

Back to the Square Point| Traveler Ayesha's Brave Insistence

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”

——Lao Tzu



Education is Power

When we saw photos of the newly renovated campus, Ayesha said with full pleasure:“ See, this is the new shed. It was built to provide shade for the girls and protect them from the scorching heat in the summer, as in Pakistan temperatures can reach as high as 40 °C. Here, students can play and drink clean water from the filter.”



Sahah School © Provided by interviewee

In 2009, Ayesha was raising funds to establish this school with other partners. As a non-profit program, the equipment, and the overall infrastructure were enhanced as the group of students enrolled in this school increased, and continuous investment was required for the annual running of the school.

A group of intellectuals (mostly friends from Manchester) raised £20,000 within 18months to establish this school. In addition, a handsome donation was also provided by the Al'Hamd Trust Fund.

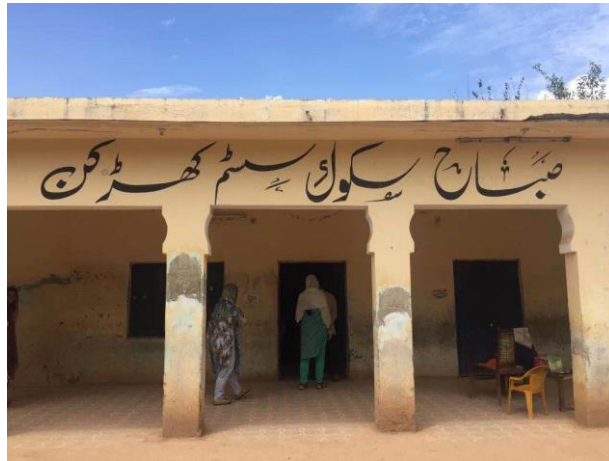


Image of Sabah School ten years ago © Provided by interviewee

When good people put their trust in you, it shows you have built solid win-win networks, and the crux of which is time spent wisely. **“I always tell my students to collaborate with each other. It is very hard to build real connections, you need to start now.”** In fact, to achieve your goals credibility and reliability are not the only two key factors, it also requires self-motivation, hard-work and excellent communication skills. “Can you imagine pouring all your money into a pit hole? We didn’t realize it would be that difficult to raise money for maintenance purposes. It’s a tough job.”

Ten years ago, there was no school in this village, especially for girls. Sabah School System is located in the outskirts of Islamabad (Rawat, 40 km away from Islamabad). According to a report “The impression of the Pakistan” delivered by the World Bank in 2014, Pakistan’s education index rank is only 113 among 120 counties. Women possess two thirds of 7 million people who drop out. Although, Pakistan’s current development level is equal to that of China in the last century; as an underdeveloped country, gender discrimination seems to be insuperable. If a family has a boy and a girl, the boy will gain the right of education without doubt; in contrast, the girl has to look after the family and remain a housewife.



© Provided by interviewee

However, in some of the major cities in Pakistan, such as Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, families are investing a great deal in education (boy or girl) as they understand that it is not only the right

thing to do, it is also smart economics.

Thanks to Ms. Jameela Nawaz and Mr. Najib Ahmad, the school is being managed and run successfully. Initially, only 15 girls were enrolled on campus as parents in village were relatively conservative and girls were important labor force in the family. So, “we decided to employ local teachers in order to win parent’s trust.” Currently the school is run in two shifts; the first shift begins from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., whereas the second from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. By doing so, work-life balance can be maintained and families would allow their girls study freely.



Headmaster and master are packaging gifts © Provided by interviewee

The core subjects include Mathematics, English, Urdu, and Pakistan Studies. This year, total amount of students registered reached 250. In this country, the youth is extremely eager to listen to the pleasant sounds of the outside world. **We all understand the right to education and globally recognize it as a basic human right.**



Girls are playing in breaks © Provided by interviewee

“In a world where you can **be anything, be kind.**” Ayeesha feels she was privileged and blessed to

receive the best level of education and empathizes with other students. She says, “we are the same race. It’s not fair but we need to face the facts, and **work-harder, appreciate more and remain humble.**” **A prerequisite of such kindness is her empathy and selflessness.**

Whenever Ayesha visits Pakistan, she volunteers to teach girls in that village. She would not impart subject knowledge on them, but share her own experiences related to student——life abroad, travelling and building networks. The stranger, who is always on the go and has travelled to more than 15 countries, prefers to contemplate the splendor of the world with the youth in Pakistan – million miles away from her home-country.



The travel map of Ayesha © Provided by interviewee

Ayesha told us:" When I told them there is a bigger world out there, their eyes lit up. Some of the students had not even visited other cities in Pakistan. But as a shared my experiences, not everyone understood. For them education simply means to enhance their quality of life, earn reasonable amount of money, and have a decent and respectable position in society. My question remains, **is that what we call real education?**"



© Provided by interviewee

It is quite thought-provoking. We are open to different opportunities, we are privileged enough to pick and choose, and yet we do not grasp it. However, unprivileged students have a better understanding of how to use every chance they get to pursue their dream and achieve their goals. It taught Ayesha to remain motivated and she set long-term career goals. Opportunity never knocks twice – education is the door-way for finding creative solutions to real-world problems!



©Provided by interviewee

Foresight and Persistence

After 10 years of conducting scientific research at University of Manchester, between years 2003 to 2012, Ayesha worked on developing biomaterials for Cartilage Tissue Engineering applications. Upon completion of this project, Ayesha had full confidence that this research project had commercial value. She suggested to her supervisors Professor(s) Alberto Saiani and Aline Miller to take this idea forward and set up a Bio-Tech company that would focus on product development of peptide-based hydrogels for tissue engineering applications.

Dr Ayesha Mujeeb, Technical Manager



Ayesha was appointed Technical Manager in May 2016 and leads the production activities at PeptiGelDesign Limited. Ayesha obtained her Ph.D. in Materials Science from University of Manchester in 2013. Her studies were

centred on developing novel self-assembled peptide-based hydrogels as scaffolds for cell culture applications. Following her Ph.D. she took up a short industrial post-doctoral position at the University of Manchester in collaboration with Peptisyntha. She is a Visiting Academic at the University of Manchester. Prior to this she was a CAS President's International Fellow at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Ayesha is a member of the Tissue and Cell Engineering Society (TCES) and the European Society for Biomaterials (ESB).

PeptiGelDesign
At the very heart of regenerative medicine

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Hydrogels

PeptiGelDesign "The happy cell company"

Our aim is to deliver life changing solutions for all healthcare stake holders and we're in the process of developing biocompatible and biodegradable grafts that can be implanted to treat people who have suffered from a heart attack.

Research Project © Provided by interviewee

Scientific research has cultivated her critical thinking, problem-solving and innovative abilities. “You have to prove yourself, and if you have worked on a product for several years you have to believe it has value. Whether the product is marketable or not is another episode, however,

you won't know unless you've experienced it first-hand," she claimed.

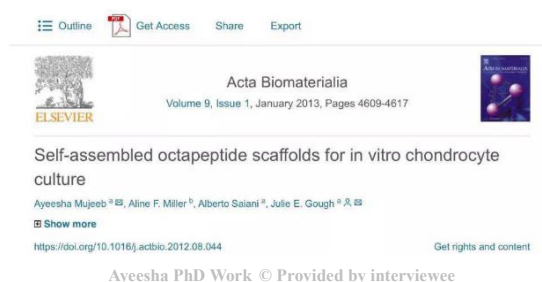
Ayeesha concluded her PhD in 2013 and accepted an offer from Peking University (Beijing, China) to work as Postdoctoral Research Scientist under the supervision of Professor Zigang Ge. In this laboratory, she worked with other members of the Ge Group to develop commercially viable biomaterials for cartilage tissue engineering applications. They exchanged ideas, conducted state-of-the-art research and published works in prestigious journals.



Postdoctoral Research Scientist in Chinese Academy of Sciences © Provided by interviewee

In May 2014, surprise!

Her Professor Alberto Saiani at University of Manchester sent her an email, introducing PeptiGel Design Limited (now named Manchester BIOGEL) as a start-up company that would focus on the development of peptide-based hydrogels for tissue engineering applications. A partner offer was made, and Ayeesha was asked to join the company as a shareholder and scientific advisor. "I was extremely happy, and I knew it was a once-in-a lifetime opportunity," Ayeesha agreed, without hesitation.



Ayeesha PhD Work © Provided by interviewee

In April 2016, Ayeesha finally decided to return to Manchester to help her Professors set up the business as 'Technical Manager'. Although she was working as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Chinese Academy of Sciences at the time, however her supervisor Professor Nie Guangjun encouraged her to pursue her dreams. She worked with the team at the CAS from Manchester.

From the outside, everything seems perfect—— according to her plan. Gaining success at a young age is an incredible feeling. The work was rigorous and intense. Her working hours were long. She woke up at 4 a.m. and entered home at 11 p.m., day in and day out. The company team was involved

three members, Dr. Guillaume Saint Pierre (then CEO), Caryl Hall (administrator) and Ayesha. They were in charge of marketing & branding, production and packaging, research and development and so on.



Manufacturing Laboratory © Provided by interviewee

"Of course there were times when I wanted to give up. Science is very demanding. **It requires data, but its analysis is equally important. Self-motivation is key to success,**" Ayesha mentioned.

Manchester BIOGEL received its third-round of investment in November 2017. The company is running smoothly and plans to expand its business to other European countries, the US and China. "**It's one of the hardest things I've ever done, but it's also one of the best experiences of my life,**" Ayesha said with pride, and a big smile appeared on her face.



Project Promotion © Provided by interviewee

Educate, Innovate, and Inspire

The education system in the UK values students and gives them the opportunity to make right decisions.

Schools in the UK offer students the platform to develop themselves into confident, well-rounded individuals. Ayesha wants to use her experiences and with her sound education background she would like to inspire other students to pursue a career in the Sciences.



© Provided by interviewee

In comparison to the Chinese style of teaching, Ayesha believes in allowing students to share their point-of-view, ideas and post questions. **Independent study, problem-based learning, conceptual learning, and group study** are some of the standards or requirements set by Ayesha for her students. So, she always discusses different experiments to evoke students' interest of exploring and studying independently. Her classes are always challenging and interesting. She wants students to work in groups and share different concepts and theories and gain inspiration from each other. Her study design is inclusive and flexible with rigor and objectivity. "We are partners in learning," she says.



© Provided by interviewee

Looking back, Ayesha has committed 15 years of her life to research. She joined ZIA in April 2018 to take part in the STEAM Program. "Working with high school students is fun. I want to help them make the right decisions about their careering Science." So, she wants her students to explore different options, and become well-rounded individuals.

In the professional field, Ayesha is knowledgeable, ambitious, and fierce. In day-to-day life, she is easy-going and enthusiastic. She has an excellent rapport with colleagues and students. She is a very warm and positive person. With her rich life experiences, Ayesha is able to communicate with students freely and encourages them to perform well in life.

Ayesha wants to keep moving forward, and achieve goals step-by-step. Slow and steady wins the race!



Steam team in Beijing No. 35 High School © Provided by interviewee