

THE AMCHAM POST

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4 pages every Saturday

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Instructor Kawser Ahmed, who carries out peace and conflict studies, reveals how uncomfortable it is for teachers and students to discuss about hot-button topics like immigration, race, religions and sex in a society where extremism and violence do still exist. Based on the case of the province of Manitoba, Canada, he proposes to redefine the relationship between students and teachers to be more human, and proposes a learning curriculum which gives a strong focus on human rights, equality and responsibilities of citizens, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

24 January 2020, International Day of Education "Learning for people, planet, prosperity, and peace"

The 2020 theme highlights the integrated nature of education, its humanistic aims, as well as its centrality to our collective development ambitions. It also gives stakeholders and partners flexibility to tailor the celebration for diverse audiences, a variety of contexts and for priority themes

Education initiatives have a proven potential to help marginalized populations gain access to justice that contributes to peaceful societies.



Signature of the Civil Rights Act by US President Lyndon Johnson (1964).

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EDITORIAL

By Ravel Notoavina,
Mandela Washington Fellow 2018, Co-founder and School
Director of Ayhay, Quality Education Activist

We must harness our potentials to reduce the barriers to education in Madagascar and across Africa.

Happy Education Day! The International Day of Education is celebrated on January 24 every year. It is important to celebrate since the role of education is to bring global peace and sustainable development around the world. Education is the foundation of development. It is the tool to eradicate poverty today and tomorrow. We must therefore harness our potentials to reduce the barriers to education in Madagascar and across Africa.

The country's Education Sector Plan (ESP) for 2018–2022 seems bold and credible to improve quality (learning), access, and governance (World Bank Madagascar Basic Education Support Project (P160442)). However, there are various barriers to education that we must tackle as soon as possible in Madagascar. More so than anything else, there is a vicious cycle that we must fight together: the lack of quality education is the root cause of poverty, and poverty is the primary barrier to education.

The Global Citizen Movement has released the top ten barriers of education; such as the decrease or lack of allocated budget or funding for education, the increase of untrained or lack of teachers, no classrooms and the lack of learning materials, the distance from home to school, the exclusion of children with disabilities, hunger and poor nutrition, political instability and the cost of education.

Similarly, the National budget allocated to education in Madagascar has decreased to less than 15 percent and the national budget allocated to research has decreased to only 0.01 percent in 2017. About 80 percent of the teachers have no formal teacher training and public primary school teachers clearly lack pedagogical competences. Students learn more when the teacher has a higher level of education, including teacher training preparation. And 47 percent of children under 5 years in Madagascar develop insufficiently in the early years due to malnutrition and poor health as reported by the World Bank (Madagascar Basic Education Support Project (P160442)).

Harnessing the potentials of Education leaders in Madagascar is a great way to tackle the barriers to education and implement innovations. As to that example, during the West Africa Regional Convening in June 11–12, 2019, the Mandela Washington Fellows 2018 (President Barack Obama's YALI Flagship Program) joined forces by "Harnessing their potentials to reduce barriers to education across Africa" in Accra, Ghana. As a result, here is a summary of the initiatives taken by the Fellows:

We must train any existing teachers, especially primary ones, with leadership skills so that they will find effective solutions by themselves. The inclusion of civic leadership, public management and business and entrepreneurship theme subjects in secondary curriculums are essential. Kindergarten's curriculum should include Information Technology. A designed educational apps in tablets will help with the shortage of qualified teachers. We must include coding in our curriculums depending on the context and class level of each country. We are to train teachers for children with special needs and set up a policy for an authentic inclusive education. As a global language, English needs be used to leverage education system without despising mother-tongue. It is important to educate students with African stories to know the values and implement concrete contextualized lessons with learning materials.

While speaking of contextualizing lessons and teachings, we need to be aware that *"first, Madagascar is blessed by having many resources that we must consider as big advantage for Malagasy people. However, if the next generations are not aware of what they possess in the backyard and how fortunate they are, then it is not just a shame but a big loss. Others will surely take advantages of our richness. Therefore, children should learn about their possessions from their age; such as, the endemic fauna and flora, the precious stones/gems, or the marine ecosystem and many others. There must be an ongoing field activity for practical learnings and discoveries rather than just theory in our school programs. In other words, active learning is a crucial component as a method that teachers should use at school."* Professor Jonah Ratsimbazafy, President of GERP Madagascar.

To add the propositions of Education innovations, Mrs. Zo Raveloson, Founder of Sweet First Years Montessori School Madagascar advises that *"there are many ways of educational approaches in the world that one can use. We need to initiate Montessori pedagogy to parents and educators, even for part time at schools because it can cover the lack in our education system and approach."*

When looking for innovations in education, we must take into account the culture, character traits and backgrounds of the students. Professor Jonah Ratsimbazafy, highlights that *"we must consider the culture and attitude of Malagasy children when finding new techniques of education. Serious discussions must be done to encourage innovation techniques for good education program. How can we enable children to create, innovate and think and what is the vision? In the all education system at all levels, innovative discoveries must be encouraged in Madagascar if we really want to take charge the future of our country."*

Educational leaders, educators, teachers, and quality education enthusiasts! We must harness our potentials to reduce the barriers to education in Madagascar and across Africa. We need perseverance and hard work to make it happen. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela cheered his people: *"It always seems impossible until it's done"*. We must empower one another and encourage any teachers throughout their career by providing training opportunities. Let us prepare the educators of tomorrow and be open to innovations in education. The lack of quality education is the root cause of poverty, and poverty is the primary barrier to education. We must fight.



EDUCATION

Combating hate, racism and extremism through education



Author Kawser Ahmed visits a Grade 12 class at J.H. Burns Collegiate School in Winnipeg to discuss the dangers of radicalization and the importance of education. (Kawser Ahmed), Author provided

In his article in The Conversation, Kawser Ahmed, Instructor and SSHRC Post-Doctoral fellow at the Political Science department, University of Winnipeg, in the Province of Manitoba, Canada, shares that communities can combat racism, hate and extremism with education.

Through his own research in peace and conflict studies, he believes that to confront and combat extremism, the province of Manitoba needs new ways of engaging with young people that are sensitive to Manitoba's social-political context.

What causes extremism?
In his PhD research, Kawser Ahmed reveals that there are "extremist recruiters" – people who deploy a narrative of hate – who target young people in schools and universities. He fell across one of those recruitment posters inviting young people to join The Base, a U.S.-based neo-Nazi group. Manitoba has then become a place that must seriously grapple with racism. For example, last winter, Canadian Courts was told to be racist when the man accused of killing Tina Fontaine, an Indigenous girl, in 2014, was acquitted. Last year, signs stating "It's okay to be white" popped up at a number of educational institutions. A whole Winnipeg school division closed due to online threats.

What do educators think? Ahmed spoke with

12 educators and the following ideas came out. Participants agreed that racism and anti-immigrant extremism were on the rise and manifesting in different forms, and that they often felt uncomfortable addressing the issue. They also admitted feeling uncomfortable discussing hot-button matters as race, religion and sex. So they agreed on the fact that all stakeholders have to take measures to counter extremism.

How to deal with it?
Through EDUCATION. Ahmed explains the Manitoba social studies curriculum, the concept of citizenship as "knowledgeable and engaged citizens" and as an essential subject for kindergarten to Grade 12 students in age-appropriate ways. The curriculum gives a strong focus on human rights, equality and responsibilities of citizens, as well as on anti-bias and anti-racism approaches and Aboriginal perspectives throughout the social studies curriculum. But racism is not covered as a subject or as content exclusively.

For instance, Grade 11 Canadian history discusses about restrictions to Asian immigration, the impact

of the American Civil War on Black immigration to Canada as well as Black loyalists. In Grade 6, social studies learning outcomes include the reserve system and its impact, treaties and Aboriginal rights in Canada from 1876 to the present.

Towards a renewed relationship between students and teachers. Ahmed states that educators are uniquely positioned to prepare young people as they transition from school to university. But the society we live in now demands new ways of teaching. Discussions on extremism and radicalization should be brought into classrooms. In a broader perspective, students and teachers, adults, citizens and community leaders need a relationship based on trust and confidence. In Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's words, in his work Education: the Practice of Freedom, *"To be human is to engage in relationships with others."* The role of human beings is not simply to be in the world but to engage with the world.

Source: The Conversation

Edited by Kenny Raharison



AMCHAM

Sourcing at MAGIC 2020: Malagasy participants are ready



The Malagasy delegation and AmCham's partners during the press conference last Wednesday.

This year, the American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar will accompany five Malagasy companies to attend the famous Sourcing at MAGIC trade show which will happen in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA on February 4-7, 2020.

Last Wednesday, the Chamber, its partners, and the participants held a press conference at ViMa Ankorondrano in order for them to introduce the Malagasy delegation who will be heading to Las Vegas next week.

The United States is a huge market for Malagasy products. The exports from Madagascar to the US under AGOA have substantially increased these

last years – from USD 39.8 million in 2015 to USD 180 million in 2018 if we refer to what Mrs. Elodie Rabenivo, AGOA Resources Center Madagascar Project Officer said. As a reminder, the AmCham has launched a call for interest five months ago to find out if Malagasy companies were willing to participate in the trade show. After a selection process, five companies will finally represent the Malagasy brand during the trade show.

Five companies. Two textile companies will be present at the textile pavilion of the Mandalay Bay Convention Center: PLG Confection, specialized in jeans and denim products, and Haytex Madagascar, specialized in Smock Dress. The handicrafts delegation

will be made up of Unik Bags (raffia bags), Diamondra Création Madagascar (raffia bags and accessories), and Nivo Jewels & Precious Stones (silver and gold jewelry with local precious stones).

85,000 visitors worldwide are expected to attend this huge trade show. Since the event is not intended for direct sales, companies will be geared towards getting orders, contacts and partners.

Madagascar's participation to Sourcing at MAGIC is supported by the U.S. Embassy Madagascar, Groupe Filatex, and Ethiopian Airlines as official carrier. We wish all the participants the best!

By Kenny Raharison

EDUCATION AND RELIGION IN THE U.S.

Can public funding be spent at religious schools?

Last week, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos stated that public schools must allow prayer and other forms of religious expression or risk losing federal funds. As a reminder, in 2003, President George W. Bush issued a guidance which suggests the department would be enforcing guidelines under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act requiring state oversight of districts to ensure they have clear policies protecting the right to prayer in school and make available a clear process for students, parents and teachers to report violations of their

right to pray. The release raised debates among education organizations. Some say the statement affirms a core constitutional protection: School officials are prohibited from imposing their faith on students. Others fear a disruption in the whole education system.

Another point that raised debates was the loosening of requirements for religious schools to access federal grant funds. Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said that DeVos and Trump were trying to rewrite the Constitution

and trying to vitiate the separation of church and state."

Other education organizations see the release as an effort to push a larger agenda expanding private and religious schools while sidelining public education. In other words, the decision may not only muddle separation of church and state, but also siphon funds meant for public schools to private ones and essentially disrupt the whole U.S. public education system.

Source: Education Dive
Edited by Kenny Raharison



Betsy DeVos from Ed Dept proposes easier access to federal funds for religious schools, emphasizes school prayer.

SOURCING at MAGIC

FEBRUARY 4-7, 2020
MANDALAY BAY CONVENTION CENTER, LAS VEGAS
TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY

Madagascar will be represented by:

- PLG Confection
- Haytex Madagascar
- Diamondra Création
- Unik Bags
- Nivo Jewels and Precious Stones

Facilitated by:

Supported by:

Partner:

Official Carrier:

ANNOUNCEMENT

AmCham English Discussion Seminars

The American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) is pleased to announce the opening of new terms for English Discussions Groups.

- 2nd term of its **Tuesday – Thursday sessions**, starting on **Tuesday, 25th February 2020**
- 2nd term of its **Wednesday – Friday sessions**, starting on **Wednesday, 26th February 2020**

If you want to improve your English skills, come join the AmCham's English discussion seminars, consisting of 100% practice in a friendly and welcoming learning environment.

Class descriptions:

- Each class is limited to 10 participants to give you the best possible opportunity to learn quickly and accurately.
- Sessions are led by fluent English speakers having extensive experience in teaching the English language.
- Each session focuses on a variety of topic of interest to the participants.

Calendar & Venue:

Seminars are held at the AmCham Office, Bâtiment C1, Explorer Business Park, Ankorondrano - **all at the same time: 12:15pm-1:45pm.**

Participation fee is **100,000 Ariary** per person for all 10 sessions (10,000 Ariary per session), or 15,000 Ariary per session for those attending "à la carte".

Anyone with basic conversational English is eligible to attend. However, preference will be given to individuals registering for the full 10 session block, and within this group, AmCham members.

Registration: Class size is limited to 10 participants, so to secure your spot, please submit payment to the AmCham office by:

- > **Monday, 24th January 2020, for Tuesday – Thursday sessions**
- > **Tuesday, 25th January 2020, for Wednesday – Friday sessions**

Special formula: Companies may have the English discussion seminars held at their offices on one condition: the client has to provide 10 participants for each class.

Another possible option under this special formula: Companies that cannot gather 10 participants but located in the same area (e.g. downtown) can make a joint session at an agreed location (e.g. in the premises of one of the participating companies). Interested parties are invited to contact AmCham in the below contact details. Registration deadline for this special formula is open-ended.

For further information, contact AmCham at es@amcham-madagascar.org/ info@amcham-madagascar.org or at 020 26 410 34.

TIP CORNER

Don't Let Work Stress Keep You Up at Night

Work stress is inevitable, but it doesn't have to get in the way of a good night's sleep. Try these strategies during the day to avoid worrying about work at all hours of the night. Make a to-do list. The act of writing down uncompleted tasks allows you to put them out of your mind. You also might consider keeping a journal, where you write down your thoughts and feelings. Putting pen to paper can help you process emotions and reduce anxiety. Get some exercise. Physical activity — even a single instance — decreases rumination, which is often linked to insomnia. Or practice meditation. Researchers in the Netherlands found that even small amounts of mindful meditation (10 minutes before and after work for two weeks) helped calm racing minds and improved sleep quality and duration. Lastly, be easy on yourself. Self-compassion can often break the cycle of negative thoughts that keeps you up. Work stress may be inevitable at times, but these strategies can increase your ability to wake up feeling refreshed and able to tackle your biggest challenges.

This tip is adapted from "How to Stop Thinking About Work at 3am," by Rebecca Zucker

Source:

Harvard Business Review

ANNOUNCEMENT

AmCham Business Trainings | Call for Trainers

The American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar now more than ever understands the role of the private sector in the Malagasy economy; thus is willing to reinforce its strength.

For 2020, the Chamber will organize trainings for individuals and/or businesses, members and/or non-members.

The Chamber thus calls for applications in the following fields:

- Legal
- Finance and Investments
- Business Management
- Project Management
- Leadership and Entrepreneurship
- Personal Development

Applicants should submit their resume, motivation letter, and module proposals at elodie@amcham-madagascar.org

For further information, contact AmCham at 020 26 410 34.

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