

# STARTUP PANORAMA

EDITION 5.0

دبي للمشاريع الناشئة

DUBAI STARTUP HUB

AN INITIATIVE OF DUBAI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

**SCHOOL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION PROGRAMMES**



**UNIVERSITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION PROGRAMMES**



**INCUBATORS, ACCELERATORS AND CO-WORKING SPACES FOR STUDENTS**



**TRAININGS, WORKSHOPS, CAMPS, EVENTS AND COMPETITIONS FOR STUDENTS**



## EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE DUBAI STRATEGY

Imagine graduating from university and leaving not just with a degree but also with your very own startup that's potentially already secured funding and already has some big name clients on board.

A new strategy to create innovation and economic free zones in universities across Dubai is set to turn that scenario into reality. In April 2019, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, approved a Dubai Free University Zones Strategy to transform public and private universities in the Emirate into free zones that allow students to carry out business and creative activities as an integrated part of their higher education.

The Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University (HBMSU) is the first university to participate and lead this new initiative - and according to Dr. Mansoor Al Awar, Chancellor of the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University (HBMSU), this **new free zone is going to "change the whole concept of education" as we know it.**

With companies based on and around university campuses as part of the new free zone, industries will be able to share their real business challenges with learners. The learners, in turn, will have an opportunity to contribute by conducting research on these real problems and come up with innovative solutions that could turn into the business model for their startup.



Dr. Mansoor Al Awar, Chancellor of the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University

**"We are ready to attract companies [from] around the world,"** Al Awar says. "Big, old companies are looking for new ideas, and those new ideas will not come [without] the young generation who are in the universities. [It's all about] action research not theoretical research, which means a real-life business problem and a real time solution."

Following the announcement of the new policy, HBMSU is in talks to join forces with a number of local, regional,

and international organizations, as part of plans to launch the first innovation and economic free zone among UAE universities. The Innovation Center, which is to be positioned as a strategic link between the key elements of HBMSU and the specialized resources of its partners from both the public and private sectors, as well as international companies (including Signify, formerly known as Philips Lighting), will conduct applied research and specialized projects to come up with real solutions for the local and international business community. The university is also working on similar initiatives with other companies including Siemens, Etisalat and Honeywell. In fact, Al Awar says, learners at the HBMSU campus already have a system in place where its learners are evaluated by industry rather than instructors for about 40 percent of their grades.

**"The motto of Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University is that it graduates entrepreneurs, not job seekers,"** he explains.

In some cases, the university also offers to support and help commercialize a student's idea through its own fund or give the learner-led startup an office on campus and the advisory that they need, the chancellor adds.

**"It's a whole ecosystem," the chancellor says. "Entrepreneurship must become a culture in society and this culture change needs initiatives like this."**

## HANDS-ON IN THE STARTUP WORLD

Peek through the glass doors and you'll sometimes see rows of empty workstations even on the busiest days. That's because, if you look a bit closer, you'll find a group of curious young people crouching on the floor instead, intently following the route of their very own self-driving remote controlled car set on a simulation track they've built themselves to test its working.

Welcome to The Assembly - **a one-of-a-kind collaborative community makerspace and Smart lab in Dubai.**

The not-for-profit initiative, located within the in5 innovation center in Dubai Knowledge Park, brings together learners, students, entrepreneurs and makers to learn and share hands-on tech skills, explore new ideas and bring them to life.

The Assembly presents a weekly series of interactive and innovative workshops ranging from coding a ride sharing app, to making an augmented reality app for IoT home automation, building your own blockchain, and even designing and 3D printing jewelry.

"Anybody who wants to add to their skills can attend," says The Assembly's founder and benevolent benefactor Prashant K. Gulati.

"All our initiatives are completely free to the community." The lab is stocked with 3D printers, drones and VR headsets, along with a range of components to



Prashant K. Gulati, founder, The Assembly

build prototypes including Raspberry Pis, Arduinos, microcontrollers, sensors, modules and kits for IoT, machine learning, robotics and virtual reality. But while the collaborative community space is open to all ages, majority of its active members are university students, Gulati says.

**The Assembly runs one of the "most sought-after" internship programmes in the UAE, he adds, with interns from universities across the emirates.**



An event held at The Assembly

Gulati, a technology innovator, angel investor and mentor, with more than two decades of experience building, investing in and supporting technology companies, says the internship is coveted because unlike other programmes The Assembly delivers major leadership training.

The Assembly has also signed several MoUs with educational institutions in the UAE including Middlesex University, Amity University and Manipal University, in order to look at making the internship opportunity a part of their academic programmes.

Ultimately, Gulati adds, his vision is to replicate The Assembly model in other emirates and across the globe, supporting the UAE's National Innovation strategy to establish the country as among the world's most innovative nations.

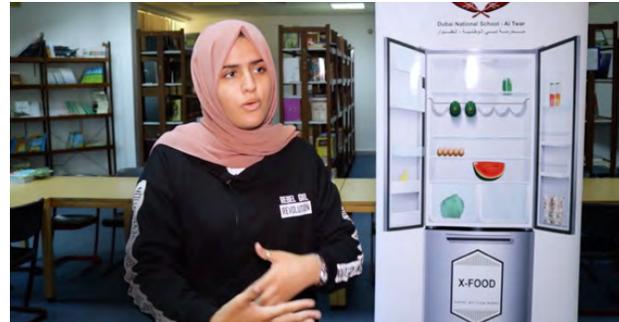
## THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

“If our marketing fails, the whole company fails,” Rahaf Al Omari explains earnestly. She’s a student at the Dubai National School, Al Barsha - and Head of Marketing for Senior It, a digital platform that guides students through their senior year.

Al Omari and her fellow classmates came up with the idea during their entrepreneurship course that runs in collaboration with INJAZ – a not-for-profit organization that delivers cutting-edge, experiential volunteer-based programmes in entrepreneurship, workforce readiness and financial literacy to high-school students in the UAE. What began as a brainstorming session for a class project soon turned into a real business plan when the group realized that their idea presented an untapped opportunity to cater to their own demographic.

“We came up with an application that contains everything for seniors,” Senior It CEO Meera Al Blooshi explains. The platform offers access to counseling, education resources, merchandise and entertainment options.

“I personally think this idea couldn’t come from other companies because as seniors we’re the customers ourselves,” Head of Sales Leen Al Kaytoob says. CFO Nour Ghassan adds that the company has already attracted the attention of investors they met through INJAZ and the Dubai Chamber of Commerce.



Lujain Ammar, CEO, Xfood

**The team has also officially registered a company - with support from their teacher - through Dubai’s Department of Economic Development with a goal to launch the platform while they pursue their higher education.**

Meanwhile, Amna Khoory is part of a team that has created 971, an incubator for Emirati artists and designers. The Head of Business Development says the INJAZ programme has shown her and her fellow students a different view of the world. “We’re seeing the world as an entrepreneurial world where we can come up with any brilliant idea and it can go on.”

Hind Alkaiatob, a student from Dubai National School’s Twar campus, has co-founded R Path, a website to help students choose their major and university.

“We thought that since we personally struggled [to choose a major] why don’t we find a solution for it,” she explains. Students enter their scores and preferred major into R Path and get a list of universities that they qualify to attend.

“INJAZ helped us go step by step,” she says. “We started building everything [from the] logo to company structure, and later we started finding developers who would help us develop our website.”

Student Lujain Ammar, CEO of Xfood, adds that the experience has taught her that she can help the world through business. Xfood aims to reduce food waste and maintain a good consumption rate in the UAE and worldwide through its expiry date tracker, which notifies industry, grocery stores or customers when an item is near expiry so they can either consume it or donate it.



Dubai National School

“Through INJAZ, I was able to boost my confidence and leadership skills,” Lujain says. “We also learned a lot about creativity and imagination, and that even though we’re young we can still offer a lot of impact to the world in the future.”

Meanwhile, teacher Raghad Khalifeh insists that the programme has brought huge transformation in her students.

“INJAZ supported us with mentors all along, with books, with supervision, and making sure students are on the right track. We saw full support from the Dubai Chamber of Commerce with people passing by the booths encouraging the students. As an educator I can tell you that each ‘wow’ phrase does a lot for students. They feel confident and they say ‘this programme has changed our life.’”



Hind Alkaitoob, co-founder, R Path

## STUDENTS AS ENTREPRENEURS

Today, this new generation of young people - Gen Z or millennials as they’re often referred to - need more up-to-date engagement, and no one recognizes that better than the UAE. It’s why the country’s National Agenda strives to instill an entrepreneurial culture in schools and universities to foster leadership, creativity, responsibility and ambition – and INJAZ UAE is one such initiative that is on a mission to do exactly that by equipping students with real life skills for economic success.

The not-for-profit organization, a member of Junior Achievement Worldwide (JAW) and regionally known as INJAZ Al Arab representing the Middle East and North Africa, delivers cutting-edge, experiential volunteer based programmes in entrepreneurship, financial literacy and work readiness skills, to high-school students in the UAE. “The programme is a simulation of a startup,” Acting CEO Razan Bashiti explains. “It’s all about teaching students what entrepreneurship is, to consider it as a career option for self-employment, and to discover what are the ways and tools available to reach this goal in terms starting their own businesses.”

Student teams are paired up with a volunteer or a mentor from the private sector to guide them through the entire process of building a startup. INJAZ UAE is supported by board members from leading multi-national corporations with representation in UAE including Honeywell, CITI,



Razan Bashiti, acting CEO, INJAZ UAE

HSBC, Standard Chartered, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Accenture, Oliver Wyman, Shell, and chaired by Bin Zayed Group.

“They go on to form a team structure and appoint a CEO, a CFO, marketing head, product development lead and the different other functions needed within their company. They further move into raising capital and funds, market research, product development, marketing and sales.”

**It runs as a real company**, Bashiti adds. “We ask them to liquidate it after the completion of the programme because they are underage. But once they are in university, they can go ahead and register it.” However, the nearly year long programme has also had some exceptionally determined students who have insisted on officially registering a company and done so in the name of their parents or teacher.

The programmes, delivered free of cost, have already reached out to 7,000 students in the UAE so far this year. Bashiti adds: “Most students say the program is a life-changing experience.”