

2.2 Innovation in Education

“More than any other time, we need to boost innovation among young people, build nurturing environments in our society, and encourage our schools and universities to equip our youth with skills in research and discovery methodologies.” - Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai (2014)

Promoting a culture of innovation in schools

Innovation is the generation of new and creative ideas and the use of new or improved approaches. It is one of the most effective drivers of economic growth in the modern era for stimulating entrepreneurship and enterprise. The UAE Vision 2021 sets out the National Agenda for the UAE to be among the most innovative nations in the world.

The National Innovation Strategy sets the context for ‘innovation’ and ‘innovative leadership’ as the primary tools for delivering a programme of economic development and progress, stimulating creativity, and growing a distinct set of skills and capabilities across the nation in order to achieve the UAE Vision 2021. It provides the UAE with a comprehensive plan to develop the entire ‘innovation ecosystem’, which extends into seven key areas of the economy, including education, where innovation is a basic criterion for evaluating public and private schools in order to deliver a world-class education for all children in the UAE.

Innovation comes in many forms. There are innovations in the way schools are owned, organised and managed; in curriculum design models; in teaching and learning approaches, such as the ways in which learning technologies are used; classroom design including virtual spaces; assessment; timetabling; partnerships to promote effective learning and engagement in the economy; and the ways in which teachers and leaders are recruited, trained, developed and rewarded. These innovations can be small or large, recognisable or entirely new and different.

Innovation is driven by a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. Innovation is based on curiosity, the willingness to take risks and to experiment to test assumptions. Innovation is based on questioning and challenging the status quo. It is also based on recognising opportunity and taking advantage of it. Being innovative is about looking beyond what we currently do well, identifying the great ideas of tomorrow and putting them into practice.

During school inspections, there is now a focus on innovation and the ways in which it is promoted in schools. Inspection teams will explore the school’s vision and interpretation of innovation as found in selected indicators and elements of the inspection framework. Inspectors will seek to understand how it is defined, designed and expressed in the school.