgethi Phakeng is the former vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, where she has been serving as vice chancellor for research and internationalization since January 2017. Dr Phakeng is the founder of the Adopt-a-learner Foundation. This non-profit organization started in 2004 and provided financial and educational support to students from the township and rural areas to acquire higher education qualifications.

By **Elena Arnaiz**

Born in rural South Africa during apartheid, Dr Phakeng was committed to education despite the challenges. "Growing up in rural South Africa during Apartheid, my parents, who were not educated themselves, were committed to education," she recalls. Mathematics became her preferred subject as she realized she could solve problems her way.

After earning a teaching diploma, Dr Phakeng started her career as a high school teacher. It was here that she discovered her love for imparting knowledge. "My first year of work was at a teacher's training college. Teaching is where I discovered my passion for education and helping others learn," she says.

Driven to expand her knowledge, Dr Phakeng pursued her Bachelor's and Master's degrees part-time while teaching. Her excellence in mathematics led her to pursue a Ph.D. in Mathematics Education from the University of the Witwatersrand.

Breaking Barriers

Completing her PhD in 2002, Dr Phakeng became the first black South African female to earn a doctorate in Mathematics Education. "I was the first South African female ever to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics education, an achievement I attribute to my parents' commitment to education despite not being educated," she shares.

In 2018, Dr Phakeng was appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town. It was a challenging time, with student protests erupting over fees, institutional racism, and more. But Dr Phakeng was determined to engage. She made it a priority to visit protesting students, listening to their grievances directly. "I wanted to be on the ground and hear the issues firsthand because I was new and had never lived in Cape Town before."

Under her leadership, UCT increased diversity, with over 50% black students and 41.5% first-generation university entrants in the first-year class. She championed student entrepreneurship, with UCT winning multiple times the prestigious Entrepreneurial University of the Year award.

Shaping Futures: The Impact of Dr. Phakeng

Beyond her accomplishments at UCT, Dr Phakeng founded the Adopt-a-learner Foundation and continues to shape the educational landscape globally. Holding the distinguished title of Visiting Professor at universities worldwide, from Australia to the USA, she is on a mission to transform lives through education. Dr Phakeng's remarkable academic career was marked by becoming the first black South African researcher appointed to co-chair a study commissioned by the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction in 2008.

However, her transformational approach also garnered controversy. In 2023, allegations surfaced about her tenure approval and salary payment. Despite never facing formal disciplinary charges or being found guilty of wrongdoing, Dr Phakeng opted for an early exit in the university's best interests.

Reflecting on her term as Vice Chancellor, Dr Phakeng says, "When I turned 40, I embraced my freedom and who I am. I can't be someone else. Since I embraced that, it's given me the freedom to be who I am."

Now on sabbatical, the trailblazing Dr Phakeng is using her time to write her memoir, advocate for education and women's empowerment, and take up advisory roles. She concludes, "Success is built on persistence, patience, and consistency."

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The Khan Academy Story:

One Man's Mission to Revolutionize Education

Sal Khan is the founder and CEO of Khan Academy, a nonprofit that aims to provide a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere. He is also the founder of Schoolhouse, world, Khan Lab School, and Khan World School, all nonprofits focused on making world-class, personalized mastery education accessible. Sal's interest in education began while he was an undergraduate at MIT. He developed math software for children with ADHD and tutored fourth- and seventh-grade public school students in Boston. He holds three degrees from MIT and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

By Alexis Miller

Salman 'Sal' Khan graduated from MIT and Harvard Business School in 2003. Following an internship at PARC, he ventured into the finance world as a hedge fund analyst, expressing his ambition to his friends, saying, "I'm going to do this long enough so I can become independently wealthy."

Around the same time, Khan began tutoring his young cousin Nadia in math over the phone. He started enjoying the process and soon started helping more of his extended family and friends with various subjects, recording his lessons and posting them on YouTube to aid their learning.

His friends were amazed by Khan's unique teaching style and ability to explain complex concepts in a simplified manner. They encouraged him to keep making the videos, sensing he

had found a real passion. Seeing the incredible impact his videos were having, Khan decided to leave his job in finance to pursue this passion full-time.

A Billionaire's Recognition: How Bill Gates and Ann Doerr Changed the Game

Khan then started living off savings with his family while trying to get Khan Academy off the ground. He recounts, "I think anytime you do anything entrepreneurial for-profit or nonprofit, you have to start with that delusional optimism." But after nine stressful months of digging into savings, a \$10,000 donation came from Ann Doerr.

He says, "Ann wanted to learn more, so we met for lunch, and she asked me about my goals. I replied, I want to provide free, world-class education for

anyone anywhere. To that, Ann replied, how have you supported yourself? And I proudly stated that I have not." He continues, "She paid the bill, and then 10 minutes later, I get a text message from Ann saying, 'You really need to be supporting yourself. I just wired you \$100,000.'"

A few months later, Khan received a text from Ann while running a summer camp, saying Bill Gates had mentioned Khan Academy on stage. Khan recounts: "I was like, 'Is this really happening?' I remember that night showing my wife and asking, 'What do I do now? Do I call him up?'"

Within two weeks, Gates' chief of staff called him and offered to fly him to Seattle. Khan recalls his excitement on the call, saying, "Yeah, sure. I've got to cut my nails next Wednesday, but I'm happy to meet with Bill." After

the meeting, significant funding soon followed from the Gates Foundation and Google, allowing Khan Academy to grow into a real organization.

Growth and Global Impact: Khan Academy's Journey Beyond the Garage

Khan's leap of faith to pursue Khan Academy full-time paid off. Khan Academy's reach has grown exponentially since its early days. Today, the nonprofit offers over 70,000 practice problems translated into more than 50 languages. It has partnered with over 500 school districts and established accredited schools, including Khan Lab School in Silicon Valley and Khan World School in collaboration with Arizona State University.

Staying on the cutting edge, Khan Academy is now launching Khanmigo - an AI chatbot designed to instruct both teachers and students on leveraging AI to enrich learning. Through constant innovation and strategic partnerships, the platform Sal Khan started in his garage has blossomed into a global force in education technology.

When asked about criticism of his lessons, he responds openly. "If someone rightly points out errors, we fix them. With over 10 million users, we constantly get rapid feedback to improve content quality."

While discussing the drawbacks of screen time and the challenges of running an education platform exclusively online, Khan emphasizes the neutral nature of screen time. He highlights its excellent uses: "Obviously, if a student is writing a paper, coding, doing some graphical art, I would argue Khan Academy. For my children as well, I want them to go outside and play with their friends." Even at Khan's Lab, "Our kids are not on a computer all day." He explains, "They probably use a computer more than your average school, but they're also getting more social interaction because they're not sitting in lectures all day."

Transitioning to broader insights, Khan advises against venturing too far from people's current comfort zones, stating, "You might be trying to tackle too many degrees away from where people's comfort zone is right now." Instead, he proposes a strategic approach, suggesting the application of the same tool to create enterprise apps or for college students to start companies. Khan envisions a scenario where venture capitalists could leverage such tools to initiate their incubators, facilitating rapid app development and efficient product-market fit tests. According to Khan, this innovative model holds the potential to reshape the landscape of technological entrepreneurship.

Conclusively, his advice for budding entrepreneurs is to start by meeting people's needs in a familiar space and planting seeds for more disruptive innovation. As Khan states, "Don't be afraid to challenge the status quo; innovation comes from thinking differently." By balancing practicality and vision, entrepreneurs can pave the way for transformative change.



Don't be afraid to challenge the status quo; innovation comes from thinking differently.



Leadership Lessons from the Yard

- Written by contributing writer Michelle Marie Walton, Ph.D.

About the Author:



Dr. Michelle M. Walton served as faculty at four HBCUs: Stillman College, Texas Southern University, most recently Alabama A&M University, and currently at Paul Quinn College. She is the author of “Regenerating Gender Communication: Awareness, Understanding, and Engagement” and “The Single Shift: Work/Life Experiences of Never-Married Childfree Professional Black Women”. Dr. Walton appeared as a communication expert on WVUA 23 News, having worked in the most diverse cities in the U.S., including New York City. A native of Kansas City, KS— she is now based in Houston, TX.

Watching episodes of the hit collegiate sitcom *A Different World* in high school illuminated possibilities of what student life at an HBCU (Historically Black College or University) could be for me. I imagined myself as the show’s characters: attending lively homecoming festivities like Dwayne Wayne, being on a sorority pledge line like Kim Reese, or discovering cultural artifacts hidden in campus infrastructure like Freddie

Brooks. The show’s run ended when I was a sophomore at my beloved alma mater-- Talladega College, Alabama’s oldest private HBCU. Suffice it to say, the show’s enduring depictions are authentic to my lived experiences on “the yard,” a term short for schoolyard used to reference an HBCU’s campus.

Decades later-- my life then imitated the television series from the perspective of the campus leaders it characterized like hard-nosed math instructor Colonel Bradford Taylor, cantankerous but wise cook Mr. Vernon Gaines and dorm director Lettie Bostic. Like these portrayals on *A Different World*, my real-life experiences as an HBCU professor provided me with extraordinary practice in leadership. Unique to faculty, staff, and administration of historically Black colleges and universities, I learned impactful lessons as a leader grounded in the culture of these great institutions.

Achieving more with less is the golden rule.

It is no secret that HBCUs endure chronic challenges regarding access, funding, and facility upgrades. Despite this fact, as a faculty at four different HBCUs, I became aware that cultivating elevated student experiences relies on creativity, going the extra mile and thinking outside the box. During the pandemic, when all schools faced issues managing Covid-19-- HBCUs confronted higher stakes. As an academic program head, I knew enrichment was key to student support and retention. Since large campus group meetings were unviable, I gained approval to hold the Fall 2021 orientation at the outside patio of a nearby Italian restaurant. After negotiating discounts on high-end pizzas cut in small portions with water and tea, I subsidized on the cheap, then requiring business attire;

it became an elegant event with much needed fellowship for re-connection. When full operations returned to the yard, students requested this event plan be an annual program staple. In other instances, I often made onsite classroom changes for access to presentational equipment while other faculty fundraised to assist some students with praxis exam fees. Ultimately, I learned that making something out of nothing is par for the course among HBCU leaders.

Wearing multiple hats is a given.

As an HBCU student, I first became aware that many faculty and staff held side hustles via other campus roles. Back then, my work-study job with the baseball team was positioned at the men’s dorm since the coach also served as dorm director. Our student activities director doubled as the assistant women’s basketball coach while the provost and registrar taught freshman orientation courses. When I became a faculty on the yard, I gained a better awareness that repurposing staff supports the necessary streamlining of institutional operations at HBCUs. For instance, as the graduate communication degree program director I was also its only full-time professor, advisor to all program students, and also serving as the assessment coordinator. It was literally a one-person show. For a year during that time, I held similar responsibilities for the undergraduate communication program in tandem before that vacancy was filled. I later realized that even though some HBCU faculty and staff hold multiple roles out of institutional need, they grow exponentially as leaders, develop a greater skill set at a faster rate, and leverage themselves for higher jobs in the yard, in academia, or in



industry. Wearing multiple hats as HBCU faculty allowed me to diversify my professional experience and truly elevate my leadership capabilities for future opportunities.

Be a mentor or be marginal.

The greatest commodity in the HBCU infrastructure is student mentorship. In the yard, mentors are everywhere. During my school days, a business office clerk frequently waited for me on Fridays when I ran late to get weekend cash from my campus account. I still have her beautiful gift to me from when I pledged to a different sorority than

she did. Or the admissions officer who awarded me a larger scholarship than my high school grades warranted; later allowing me to use that office as summer storage space after freshman year. When I became an HBCU leader, these acts of mentorship were embedded in my own approach to students. I once worked past the end of a semester to ensure a student met the deadline for a summer arts internship they eventually won. I maintained a monthly meetup with another student to support their integration into campus life. Essentially, I discovered that mentoring at HBUCs is akin to

its overall success-- because without it, students are underserved, and the impact needed from leaders can render a major shortfall.

In all, these leadership lessons are the manifesto for student engagement at historically Black colleges and universities. They reflect a conducive campus culture interactive social support, and offer direction in understanding the lasting influence of these institutions. Specifically, in my case, these lessons in leadership from the yard represent my legacy which is a lasting reward!

The Top 5 Employee Benefits your Workforce Wants in 2024

- Written by contributing writer Phil Denman

About the Author:



Phil Denman is the CEO of Capacity Insights and an insurance expert with over 30 years of experience. Having held senior roles in underwriting, sales, and operations with several leading UK travel insurance companies, Phil founded Healix Insurance Services, a specialist intermediary business specializing in large, complex travel insurance schemes, in 2005. As CEO of new underwriting MGA Capacity Insights, Phil brings together his expertise in business development, health insurance, travel insurance, employee benefits design and sales management to create customer-centric bespoke insurance products for SMEs and corporates.

We all know that employee benefits are no longer really a “nice to have”. If you want to attract and retain the top talent in your industry – and you do – then you need to offer a competitive employee benefits package.

As well as helping with recruitment while reducing churn, the right

employee benefits can also boost staff morale and productivity. And through addressing the root causes of stress and anxiety, certain employee benefits can also help to reduce unplanned absences in the workplace.

But we all know this. Nobody needs convincing on why employee benefits matter. The question is: What makes for a good employee benefit in 2024? What do employees actually want from their benefits packages?

Here are our top five employee benefits your workforce will want in 2024.

Employee Perks

Employee perks can be low-cost, or even free and can include things like:

- Complimentary food and drink in the office.
- Employee discount schemes.
- Wellness initiatives (such as subsidised gym memberships).

Perks can help to boost staff morale and productivity, and a flexible work scheme might be just the thing to make a potential employee decide to work for you, rather than one of your competitors. But perks should not act as a substitute to a genuinely competitive remuneration package that includes some truly valuable benefit schemes.

A bowl of fresh fruit in the workplace, free coffee and a ping pong table in the staff room all have the potential to brighten an employee’s day, in a small way. But a good employee benefit scheme can make a fundamental difference to your employee’s lives both inside and outside the workplace.

Employee Healthcare Cover

Workplace healthcare schemes are among the most popular employee benefits for 2024.

- In the 2023 SHRM 2023 Employee Benefits Survey, 89% of respondents

rated healthcare benefits as “very important” or “extremely important.”

- According to website Inc., 80% of jobseekers look for workplaces that offer some form of health benefits.
- Health related benefits may be particularly important for attracting younger employees to the workplace. According to The HR Director, nearly 50% of Gen Zs and 40% of millennials report feeling stressed or anxious at work, and believe that employers could do more to support them.

When people across the world are facing long waiting times for even the most basic of healthcare treatments, it’s easy to see why employees might value healthcare benefits. Give your employees healthcare cover as part of their benefit package, and they can get fast-track access to doctors appointments, along with instant referrals to any treatment they might need.

And as the above research shows, extend your healthcare benefits to include mental health support and you could attract and retain the next generation of employees.

Dental Cover

Not all healthcare packages include dental cover as standard. Usually, you’ll have to offer it as a separate benefit. But doing so will certainly give your employees something to smile about.

Good dental care is expensive almost everywhere you go. And if it’s currently hard for people to access healthcare, it’s arguably even harder for many to access dental care. According to NHS Care, in the UK, approximately four million people live in “dental deserts” without reliable access to dental services.

For this reason, dental cover as an employee benefit can bring tremendous peace of mind to your workforce. They can get rapid access to regular private check-ups, so they can deal with any



potential problems long before they cause discomfort. And if they ever need treatment, rather than suffer in silence they can jump right to the front of the queue and get the support they need as soon as they need it.

Personal Accident Insurance

Even the smallest injury can turn your life upside down. For example, if you don’t adopt the correct posture when lifting a box, you could be looking at months of back pain and severely limited mobility.

Personal accident insurance means your employees can get financial compensation if they ever suffer from a debilitating injury. This sort of benefit can also pay for an employee’s ongoing rehabilitation, giving them cover for physiotherapy or other counselling fees.

It should be clear by now that good employee benefits offer essential peace of mind. If an injury ever puts an employee out of work, they might get statutory pay, but will this be enough to keep them going, and to help them

recover? With personal accident insurance, you can help them get back on their feet while helping them meet all of their expenses during their downtime.

Travel Insurance

In the SHRM 2023 Employee Benefits Survey, 81% of respondents rated leave benefits as either “very important” or “extremely important.”

What’s a “leave benefit”? It’s any benefit that encourages a good work/life balance through making it as easy as possible for employees to take their well-earned leave. Travel insurance as an employee benefit can do just this through reducing the risks associated with travel. It can provide cover for a number of unexpected expenses, from cancelled or delayed flights to lost luggage.

Most company travel insurance schemes will only cover for business travel. But you can also choose to cover employees for their personal travel. Essentially, this means that you, as an employer, will offer to cover all of the

risks employees may face when taking family holidays outside of work.

As a demonstration of how much you value your employees’ health, happiness, and overall wellbeing, it’s hard to imagine anything more effective.

Flexible Working

Finally, survey after survey reveals that the most popular employee benefit for 2024 will be some form of flexible working arrangement.

The global lockdowns of 2020-2022 forced millions of employees to work from home. For many employees, this may have been their first taste of flexible working. And the majority of employees seemed to have found it to their liking.

A 2022 CIPD study found that over 4 million employees changed their careers due to a lack of flexible working opportunities. In 2024, you need to give your employees the freedom to choose how, when, and where they work. Otherwise, your year might be defined by struggles with employee satisfaction, morale, and retention.

Dan Rosenzweig:

Why America's Return on Education Needs Rethinking

Dan Rosenzweig is an education trailblazer who is chairman, president, and chief executive officer of student services company Chegg. Previously, Rosenzweig served as president and CEO of Guitar Hero, COO at Yahoo!, president of CNET, and president and CEO of ZDNet.

By **Justin Roberts**

Rosenzweig graduated from Hobart and William Smith Colleges at the top of his class with degrees in political science and Asian studies. His professional journey began with an unexpected setback - getting laid off on the first day of his first job out of college selling word processors door-to-door. Undeterred, Rosenzweig joined computer magazine publisher Ziff-Davis, transitioning from selling advertising to telemarketing in their new circulation department.

He swiftly ascended the ranks at Ziff-Davis over his 15-year tenure. Rosenzweig's penchant for identifying emerging trends propelled him up the ranks of Ziff-Davis to become CEO of ZDNet, taking the company public before orchestrating its acquisition by CNET in 2001.

This early success, achieved before his 40th birthday, affirmed Rosenzweig's belief in "serendipity" as a guiding force. "Find environments where what you do well is the necessary thing. Commit and then kick ass," he advises. This relentless drive and adaptability

mindset shaped his trajectory to even greater heights.

Yahoo's Turnaround: Rosenzweig's Role in Reshaping a Tech Giant

In 2002, Rosenzweig was recruited by Yahoo! co-founder Jerry Yang to serve as its COO after the dot-com bust. Despite the company's woes, Rosenzweig saw an unmatched opportunity to reverse its trajectory. "Terry Semel said to me, 'Do you want to be an 80-year-old in Scarsdale, or do you want to make an effort to be a 40-year-old who says, Here's how we change the world?' That was the game-changer for me."

Rosenzweig embraced the challenge and helped assemble a dynamic executive team that engineered Yahoo!'s remarkable comeback. The company's valuation skyrocketed from \$1 billion to over \$50 billion, with Rosenzweig architecting the reinvention of its media model and driving critical product innovations still integral to the company today.

"I always joke about being brilliant by accident," Rosenzweig reflects with a laugh. "Most of the mistakes I've made in my career have been not being open to saying yes to opportunities." This philosophy continues fueling his drive to tackle new frontiers.

Chegg's Renaissance: Revolutionizing Education Through Technology

In 2009, Rosenzweig answered Bobby Kotick's call to become CEO of Guitar Hero, overseeing its rapid expansion before launching his most ambitious venture yet: revolutionizing higher education. The passion project began in 2010 when Rosenzweig took the helm at Chegg, which was a struggling textbook rental startup back then.

With many students drowning in debt while technology reshaped nearly every other industry, Rosenzweig recognized the need for an education revolution. "We knew more students were going to need more help with more things," he says. "They were going to have less support from families, and more were going to be from immigrant families. The



**I think good companies
can navigate being public
and doing the right things
for their customers.**

educational experience needed to be on-demand when they could do it."

Under Rosenzweig's leadership, Chegg underwent a dramatic turnaround through an 'all-in' bet on online, personalized learning. He brought on visionary investments like acquiring the tutoring platform Cramster and developing proprietary content like step-by-step textbook solutions and expert Q&A networks. Despite critics' doubts, he held firm to the mission to improve accessibility to high-quality education where students learn and gain employability for the future.

The results speak for themselves; Chegg completed a \$210 million IPO in 2014 and today boasts over 5 million subscribers with a \$10 billion market cap. Lifelong learning is no longer a lofty aspiration but a global reality powered by Chegg's offerings, from college admissions to skills training.

The pandemic accelerated Chegg's tremendous growth, with 69% year-over-year subscriber gains in 2020. Yet it also highlighted the massive gaps and inequities plaguing higher ed. "If I could do anything," Rosenzweig emphasizes, "it's to get a dialogue going about the role of education in the United States."

Equity for Education: Chegg's Mission to Radically Improve ROI

Rosenzweig's bold vision extends beyond the classroom to tackle the crippling student debt crisis plaguing millions of Americans. His 2019 documentary series with Ashton Kutcher, "Going from Broke," spotlighted the systemic issues burdening hardworking students and families. Garnering nearly 15 million views as one of Crackle's most successful shows underscored the urgent need for reform.

"It's almost like a Ponzi scheme," Rosenzweig emphasizes. "Colleges raise

prices; the government lends students more with no option to refinance or discharge debts. In the next ten years, student debt will be larger than credit card and mortgage debt combined."

Traditional college pathways reach only 20% of students. Yet, a staggering average debt of \$30,000 per graduate impacts 44 million Americans, particularly for Rosenzweig's immigrant family roots; high costs strain aspirations for economic mobility.

To drive systemic change, Chegg is at the forefront of policy advocacy - successfully lobbying Congress to allow companies to provide tax-free student debt repayment assistance. Rosenzweig envisions financial incentives that channel corporate America's resources towards the most significant stimulus in the world: giving young people money to start families, buy homes, and invest in their communities.

Leading by example, Chegg's mission centers on radically improving education's return on investment. Through pioneering initiatives like "Equity for Education," the company directly tackles employees' student debts. As Rosenzweig puts it, "We need to get a dialogue about the role of education in the United States. The debate shouldn't be if it should be free, but what should it be doing?"

In aligning with this mission, Rosenzweig concludes, "I think good companies can navigate being public and doing the right things for their customers."



Image Source: Chegg, Inc

From Secret Schools to Rwandan Exile: Shabana Basij-Rasikh's Mission to Educate

Shabana Basij-Rasikh co-founded the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA) in 2008 while a student at Middlebury College in Vermont. SOLA prospered as Afghanistan's only boarding school for girls until the Taliban seized Kabul in August 2021. As president of SOLA, Basij-Rasikh helped evacuate nearly 100 students and staff to Rwanda, where they resumed classes in exile.

By **Kyle Goldberg**

Shabana Basij-Rasikh was just six years old when the Taliban seized control of Kabul in 1996. The extremist regime immediately banned women from working outside the home and prohibited girls from attending school. For Shabana and her older sister, accessing an education meant secretly attending underground schools run covertly out of people's homes.

"I got incredibly lucky," Shabana recalls. "I had to be born in a family and to have the parents that I have, who valued education deeply and who found it riskier to raise daughters without an education than to risk our lives to send us to the secret underground schools."

To avoid attracting attention from the Taliban's morality police, Shabana dressed as a boy and accompanied her burqa-clad sister to school, hiding their books in shopping bags. After the Taliban fell in 2001, Shabana cherished being able to attend school openly for the first time. She soon realized that

education was her ticket to freedom, to a life of dignity and independence.

In 2002, at age 15, Shabana spent a year studying in the United States through a State Department youth exchange program. For the first time, she experienced living in a society where girls didn't have to fear losing access to education. She dreamed that one day, Afghan girls would be able to take their schooling for granted in the same way.

The Foundation of SOLA

When Shabana started college at Vermont's Middlebury College in 2007, just 6% of Afghan women had undergraduate degrees. Feeling privileged and determined to give back, she co-founded the nonprofit School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA) in 2008 with the mission of providing quality education for Afghan girls.

Initially, SOLA funded scholarships to bring Afghan girls to study abroad in

the US. But as the security situation deteriorated in Afghanistan, Shabana pivoted to establishing schools inside the country so girls could access education without leaving home. In 2016, after years of preparation, SOLA opened Afghanistan's first all-girls boarding school. "I wanted Afghan girls to feel the same way about their education someday," Shabana says. "I wanted that to happen in my lifetime."

In August 2021, just days after the Taliban seized Kabul, Shabana led the urgent evacuation of SOLA's students and staff to Rwanda. Overnight, a planned study abroad program had become a traumatic escape from Afghanistan. But Shabana succeeded in getting her entire school community out of harm's way.

"I immediately feel so grateful that everyone in our community who wanted to get out of Afghanistan during that time managed to get out and get out safely," she says.



"I had to be born in a family and to have the parents that I have, who valued education deeply and who found it riskier to raise daughters without an education than to risk our lives to send us to the secret underground schools."

Continuing SOLA's Mission in Exile

Under Taliban rule, Afghanistan has again descended into the repressive conditions of Shabana's childhood - women denied freedom and girls barred from education beyond 6th grade. Rather than give up, Shabana got to work re-establishing SOLA in exile in Rwanda. Her school now operates as the only boarding school for Afghan girls worldwide.

Within just four days of arriving in Rwanda, Shabana had transformed a wing of local guesthouses into makeshift classrooms for her students. Desks and whiteboards were hauled into place as teachers prepared to resume lessons. The girls, ranging in age from 11 to 18, adapted quickly to their unfamiliar surroundings in the capital city of Kigali. Though now exiled over 3,500 miles from home, their education continued uninterrupted.

At SOLA's new campus

on the outskirts of Kigali, the girls follow an ambitious curriculum aimed at developing the next generation of women leaders in technology, law, medicine, and education. They take courses in calculus, physics, chemistry, English literature, computer programming, and social entrepreneurship. Small classes allow lively debates and in-depth discussions, shaping young minds. Girls as young as 11 learn public speaking and leadership skills. Science labs provide opportunities for advanced experiments

and research. Despite their world turning upside down, pursuing knowledge remains SOLA's *raison d'être*.

The girls play sports on weekends, tend vegetable gardens, and enjoy dance, yoga, and movie nights. Their living quarters are decorated with art and bright fabrics in traditional Afghan styles, creating a nurturing home. While circumstances have forced them far from their homeland, their community remains strong.

"My commitment is to the girls of Afghanistan, girls still in their homeland and girls scattered in the worldwide diaspora," Shabana says. "I am driven to make SOLA a place of hope and promise - a place where Afghan girls will always be free to learn."



Image Source: SOLA School of Leadership, Afghanistan

Vicky Colbert's Escuela Nueva: A Blueprint for Global Education Reform

Vicky Colbert is the founder and director of Fundación Escuela Nueva and a pioneering co-creator of the acclaimed Escuela Nueva educational model, an innovative approach globally renowned for its proven effectiveness in improving education quality. She served as the first National Coordinator of Escuela Nueva, Director of Distance Education at Javeriana University, Vice Minister of Education of Colombia, and UNICEF's Regional Education Adviser for Latin America and the Caribbean.

By Alexis Miller

Born in the United States but raised in Colombia, Vicky Colbert was inspired by her mother, an educator who founded teacher training colleges. A Ford Foundation scholarship enabled Colbert to study comparative education at Stanford University. She returned to Colombia, driven to improve basic education for the poor, isolated rural schools. In these farming communities, children often dropped out temporarily to help with the coffee harvest and struggled to catch up when returning to mixed-grade classrooms. Colbert saw the need for a flexible education model to accommodate these realities.

Image Source: Fundación Escuela Nueva *Volvamos a la Gente*

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Education is at the heart of everything. It's the way to improve lives and provide people with economic opportunities

She knew this was an opportunity for change: "We had to rethink everything," she explains. Along with co-founders Beryl Levinger and Oscar Mogollón, a rural teacher, Colbert pioneered a new model called Escuela Nueva (New School). It shifted the focus from teacher-centric to child-centric learning.

Creating Escuela Nueva: A Model Focused on Child-Centric Learning

The Escuela Nueva model is simple: students sit in small groups, each with their learning guides. The guides facilitate discussion, individual work, and feedback. After exercises, pupils discuss with their group, helping each other and delving into details. Teachers observe, guide, give feedback, and help when needed. The curriculum combines personalized, self-paced, and cooperative learning.

Colbert explains, "When we started initially in those isolated, rural multi-grade schools - what I call the 'invisible schools' - the teachers were desperate for support. Handling multiple grades in one classroom was overwhelming. Just having some guidance was so helpful to them. The teachers were very open to this new approach. However, the community initially pushed back, thinking the students were playing with the Montessori-style methods." She continues, "Our model wasn't philosophically new, but we had concrete tools to put it into practice. We wanted to spark innovation and change, so we began having demonstration schools across Colombia to showcase this fresh way of learning."

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This approach works for bigger classes and monograde schools, too. So Fundación Escuela Nueva adapted it for urban contexts as Escuela Activa Urbana. The model was piloted in 1976 with just a few schools but soon expanded. By 1989, it reached over 17,000 schools and 800,000 students. Appointed Vice Minister of Education in 1982, Colbert enabled national adoption. She reflects, "It was a Cinderella story, starting with isolated schools and ending with a model for the future."

In 2000, 20 underperforming public schools in Bogota implemented Escuela Nueva, improving results by 45% in language and 81% in math. In 2001, Learning Circles were introduced to provide education for displaced children. These community-supported groups transition kids into formal schools, raising self-esteem and achievement.

Scalability, Cost-Effectiveness, and Evidence: The Pillars of Escuela Nueva

Escuela Nueva's success lies in its scalability, cost-effectiveness, and evidence. Students have higher achievement, lower dropout rates, and better life skills. The World Bank hailed it as an outstanding reform, with sixteen countries across three continents implementing it.

The accolades garnered by founder Colbert include the prestigious Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship. However, Colbert humbly insists, "It's not my project; it's a movement." In her eyes, the impetus for change comes from children, teachers, and communities, leading to what she refers to as "silent revolutions." This global impact is what motivates Colbert. "It's so important that learning happens because failure is terrible for peace, democracy, everything." She warns that while some progress has been made, education itself remains stagnant.

Looking ahead, Colbert is driven to provide quality education for more marginalized children. Simultaneously, she aims to strengthen social-emotional learning and instill 21st-century skills

such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration. "Education is at the heart of everything. It's the way to improve lives and provide people with economic opportunities," says Colbert.

Pandemic Resilience: Escuela Nueva's Self-Paced Learning Amid Challenge

The pandemic has demonstrated the resilience of Escuela Nueva's self-paced learning. While shedding light on the digital divide, it has also revealed that solutions need not exclusively depend on technology. Colbert explains, "I believe technology is essential, but we must be cautious in how we introduce it. Adding computers to classrooms without changing teaching methods perpetuates traditional techniques at a higher cost. We're incorporating technology gradually, introducing virtual resources to complement learning materials." She adds, "However, in rural Colombia, where there's no connectivity, technology isn't utilized. In urban areas with connectivity, it serves more as a supplement to our pedagogy. But we're deliberate; cost is a factor. We need more tech-savvy teachers, which impedes Latin America. Often, the students know more about technology than their teachers."

Her impactful contributions have garnered recognition through numerous awards and distinctions in leadership and social entrepreneurship. Colbert's accolades include the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship, the Clinton Global Citizenship Award, and the Kravis Prize. Additionally, she has been honored as an Outstanding Social Entrepreneur by the Schwab Foundation, Ashoka, and the World Technology Network.

It took several years of perseverance for Escuela Nueva to expand across Colombia, but it has now reached 20,000 schools there. Colbert reflects, "More than just governmental support, ground-level support is crucial to catalyze change in education systems." The model has continued to spread globally, with Escuela Nueva schools now being found in 19 countries, including Brazil, the Philippines, and India.

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Strategic Alliances: Unleashing the Potential of Executive Mentors in Educational Institutions

- Written by contributing writers *Dr. Hemachandran Kannan & Dr. Raul Rodriguez*

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Academic-corporate partnerships play a crucial role in preparing students for the real world. These strategic alliances can transform conventional learning methods by bringing seasoned professionals into academia and enhancing students' education with real-world experience, perspectives, and leadership abilities. This introduction lays the groundwork to explore how these partnerships revolutionize education. Blending industry insights and academic

knowledge, mentorships boost creativity, job readiness, and student success.

The Role of Executive Mentors in Education

Executive mentors are essential to education because they bridge the business and academic worlds. These mentors, who have a plethora of real-world experience, provide students with priceless guidance, insights, and practical knowledge. Through their mentorship, which goes beyond

conventional classroom instruction, students gain a greater grasp of the dynamics and difficulties faced by the business. Executive mentors significantly improve students' academic journeys by teaching leadership skills and creating an innovative culture that equips them for successful transitions into the professional sector. This symbiotic relationship between budding and seasoned professionals enhances learning and readiness for the workforce.

Advantages of Strategic Alliances

Educational institutions might benefit from a variety of strategic collaborations with executive mentors. These partnerships help students better understand the complexity of real-world industries, facilitating a smooth transfer from the classroom to the working world. Mentorship programs foster a practical awareness of industry practices and expectations while expediting professional development. This partnership creates an innovative classroom atmosphere and gives students the flexibility they need to succeed in modern jobs. By blending industry insights with academic knowledge, executive mentorships bridge the theory-practice divide, preparing students for career success.

Implementation Strategies

Programs for executive mentoring must be carefully thought out and strategically planned. Making meaningful linkages between industry expertise and student requirements is ensured when mentors are chosen using well-defined criteria. Overcoming integration issues involves proactive communication, supportive environments, and program customization to meet the specific demands of academics and industry. With an emphasis on flexibility and adaptation, these methods optimize the benefits of mentoring while facilitating the smooth integration of executive mentors to boost professional readiness and student development.

Impact on Student Success

Executive mentoring significantly affects students' classroom success and preparation for their future careers. Students develop a practical understanding of industrial difficulties by gaining insights from the actual world. Professional development is accelerated by mentoring, which cultivates the abilities necessary for success in a varied workplace. The individualized support develops self-assurance and a strategic attitude, improving academic achievement and facilitating a seamless workforce entry.



Ultimately, executive mentorships empower students with the abilities, knowledge, and mindset to thrive professionally and impact business meaningfully.

Case Studies: Learning from Success and Challenges

- Stanford pairs seasoned business executives with students in its Global Executive Fellows Program and Executive MBA program, offering practical knowledge and individualized coaching. Their worldwide reach encourages a variety of viewpoints and provides access to global networks.
- Keio's Global Leadership Program partners students with leaders from international corporations for a year-long experience that provides an in-depth understanding of real-world business difficulties through practical initiatives and insights specific to Asia. This equips pupils for employment in the thriving market in the area.
- With 284 Executive Fellows in 284 countries, Woxsen University has a global network that supports students on industry-focused projects, international industry initiatives, internships, contests, and career counseling. This priceless assistance guarantees that our students are ready for the needs of the business, allowing a smooth

transfer from the university to the working world.

Challenges and Solutions

There are obstacles to overcome when implementing executive mentorship programs in educational institutions, such as program integration and mentor-student compatibility. To tackle these obstacles, it is necessary to create unambiguous lines of communication, define expectations, and organize mentorship programs; providing a welcoming climate that promotes candid communication and criticism is essential. Periodic assessments are another way to ensure that the curriculum aligns with academic objectives. Through proactively resolving obstacles, educational establishments may fully leverage executive mentorship's advantages, thereby advancing students' holistic growth.

Conclusion

In essence, executive mentorships revolutionize education by bridging the gap between academia and business. By offering crucial advice, perceptions, and practical experiences, these mentors create a vibrant learning atmosphere that closes the theory-practice gap and prepares students for successful employment. Practical solutions, such as specific programs, adaptive methods, and clear communication, are essential even in the face of problems.

Cultivating Diamonds: A Leadership Approach to Unleashing Potential

- Written by contributing writer Sharath Jeevan

About the Author:



Sharath Jeevan OBE is the globally recognized authority on Leadership at Inflection Moments. He is an acclaimed advisor, facilitator and author supporting a wide range of organisations to navigate their Inflection Moments and futureproof success safely. Sharath was awarded an OBE in the Queen's 2022 New Year's Honours, and an Honorary Doctorate, for his contributions to the field.

He holds degrees from Cambridge University (First-Class Honours), Oxford University and INSEAD (MBA with Distinction). He is an alumnus of Strategy& and eBay. He founded and led two education organisations – STiR Education & Teaching Leaders – which collectively impacted over 10 million children across 40,000 schools in the UK, US, India, East Africa, Indonesia and Brazil.

Are you a great screener of talent? Or a world-class nurturer of potential? As leaders, we need to be both. But I would argue that we have spent too much time and effort trying to 'objectively' and 'rigorously' screen for talent. All in the often futile hope of finding that previously undiscovered fully-formed gem. And we've spent too little effort nurturing that gem to reach its true potential: a diamond.

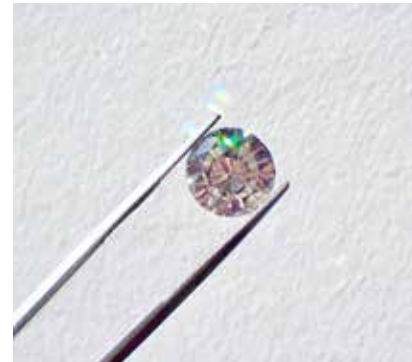
This approach is endemic in our society. It's how top universities and schools select students, how sporting teams pick athletes, how venture capitalists (VCs) screen entrepreneurs to fund, how political parties select candidates... the list goes on.

There's a deep irony here. In every sector today, we want to increase the proportion of people from underrepresented backgrounds. This is absolutely the right goal, but that takes real nurturing. If we don't provide that, we may attract new groups of people, but on a false promise. We will leave them stranded so they plateau or even fail outright.

So, why do we always look for the final product and not the diamond in the rough? The truth is that nurturing potential is tough. It takes time, and often it feels thankless.

But only screening for talent is an abdication of leadership responsibility. Talent is innate. It requires nothing of us, beyond just picking the best of what is already there. The potential is forward-looking. It requires work, but the long-term rewards for us and our people can be so much greater.

That's why inflection moments can be powerful tools for us as leaders – and why they can allow us to shine. They enable us – even force us – to ensure



that we bring everyone's potential to the challenge at hand. Because the urgency of the inflection moment demands nothing less.

Here's the tough truth: talent is 'innate', but only up to a point. Our success deeply reflects our advantages and the luck of the draw. It is often said that talent is evenly distributed, while opportunity is not. Yet the very promise of 'opportunity' is only real if there is nurturing of potential alongside it. Otherwise, there's just the illusion of the open door, which quickly slams shut.

The key to being a great nurturer is to resist the seductive illusion that selection of talent is the be-all and end-all. No matter how 'rigorously' we select someone, there is inherent (unintended) bias involved. Study after study shows that we tend to hire people who look and sound like ourselves.

The real trick is to create cultures that truly nurture the potential of all. It's a big ambition, but it can be done. It requires an abundance mindset around potential and not the scarcity mindset that screening talent usually employs. There's nothing more noble that we can do as leaders than to see the potential in all. Because if we can pull it off, we will truly enable our people to break free of their past as they leap into their future.



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