

All for one and one for all: Scaling mountains for a good cause. SDG 4: quality education awareness campaign.

Ayesha Almemari*

Corresponding Author*:

Ayesha Al Memari MD, FRCPC, MBA, LLB
Consultant Emergency Medicine and Critical Care.
Abu Dhabi, UAE
Email: Ayesha_almemari@hotmail.com

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.26738/poem.v3i1.36>

Copyright: This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>, which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Received: 18 June 2024

Revised: 26 June 2024

Accepted: 22 May 2025

How it all started?

In the mountains, I discover a profound inner tranquility, revitalizing my mind and fortifying myself to confront life's obstacles. Hiking has deeply transformed my life, igniting a passion to push the boundaries of my physical capabilities, enabling me to venture further and ascend higher.

In 2017, during my inaugural hiking expedition, I seized the opportunity to spotlight the issue of burnout, a struggle I was personally overcoming. Amidst inquiries about how I managed time for training and hiking, I found a platform to raise awareness and advocate for self-care amidst life's demands.

In July 2023, fueled by a Law school course on the significance of international organizations and inspired by the UAE's designation of 2023 as the year of sustainability, I resolved to amplify awareness around Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Health.

In the four days leading up to my departure, I delved into research, crafted social media campaigns, and hand-painted banners bearing meaningful messages, each destined to be showcasing varying altitudes throughout my journey. Remarkably, this preparatory work alleviated the stress that typically accompanies summit preparations. It transformed the purpose of my expedition from a solitary pursuit of reaching the peak to a collective endeavor of championing a noble cause. This shift not only mitigated stress but also infused each hiking day with embedded purpose, as I ascended to new altitudes, unveiling campaign banners—a tangible representation of progress and a triumph in itself.

Why SDG 4: Quality Education?

In January 2024, I proudly attained my Law degree, a decision not taken lightly, especially after completing medical school, obtaining board certification in two demanding specialties, and earning three master's degrees, all while juggling numerous professional commitments such as speaking engagements, research endeavors, and educational pursuits. The four years spent as a Law student profoundly transformed me, deepening my gratitude for the educational system that afforded me the opportunity for such high-quality learning experiences.

As a celebration of my Law school graduation, I embarked on a journey to conquer Aconcagua, standing at a staggering 6,992 meters above sea level, the tallest peak in South America renowned for its unforgiving weather conditions. This expedition served as a well-deserved respite following the rigorous four-year commitment of being a full-time student while simultaneously managing roles as a clinician, researcher, educator, avid mountain hiker, and long-distance runner.

As John Dewey rightly said, “Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself,” and, therefore, in recognition of the educational opportunities afforded to me, I dedicated the Aconcagua expedition to raising awareness for Sustainable Development Goal #4: Quality Education.

SDG 4. Definition and the role of technology in achieving it

The primary objective of the initial message was to introduce the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to guarantee inclusive and

equitable access to quality education while fostering lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals (Figure 1)¹. SDG 4 is only achievable by international, national, individual efforts and collaborations.

On the second day the message brought attention to the role of artificial Intelligence (AI) to address SDG 4. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can contribute significantly by leveraging personalized learning platforms, virtual tutoring, and data-driven insights to improve educational outcomes and accessibility. Moreover, AI-driven tools can play a pivotal role in tracking progress, pinpointing learning deficiencies, and tailoring content to individual needs, thereby nurturing inclusivity within the realm of education².



Figure 1: Education Social Media Campaign about SDG 4: Quality Education

Importance of Role models as source of inspiration

Role models serve as beacons of inspiration, lighting the way with the trails they blaze for us. In the rich tapestry of the United Arab Emirates' history, Sheikh Muhammad bin Saeed bin Ghubash Al Marri (1899-1968) emerges as a luminous figure (Figure 2). As the first Emirati university graduate, he defied the constraints of limited educational opportunities in the Emirates during his time, embarking on a journey of learning that spanned continents.

His educational journey commenced in local Quranic schools, where he immersed himself in the study of the Quran, Hadith, and religious sciences. Despite the challenges, he persevered, spending five formative years at the Rajbani School in Ras Al Khaimah. Undeterred by barriers, he ventured further, seeking knowledge at the Taimiyyah Al Mahmoudiya School in Sharjah in 1907, before pursuing his studies at the Athariyah School in Qatar in 1917. In 1926, his quest for enlightenment led him to Egypt, where he delved into Islamic sciences at the prestigious Al-Azhar

University. Upon his return, armed with wisdom and experience, he dedicated himself to service. Initially serving in the judiciary, he adorned the robe of justice as a judge in Ras Al Khaimah, adjudicating disputes with fairness and integrity until 1951. Sheikh Muhammad bin Saeed bin Ghubash Al Marri's legacy illuminates the power of resilience, determination, and unwavering pursuit of knowledge. His remarkable journey not only symbolizes personal triumph but also serves as a testament to the transformative potential of education, inspiring generations to strive for excellence and chart their own paths toward enlightenment and progress.

Later in his career, he expanded his horizons, lending his expertise to Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Tragically, in 1969, his journey was cut short by a fatal traffic accident. Among his notable works, Sheikh Muhammad bin Saeed bin Ghubash Al Marri left behind a legacy of written treasures. One such manuscript, „Benefits in the History of the Emirates,“ meticulously chronicles the rich history and genealogy of several Emirati tribes and families, offering invaluable insights into their origins and lineage³. Among the esteemed figures from the distant annals of UAE history stands Ahmad bin Majid bin Muhammad (1418-1501 CE), an illustrious navigator and geographer hailing from Julphar, now known as Ras Al Khaimah. Revered for his mastery of astronomy, navigation, and geography, he was bestowed with the epithet „Asad al-Bahr“ (Lion of the Sea), a testament to his unparalleled prowess on the waters. Ahmad bin Majid emerged as one of the foremost Arab navigators of the latter half of the 15th century, leaving an impactful mark on maritime exploration.

Under the tutelage of his father, Majid bin Muhammad Al Saadi, and other seasoned sailors, Ahmad bin Majid received his early education. Immersing himself in their gatherings and debates, he developed his skills, surpassing the knowledge of his predecessors. Through relentless self-study, he mastered celestial navigation, meticulously measuring and observing stars, understanding their celestial movements, and deciphering their influence on maritime seasons. Ahmad bin Majid's drive for knowledge transcended conventional boundaries. He meticulously scrutinized and rectified numerous inaccuracies in existing navigational data, enriching it with his own practical insights and experiences. Documenting his profound wisdom in poetic compositions, he not only disseminated his expertise but also safeguarded it from the ravages of time. Ahmad bin Majid's legacy endures as a beacon of enlightenment, illuminating the path for future generations of navigators and



Figure 2: a message recognizing the UAE founder as a role model for supporting Nation Education.

scholars, and immortalizing his contributions to the advancement of maritime exploration and knowledge dissemination. Ahmad bin Majid's ingenuity extended to the invention of the magnetic needle, famously referred to as the „qibla,“ which revolutionized maritime navigation by providing a reliable means to ascertain directions during sea voyages. This compass, a testament to his innovative spirit, played a pivotal role in simplifying and enhancing navigation techniques for sailors of his time.

Beyond his groundbreaking contributions to maritime exploration, Ahmad bin Majid distinguished himself as a prolific writer and poet. His literary legacy comprises approximately forty works, predominantly in poetic form. Among his notable literary achievements is the prose work titled „Kitab al-Fawaid fi Usul Ilm al-Bahr wa al-Qawa'id“ ("The Book of Benefits in the Principles of the Science of the Sea and the Rules"), a comprehensive treatise shedding light on the fundamental principles of maritime science and navigational rules. Through his array of talents as a navigator, writer, and poet, Ahmad bin Majid left an indelible mark on both the realms of exploration and literature, solidifying his legacy as a Renaissance figure of his era.

Ahmad bin Majid's legacy resonates through his array of contributions, notably his invention of the magnetic needle, dubbed the "qibla," a pivotal tool in maritime navigation. This ingenious compass revolutionized sea journeys by offering a reliable means to determine directions, thereby streamlining navigation processes. Utilizing poetry as a vessel for documenting his ideas, culture, knowledge, and practical experiences during sea voyages, Ahmad bin Majid ensured accessibility of his insights to fellow navigators and sailors. His literary level served as an invaluable resource for maritime enthusiasts and scholars alike. Ahmad bin

Majid's enduring legacy as a navigator, geographer, and writer is truly etched into maritime and UAE history, a testament to his profound impact on the exploration of the seas and the preservation of invaluable maritime knowledge for generations to come^{4,5}.

Undoubtedly, both role models showcase an exceptional talent for making the most of the educational resources within reach. Their successes highlight the significance of determination and resilience, qualities that hold profound importance for the advancement and well-being of a nation.

Defining interdisciplinary education and its importance

On Day four, the message centered on promoting interdisciplinary education, which involves the integration of two or more academic, scientific, or artistic disciplines. Interdisciplinary learning or training empowers individuals to blend diverse subjects, fostering innovative thinking and addressing intricate challenges. Throughout history, scientists have embraced interdisciplinary approaches, transcending narrow specializations to yield groundbreaking inventions and advancements that have reshaped human civilization.

Three exemplary interdisciplinary scientists are Jabir ibn Hayyan, Ibn Sina, and Marie Curie. Jabir ibn Hayyan, an Arab Muslim scientist, demonstrated exceptional proficiency in a wide array of fields including chemistry, astronomy, engineering, metallurgy, philosophy, medicine, and pharmacy. Revered as the pioneer of practical chemistry, his contributions laid the foundation for modern chemical science. Ibn Sina, also known as Avicenna, was a distinguished Muslim scholar and physician. Renowned for his profound insights into medicine and philosophy, he made significant strides in advancing both fields, leaving an indelible mark on intellectual history. Finally, Marie Curie, a renowned physicist and chemist, epitomized interdisciplinary excellence with her groundbreaking work in radioactivity. Her interdisciplinary approach bridged the realms of physics and chemistry, leading to transformative discoveries that earned her two Nobel Prizes and revolutionized our understanding of the natural world. These exemplary figures exemplify the transformative potential of interdisciplinary collaboration, inspiring future generations to embrace diverse perspectives and forge new pathways of knowledge and innovation⁶. Ibn Sina, widely known as the "Prince of Physicians" in the Western world, wrote over 200 books covering a diverse range of subjects, with a significant focus



Figure 4: Author paying tribute to the 6 universities where she received graduate and post graduate education.

on philosophy and medicine. His magnum opus, "The Canon of Medicine," stood as the definitive reference in the medical field for an astounding seven consecutive centuries. Notably, Ibn Sina's pioneering contributions include the precise description of meningitis, the identification of jaundice causes, the delineation of bladder stones symptoms, and the acknowledgment of psychological treatment's therapeutic efficacy in healing processes⁷.

Marie Curie (1867–1934) was a pioneering scientist in the fields of physics and chemistry. Her groundbreaking research on radioactivity led to the discovery of the element's polonium and radium, significantly advancing our understanding of radiation's properties⁸.

Indeed, interdisciplinary education and active learning opened the door for innovation. As Gyan Nagpal said *"Breakthrough innovation occurs when we bring down boundaries and encourage disciplines to learn from each other."*

UAE as a role modeling in achieving SDG 4

Day five of the campaign was dedicated to expressing gratitude to the UAE and the educational institutions that played a crucial role in shaping my life journey (Figure 3). The UAE provided me with invaluable opportunities for quality education, including two scholarships that allowed me to pursue medicine at Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain from 1996 to 2002, followed by specialization in Emergency Medicine and Critical Care at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, from 2005 to 2011. These experiences not only nurtured my growth as a medical professional but also enriched my personal development, enforcing in me a commitment to continuous learning and exploration of diverse disciplines to tackle current and future healthcare challenges. In my quest for knowledge and skills enhancement, I pursued further academic endeavors, including a Master's in Quality and Safety in Healthcare from RCSI-Dubai in 2014, followed by a Master's in Organ Donation and Transplantation from the University of Barcelona in 2017. Subsequently, I completed an Executive MBA at Hult University in Dubai in 2019, and culminated my educational journey with a Bachelor of Law from Al Ain University in 2023.

Reflecting on the vision of H.H. Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding Father of the UAE, who emphasized the role of education in advancing a nation, I was inspired by his belief that the progress of



Figure 3: a message recognizing the UAE founder as a role model for supporting Nation Education.

societies is intricately tied to the level and accessibility of education. His unwavering support for education, regardless of gender, has contributed significantly to the UAE's remarkable literacy rate, which soared from 58% in 1975 to a record breaking 98% in 2021! (Figure 4).

The UAE has implemented various literacy initiatives, catering to diverse demographics. For instance, the Elderly education program, with its flexible design, allows seniors to attend literacy sessions. Additionally, government entities offer incentives to employees pursuing education. Furthermore, legislative measures, such as Law No. 11 of 1972 on Compulsory Education, mandate parents or legal guardians to ensure their children attend school. Under the leadership's commitment to education accessibility, schooling is provided free of charge to the entire population. In 2012, the UAE Cabinet introduced a new federal law on compulsory education, updating the previous legislation and refining the stages of compulsory education. This law mandates that all children aged between six and 18 years must be enrolled in school, reaffirming the nation's dedication to universal education⁹. In 2016, the UAE introduced the National Reading Law, establishing a comprehensive legislative framework and specific government responsibilities aimed at fostering lifelong learning for the UAE population¹⁰.

What can individuals do to support SDG 4?

In its final message, the campaign highlights the power of individual actions in collectively advancing the global goals outlined in SDG 4 (Figure 5). Whether through advocacy, volunteering, or supporting educational initiatives, individuals play a crucial role in promoting quality education for all.

By volunteering with organizations that provide educational resources to underserved communities, individuals can help improve access to education. Similarly, empowering others through teaching, by volunteering as tutors or mentors, can make a significant difference. Embracing a culture of lifelong learning for oneself and encouraging others to do the same fosters continuous personal and societal growth. Active engagement with educational institutions, such as participating in parent-teacher associations or supporting local school initiatives, is another effective way to contribute. Additionally, advocating for education, especially for girls and

women, and leveraging social media platforms to share information about the importance of education and ongoing initiatives can amplify impact. In conclusion, education is a fundamental human right, and it is imperative that we collectively strive to make quality education accessible to everyone, everywhere. Although SDG 4 presents a formidable challenge, it is achievable through united efforts by all and for all.

Conclusion

In summary, combining my passion for public education, humanitarian work and mountain hiking works well for all three purposes as well as taking the summit stress out completely out of the equation. As I share the messages day by day and feel the interaction with the public, my attention shifts to the public oriented goal more than my personal mountain Goal and the summit becomes secondary rather than the primary goal of the trip.



Figure 5 All for one and one for all; The role of Individuals in achieving SDG 4

References

1. “Goal 4: Quality education,” The Global Goals. Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/>
2. “Exploring the potential of artificial intelligence to accelerate the progress towards SDG 4 -Education 2030 - UNESCO Digital Library.” Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000367373>
3. محمد بن سعيد بن غباش.. أول خريج جامعي من مواطني “الإمارات.” Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://alay.am/p/5zjj>
4. “Was Seaman Ibn Majid A Traitor?,” The Personal Website of H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi. Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://sheikhdrssultan.ae/Portal/en/media-center/ruler-in-their-pens/15/3/2014/هل-خان-البحار-ابن-ماجد/>
5. “Ahmad ibn Majid.” Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: https://prabook.com/web/ahmad.ibn_majid/3720561
6. S. S. Amr and A. Tbakhi, “Jabir ibn Hayyan,” Ann. Saudi Med., vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 52–53, 2007, doi: 10.5144/0256-4947.2007.53.
7. “Ibn Sina (Avicenna): The Prince Of Physicians - PMC.” Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6077049/>
8. “The Nobel Prize in Physics 1903,” NobelPrize.org. Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/physics/1903/marie-curie/biographical/>
9. “4. Quality education | The Official Portal of the UAE Government.” Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/leaving-no-one-behind/4qualityeducation>
10. “National Literacy Strategy | The Official Portal of the UAE Government.” Accessed: Mar. 17, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/human-resources-development-and-education/national-literacy-strategy>