

Hamdan honours achievers in field of education

The Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for Distinguished Academic Performance was distributed to students and teachers in a colourful ceremony at the Rashid Hall in the World Trade Centre

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Dubai: Outstanding achievers in the field of education were honoured on Monday by Shaikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Minister of Finance.

The Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for Distinguished Academic Performance was distributed to students and teachers in a colourful ceremony at the Rashid Hall in the World Trade Centre.

The event was also attended by Irina Bokova, General Director of Unesco, Humaid Mohammad Obaid Al Qutami, Minister of Education and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Unesco-Hamdan award, other government dignitaries and officials.

Speaking on the occasion, Shaikh Hamdan said: "It gives us great pleasure for what we witness through this award in terms of intensification and development, which have exceeded the local, Gulf and Arabian scope to reach international boundaries. Modestly speaking, the award has contributed in achieving the goals aimed at by Unesco. That is in accordance to the humanitarian vision, associated with the coherent educational policy being adopted by the United Arab Emirates Government."

Biggest challenges

The Hamdan Award was instituted 12 years ago with the aim of promoting the cause of education in the country and recognising excellence in the field. This year, a new category of award — the Unesco Award for Outstanding Practice and Performance in enhancing the effectiveness of Teachers, was introduced for the first time.

Highlighting the dearth of trained teachers all over the world, Bokova said despite the significant improvements in educational opportunities around the world since the adoption of the Education For All and Millennium Development Goals in 2000 by the UN, there are still far too many children not in school: there are still far too many adults who do not know how to read and write.

"An acute shortage of qualified teachers has been identified as one of the biggest challenges to the attainment of the goal of Education for All by 2015. It has been established that more than 90 countries worldwide will need to expand their teaching forces to achieve this target," she said.

"However low status, poor working conditions and low pay seriously discourage young people from taking up teaching and remaining in the profession," added Bokova.

She expressed hope that the Hamdan-Unesco award would go a long way in recognising the importance of teaching in shaping the future of coming generations. Al Qutami said this year the Unesco award is set to support teachers, the core workforce being relied on in the process of reforming and developing towards establishing better education to a more contented humanity.

Winners: Teacher training focus

Winners of the 2009-2010 Unesco Award for Outstanding Practice and Performance in enhancing the effectiveness of teachers:

- 1) The Ali Institute of Education of Pakistan won the award for working on improving the professional capabilities of teachers in Pakistan, since 1997, and having provided in-service training for 12,000 teachers of whom 87 per cent are women.
- 2) The Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training [Centro de Excelencia para la Capacitacion de Maestros] in the Dominican Republic, for focusing on achieving excellence in the development process for teaching reading and writing to children in the first four grades of public schools, and having trained to date 3,400 teachers and directors.
- 3) The Congolese Centre "Education for All" [Le Centre Congolais Education pour Tous] in the Democratic Republic of Congo] for its work, focused on training nursery school teachers and facilitators, and developing material for early childhood education providers.