

## Mawhiba signs a letter of intent with UNESCO to foster scientific collaboration in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) as a fundamental engine to sustainable development

King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba) held a symposium titled “High Impact STEM Programs: Success in measuring the global challenge” in collaboration with UNESCO. The symposium was held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris. A large panel of experts and professionals, as well as Mawhiba Alumni students from all backgrounds, shared their views and experience about the benefits of STEM programs for general and sustainable development. The expert panel shed light on the need to prioritize STEM education and promoting critical and lateral thinking and present science in practical and creative means.

On the same day, Mawhiba foundation represented by General Secretary Dr. Saud Almthami and UNESCO represented by Mr. Xing Qu, Deputy Director General signed a Letter of Intent. This agreement aims at establishing a strong and long term partnership to foster scientific collaboration between both parties in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education as a fundamental engine to sustainable development. Echoing Saudi vision 2030, its goal to harness the potential of Gifted Youth and to provide them with advanced skills to meet the challenges of the future. Both organizations are expected to collaborate in enhancing STEM education globally and specially in Africa and Caribbean islands.

### Symposium Recommendations:

- Correct the misperception that a STEM career isn’t rewarding
- Give the child ownership and agency over its learning
  - Make it experiential, allowing children to experiment
  - Give the students freedom and flexibility – give them the opportunity to try their own paths
  - Give them the support to create their own clubs and competitions
  - Make it fun and playful
  - Take STEM teaching out of the classroom – organise weekend activities and tournaments
- The ecosystem
  - Use alumni to support and guide
  - ‘on the Mawhiba programmes, they didn’t stop us when we failed’ – learning from failing
  - Enable exploration; enable access and let the child decide
  - Stop rote learning!
  - Not everybody learns the same way – explain and teach in different ways, based on the child’s way of learning
  - Making STEM subjects cool by bringing robotics into the learning experience/curriculum

- Build awareness within different parts of the population to build support within parents – it's not all about programmes. Also helps to achieve gender inclusion

Conclusion:

- A lot can be achieved by **continuous training of teachers** – how they teach, identifying talent, how to nurture talent.
- Give the student **agency and ownership**, whilst supported

