First, I would like to apologize to every person, official, or any entity that may have misunderstood my words in a way that made them feel I was exaggerating or speaking inappropriately. I do not intend to offend anyone; rather, I have compiled in these pages a summary of the opinions I have formed since I began working in the education sector in 2001 until now. I have had the honor of being a teacher and an academic coordinator in various international and national educational systems, as well as a general manager and owner of schools, and the founder of several educational institutions in multiple countries. I have also served as a manager, expert, and consultant for dozens of developmental projects in the field of education, collaborating with international organizations and various global funding entities. I have evaluated and developed numerous schools across the Arab world, regardless of their types and forms, and I have supervised a range of studies that aim to clarify the facts related to this field. I believe that it is my duty, 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 across the Arab world specifically, and in schools globally in general. I wish to present practical ideas for developmental proposals that can rejuvenate schools and end their stagnation, which is evident in their ineffectiveness in providing the best quality of education and learning for our sons and daughters, who are undoubtedly the most crucial factor in the qualitative continuity of building our nations.

Without a doubt, there are genuine strengths within Arab education in general and Jordanian education in particular, which I will address in the upcoming pages. These strengths are among the most important pillars of the idea behind this book, aimed at restoring schools to the strength and excellence we aspire to. I am fully aware that my words are open to both correctness and error, and they are subject to critique and rectification. 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 in your hands.

Let’s be clear from the beginning and articulate 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 raising a generation capable of achieving success in life in the 21st century? Does it equip our children, both boys and girls, with the life skills necessary for success, such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, creative thinking, and time management? Or is their twelve-plus years in school merely a waste of their time and energy?

Does the school take into account the modern knowledge that has become essential for our children to learn, such as programming, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and much more? Or is it confined to its outdated knowledge, enforcing traditional schooling on our children? As a result, do we produce young men and women who emerge from the cold, harsh, empty cave of school only to be shocked by the developments that have filled life while they were trapped in ignorance?

Why have teachers lost their passion for self-improvement, updating their abilities, and developing skills that align with the technological, knowledge-based, and skills-based advancements in the world? Do students approach learning with joy and see returning to school as a source of happiness? Or has it become a source of frustration for us and our children?

Why has the teacher's symbolic role, status, and influence diminished in the eyes of their students over the past decade? Why does the curriculum hold no value for students beyond being a burden that causes them pain and distress? What is the reason that many of our children’s talents are squandered within the confines of classrooms and the corridors of schools?

Why has rote learning increased in our schools at a time when the world is shifting towards adopting diverse learning methods that suit the capacities of these generations, such as project-based learning, fostering discussions with students, collaborative learning, learning outside the classroom, and considering the student as the focus of the educational process, among many others? How do parents view their children's schools? With satisfaction or with dissatisfaction? And why do we hear repeated complaints from parents about the poor quality of our schools and their weak outputs?

Why do ministries of education spend millions of dollars annually on developing learning and education, while the outcomes are hardly visible even under a microscope? Why do we often consider schools as epicenters of moral corruption and behavioral loss? Why is overcrowding in classrooms and within a single school at such an unbelievable scale? What is the impact of this on teachers' abilities and the actual benefit for students? How does this affect students' acquisition of undesirable behaviors among the vast numbers of pupils? And how will interests, talents, and abilities of children be discovered amidst this overwhelming influx of students in a single classroom? How can my son graduate from school after spending more than twelve years there, crammed with rote learning without acquiring a single life skill? What are schools doing for our sons and daughters to prepare them for the coming decade? What is the plan of the ministries of education to catch up on what they have missed and mitigate their decline at both regional and global levels, whether in the cognitive or moral aspects?

Is the school attractive or repulsive for our children and even for the staff working there? Do the curricula in various specialties and educational subjects ignite in students the spirit of creativity and discovery? Do they allow their minds ample space to think, enabling them to synthesize, analyze, and draw conclusions? Do our sons and daughters feel safe with their teachers? And with their peers and their administrations? Or is school, for some, a source of fear from bullying by other students, teachers, and other school staff? Are the school buildings safe? And equipped? Are the classrooms adequate? Do our children suffer as they go to their schools? Can the ministries of education become self-sufficient in this regard? Or will they remain dependent on state budgets? Do students feel a sense of reassurance and the ability to self-actualize? Do schools foster cooperation, love, friendship, and the acceptance of others? Do they feel a real sense of safe communication?

Do the top officials in the ministries of education truly feel what is happening in the field? Or are they disconnected from it? Do they possess genuine knowledge regarding this sector? Or did they come to us from other sectors, thus lacking the essential components needed for the reforms and enhancements in a sector that is considered one of the most vital for nation-building? Are we aware of the extent of financial, social, and psychological waste occurring every moment in our schools, as well as the squandered energies, potentials, talents, and abilities? Who said that the current shape of the school is a fixed paradigm? Don’t all industries evolve and progress, with something new emerging every day, especially in the last five years? So why is it that the saying "you're standing still" applies to schools, where they don’t move forward or develop, spinning in the traditional cycle? Yes, a number of countries in the Arab world have made significant strides in this area, but I believe that we have not yet reached the essence of the required change; the focus on buildings and the aesthetics of classrooms still dominates. Unfortunately, other countries have yet to take a single step forward, remaining stagnant, while some have regressed and allowed dust to accumulate on plans for change and development. Why does a culture of violence in its various forms still persist within our schools? Why do we still hear a tone of defiance, particularly among the youth, echoing in school corridors? Why do educators know so little about educational psychology and modern learning methods, and when they do know, why do they fail to implement them, except for a few exceptions? Why? Why? Why?? Hundreds and hundreds of questions circulate among people regarding the effectiveness of schools in the Arab world, yet they remain unanswered. I hope that in this book, after more than a year of experience in the field of education where I have undergone teaching, school administration, school ownership and establishment in several countries, as well as overseeing and managing many major projects with ministries of education under the supervision of international organizations in the region across various types of schools, I can offer you—parents, students, as well as Arab officials and experts in education—some answers that I consider extremely important; to initiate a genuine journey in the Arab world aimed at developing education and improving its outcomes.

The lines of this book do not merely discuss the description of the disease; there is also a considerable emphasis on describing the remedy and treatment by proposing practical strategic ideas to solve the problems and challenges we face in the education sector. My intention with the title of this book, "When the School Dies," is not only to convey that schools in the Arab world are failing to fulfill their required role, as if they do not exist at all; but I also aim to indicate the need for a complete and radical transformation through carefully studied and wise practical approaches, action plans, and strategies that will enable us to change the current shape of the school into a different form that allows us to fulfill our duty towards our sons and daughters, and our Arab homeland, as soon as possible. We must provide the necessary revitalization so that it can come back to life anew, as you recall.

In 2020, after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic had begun to settle away from the world, the ministries of education in the Arab world were proud of their achievements in the field of distance learning, celebrating what they had provided to students in terms of education. However, many parents and several education experts had a different opinion, not only in the Arab world but regarding the mechanisms and strategies of distance learning in all countries of the world.

What’s important is that I published a video on social media titled "The Failure of Distance Learning in the Arab World." In the hours following the video’s publication, a number of friends, experts, and officials in the field of education from various Arab countries called me to express almost a unified opinion: Why haven't such videos been published before? Didn't the ministries do everything within their means to mitigate learning issues during the COVID-19 period? The time is not right for this, especially since the video I posted was viewed by thousands of people within minutes, which could cause disturbances at a time when we are trying to address the negative impacts of COVID-19 on education. We need your support and do not require self-flagellation. Most ended their admonishing calls with similar phrases; it was indeed a sensitive matter.

It served as the spark that ignited in my mind the idea to begin writing this book. Their idea centered around the notion that instead of criticizing, one should speak about possible mechanisms and tools for developing education, rather than throwing a wrench into the works. The truth is, they were both right and wrong at the same time—Arab education ministries are commendably striving through their personnel to bridge the educational gap after schools have closed their doors and teachers have abandoned their classrooms while students have left their seats and playgrounds. We all appreciate this effort, yet it remains unorganized and closer to propaganda and marketing than to real truths on the ground. The platforms are unprepared and have not been sufficiently developed during that period and afterward, and the teachers are unqualified, although they could have been adequately prepared in a short time. The greater issue is that we have not progressed after the end of this dreadful pandemic; we have returned with nothing to show for it but our old selves. Many ministries in the Arab world did not recognize the reality of the changes and developments that have occurred in the world of schools globally, and they have not uttered a word to improve learning. Not to mention, the readiness of parents to take on the role of teachers in instructing or, in truth, in imparting knowledge, or to utilize modern technologies and monitor their children, especially in the foundational stage. And so on, and so forth. Let us not forget the technological infrastructure in our Arab countries that is critical for the success of the e-learning experience and how inadequate its readiness is, despite the media propaganda trumpeted by the ministries of education in the Arab world, which has reached the point where countries globally have learned from the experiences of certain Arab nations.

The second truth is that criticism alone does not bear fruit; it is imperative to propose practical, realistic solutions that are applicable through a strategic plan so that, as education and teaching experts in the Arab world, we can reach the school we aspire to. Hence, since that time, I have begun to draft this book, which aims to liberate the Arab world from a dismal educational state characterized by the devastating impact of school closures on students, their potential, and on nations by depriving them of these energies. We must revive this educational institution, which is undeniably crucial, whether in achieving balance in the four pillars of student development: intellectual, emotional, social, and physical growth.

The text discusses the importance of balancing relationships that individuals have with themselves, their Creator, others, and the things around them. It emphasizes the necessity of strengthening a hexagon of essential life skills such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making, time management, teamwork, and creative thinking. This endeavor aims to establish a healthy foundation for education and learning that empowers teachers and school staff to apply the best educational methods and messages, guiding our sons and daughters, as well as our nation, to the position we deserve.

This process involves a realistic portrayal of the harsh current situation and subsequently discussing effective, practical strategic solutions. Learning is noted to have serious and significant impacts, as it encompasses social, economic, psychological, cultural, and survival dimensions. Moreover, it is a continuous process that is not confined to a particular time, place, or generation. The development of the educational reality is not limited to one group but is a syndrome that involves planners, experts, teachers, administration, students, families, and the entire community.

In this book, I aim to remind you that we do not need coercive educational methods and programs that produce individuals with a vast amount of knowledge but lacking the ability to think critically about it. Education should be a liberating experience that allows individuals to express themselves, extract their creative abilities, and unleash their talents freely, away from stereotypes, control, and restrictions on thought, while also emphasizing the importance of positive guidance and intelligent advice that aligns with our sound cultural values and principles.

On another note, we note that students often acquire bad habits and behaviors from their peers in school. However, the worst influence a student can experience in school is succumbing to the arbitrary thoughts, opinions, and whims of teachers, which can stifle the students' intellectual readiness. This type of teacher, with their singular perspective and absolute truth claims, rejects dialogue and debate from students, resulting in groups of children who lack a sense of belonging and even a love for learning and education. Throughout their twelve years of schooling, they have suffered without contemplation, often feeling fear more than security, which leads them to view school as a repelling rather than an inviting place.

We must not forget that the process of change and development in societies is inevitable, and it is happening rapidly in recent times. Thus, understanding this change and preparing for it requires new, flexible educational plans that align with the spirit of the age and transcend traditional methods and approaches. Therefore, we need to transform the reality within educational institutions from boredom to enjoyment, from rote memorization to dialogue and critical thinking, from intellectual oppression to freedom that is disciplined by interest and respect for others, from imitation and repetition to innovation and renewal, from a singular curriculum to a diversity of curricula, from fear to security, from a singular assessment to a comprehensive and multifaceted evaluation, from focusing on the student who achieves the highest grades to recognizing that every student is talented and unique, from traditional teaching methods to modern learning approaches that suit the development of this generation, and from prioritizing the completion of textbook pages to focusing on the most important aspects of the curriculum regarding depth and continuity. We need to change our perspective on school; from viewing it as a place for knowledge to being a place for the development of the three developmental needs, four types of relationships, and six life skills. In doing so, we will have dismantled the dilapidated school model that hampers the learning process instead of advancing it.