First, I would like to apologize to every individual, official, or organization that interpreted my words in a way that made them feel I was exaggerating or speaking inappropriately. I have no intention of offending anyone. Rather, I have compiled in these pages a summary of the perspective that has formed within me since I began working in the education sector in 2001 until now. I have been honored to serve as a teacher and academic coordinator in numerous international and national educational systems, as well as a general director and owner of schools, and the founder of many schools in various countries. Additionally, I have acted as a director, expert, and consultant on dozens of developmental projects in education, collaborating with various international organizations and global funding entities. I have participated in assessing and developing numerous schools across the Arab world in all their forms and types. I have overseen several studies aimed at clarifying the realities of this field.

I believe it is essential, after more than twenty-seven years of dedicated work in this noble field, to pen these pages to discuss the educational reality in our schools in the Arab world, particularly, and in schools worldwide more generally. I hope to present a practical vision for some developmental proposals that can revive our schools and end their decline, which is manifested in their ineffectiveness in providing the best educational quality for our sons and daughters. They are undeniably the most crucial factor in the qualitative continuation of building our nations.

Without a doubt, there are genuine strengths in Arab education in general, and specifically in Jordanian education, which I will address in the upcoming pages. These strengths are among the fundamental pillars of the book’s proposition to restore schools to the strength and excellence we desire. I am fully aware that my statements may be correct, as well as incorrect, and are subject to critique and correction. I respect every opinion I receive, whether from my students, school staff, parents, or officials regarding my views in this book, whether in opposition, agreement, or suggestions for amendment and correction. It would be an honor for me to have my email address at your disposal.

Let's be clear from the outset and address the questions that come to all our minds, whether we are educators, parents, students, officials, or even experts in the field of education. We seek a genuine answer to these questions: Is the school in its current form suitable for building a generation capable of achieving success in life in the 21st century? Are our sons and daughters equipped with life skills that prepare them for success—such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, creative thinking, and time management? Or is the school, throughout their twelve-plus years there, merely a waste of their time and energies? Does the school take into account the contemporary knowledge that is widespread and which our children must learn—such as programming, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and much more? Or is it sequestered in its old knowledge, imposing mandatory schooling on our children? Consequently, do we end up producing men and women who, upon emerging from the harsh, cold, empty cave of school, are shocked by the advancements that have filled life while they were ensconced in the depths of ignorance?

Why have teachers lost their passion for self-development, enhancing their abilities, and building skills that align with the technological, cognitive, and skill-based evolution happening worldwide? Does the student engage in learning with joy and regard returning to school as a source of happiness? Or has it become, for us and our children, a source of annoyance? Why has the teacher lost their symbolic status, position, and role model stature in the eyes of their students in the past decade? Why does the curriculum mean nothing to students other than being a heavy burden that increases their pain and discomfort? What is the reason that so many of our children's talents get lost in the classrooms and corridors of schools? Why has rote learning increased in schools at a time when the world is moving toward using diverse methods of learning that suit the capabilities of these generations—such as project-based learning, encouraging discussions with students, collective learning, learning outside the classroom, and considering the student as the focal point of the educational process, among many other forms?

How do parents view their children's schools? With approval? Or with dissatisfaction? And why do we hear repeated complaints from parents about the quality of our schools and the weakness of their outputs?

Why do ministries of education spend millions of dollars each year on the development of learning and teaching, yet the outcomes are hardly visible under a microscope? Why do we often consider schools to be centers of moral corruption and behavioral decay? Why does overcrowding in classrooms and within a single school reach unimaginable levels? What impact does this have on teachers' capabilities and the genuine benefit for students? What effect does this have on students acquiring undesirable behaviors amid this overwhelming number of peers? How will children's inclinations, talents, and abilities be discovered in the midst of such a deluge of students in a single classroom? How can my son graduate from school after spending more than twelve years there, crammed into rote learning, without acquiring a single life skill? What are schools doing for our children to prepare them for the coming decade? What plans do ministries of education have to catch up with what they have missed and address their decline on both regional and global levels, whether in terms of knowledge or ethics?

Is the school an attractive environment for our children, and even for the staff that work there? Do the curricula across various specializations and educational subjects ignite a spirit of creativity and discovery in students, and do they provide ample space for their minds to think freely, unleashing their potential for synthesis, analysis, and inference? Do our sons and daughters feel safe with their teachers? With their peers? With their administrations? Or is the school, for some, a source of fear from bullying by other students, teachers, and other school staff? Are the school buildings safe? Are they equipped? Are the classrooms sufficient? Do our children suffer as they go to their schools? Can the ministries of education become self-sufficient in this regard? Or will they continue to rely on state budgets? Do the students feel reassurance and the ability to realize their potential? Does the school cultivate cooperation, love, and camaraderie, and does it teach them to accept others? Do they feel real, safe communication?

Do the top leaders in the ministries of education truly grasp what is happening on the ground? Or are they disconnected from it? Do they possess genuine knowledge regarding this sector? Or did they come to us from other sectors, and thus lack the necessary components for the required reform and enhancement in a sector that is one of the most important for nation-building? Are we aware of the extent of financial, social, and psychological waste occurring at every moment in our schools, along with the squandered energies, potentials, talents, and capabilities? Who said that the current school model is a mere home book? Isn’t it true that all industries evolve and advance, with new developments emerging every day, especially in the last five years? Then why is the school still subject to the saying "you remain in place," where it neither progresses nor develops, revolving around traditional methods? Yes, there are several countries in the Arab world that have made significant strides in this field, but I believe we have yet to reach the heart of the required change. The focus on infrastructure and the aesthetics of classrooms is still predominant, while unfortunately, other countries have not taken even a single step forward, remaining stagnant, and some have regressed, gathering dust on change and development plans. Why is there still a variety of violence present in our schools? Why do we still hear a tone of defiance, especially among adolescents, within the school corridors? Why do teachers have only a limited understanding of educational psychology and modern learning methods, and even when they do, they apply little of it, if any? Why, why, why?? There are hundreds and hundreds of questions circulating among people regarding the effectiveness of schools in the Arab world, yet they remain unanswered. In this book, drawing on over a year of experience in the field of education, during which I navigated through teaching and school administration, owning and establishing schools in several countries, and managing numerous significant projects with ministries of education under the supervision of international organizations across the region and various types of schools, I aim to provide you—parents, students, and Arab education officials and experts—with some answers that I consider to be of utmost importance; to initiate a genuine journey in the Arab world aimed at developing education and improving its outcomes.

The lines of this book do not only discuss the description of the illness; there is also a significant focus on describing the medicine and treatment through proposing practical strategic ideas to resolve the problems and challenges we face in the education sector. When I titled this book "When the School Dies," I did not mean that the schools in the Arab world are failing to fulfill their required role, to the point of being as if they do not exist at all; rather, I aimed for a complete and radical change through carefully studied, practical methods, action plans, and strategies that would lead us to transform the current shape of the school into a different one that enables us to fulfill our responsibility to our sons and daughters, and to our Arab nation as soon as possible. We must provide the necessary revival measures to bring it back to life again.

As you may recall, in 2020, after the COVID-19 pandemic began to settle and its burdens were lifted from the world, the Ministries of Education in the Arab world were boasting about their accomplishments in the field of distance learning and celebrated what they provided for students in terms of education. However, parents and many education experts had a different opinion, not only in the Arab world but regarding the mechanisms and strategies of distance learning across all countries.

I published a video on social media titled "The Failure of Distance Learning in the Arab World." In the hours that followed the video's release, a number of friends, experts, and officials in the field of education from several Arab countries reached out to me, expressing nearly the same opinion: why did you publish such videos? Haven't the ministries done everything they can to avoid learning problems during the time of COVID? This is not the right time, especially since the video I published was watched by thousands within minutes, which could cause undue annoyance at a time when we are trying to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 on education. We need your support and do not need to engage in self-criticism. Most of them ended their admonishing calls with a similar phrase: "It's inappropriate."

As if it were the spark that ignited the idea in my mind to begin writing this book; their premise revolved around instead of criticizing, take action and speak about feasible mechanisms and tools for developing education. They did not just throw a wrench into the gears. The first truth is that their statements were both correct and incorrect at the same time; the ministries of education in the Arab world, commendably, have mobilized all their resources to bridge the educational gap after schools shut their doors, teachers abandoned their classrooms, and students left their seats and playgrounds. We all appreciate that effort, but it was disorganized and more akin to propaganda and marketing strategies than to real facts on the ground. The platforms were not ready, and they had not been adequately developed during and after that period, and teachers were unprepared; although they could have been equipped in a short time. The biggest issue is that we did not progress after the end of this dreadful pandemic, returning to square one, and many ministries in the Arab world failed to realize the changes and developments that have taken place in the educational landscape worldwide. They remained silent about enhancing learning, not to mention the readiness of parents to take the place of teachers in teaching—let's be honest, in reality, it often defaults to rote learning—or to use modern technologies and monitor their children, especially at the foundational stage. Moreover, we cannot ignore the technological infrastructure in our Arab countries needed for successful remote learning and the extent of its weaknesses, believing the media claims trumpeted by the ministries of education in the Arab world. It has come to a point where countries around the world learned from the experiences of some Arab countries.

The second truth is that criticism does not yield results; rather, it is essential to propose practical and realistic solutions that can be implemented through a strategic plan, so that we, as education experts in the Arab world, can reach the kinds of schools we desire. Hence, I began to draft the lines of this book with the aim of liberating the Arab world from a dismal educational situation, characterized by the fatal impact of the school's demise on children and their potential, and on nations by depriving them of those capabilities. We aim to uplift this educational institution, upon which no two opinions differ regarding its importance, whether in establishing balance in the four dimensions of student development—intellectual, emotional, social, and physical.

The text discusses the importance of balancing relationships—those between the self, the Creator, others, and objects—in fostering essential life skills such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making, time management, teamwork, and creative thinking. This process aims to create a healthy foundation for education and learning, empowering teachers and school staff to implement optimal teaching methods and messages. The goal is to guide our sons and daughters, as well as our nation, to the place we deserve by accurately portraying the harsh realities we face and subsequently discussing effective, strategic, and practical solutions.

Learning carries significant implications: it has social, economic, psychological, cultural, and existential dimensions, and it is a continuous process not tied to a specific time, place, or generation. Furthermore, enhancing the educational reality is not limited to one group but is a collaborative effort involving planners, experts, teachers, administrators, students, families, and the entire community. In this book, I wanted to remind you that we do not need coercive educational methods and programs that produce individuals laden with vast amounts of information but lacking the ability to think critically about it. Education should be a liberating experience where individuals can express themselves, unleash their creative potential, and explore their talents freely, away from stereotypical molds and mechanisms of control and restrictions on thinking, while still emphasizing the importance of positive guidance and wise counsel that aligns with our sound values and principles.

On the other hand, we need to acknowledge that students may develop poor habits and behaviors from their peers in school. However, the worst influence on students is the coercive ideas, opinions, and whims of some teachers; this type of teacher stifles students’ intellectual capabilities by monopolizing opinion, presenting themselves as the sole truth, and rejecting dialogue and debate from students. This leads to the emergence of students who lack a sense of belonging and even a love for learning and education, as they have suffered for twelve years without reflection, understanding, or solace, primarily feeling fear more than safety. They view school as a repelling, not an inviting, environment.

We must not forget that the process of change and evolution in societies is inevitable and has been occurring rapidly in recent times. Therefore, understanding this change and preparing for it requires new, flexible educational plans that align with the spirit of the times and transcend traditional plans and methods. We need to transform the reality within educational institutions from boredom to enjoyment, from rote learning to dialogue and critical thinking, from intellectual oppression to a freedom governed by interest and respect for others, from imitation and repetition to innovation and renewal, from a singular curriculum to a multiplicity of curricula, from fear to security, from a singular evaluation to a comprehensive, multifaceted assessment, and from focusing on the notion that a distinguished student is one who scores the highest marks to recognizing that every student is talented and unique. We should shift from traditional teaching methods to modern learning approaches that suit the evolution of this generation, and from prioritizing the completion of textbook pages to focusing on the essence and continuity of the curriculum. We need to change our perspective on school, viewing it not merely as a place of knowledge but as a space for the development of three essential developmental needs, four relational dynamics, and six life skills. In doing so, we will have dismantled, with the tool of modern schooling, that dilapidated school system that hinders the learning process rather than advancing it.