



Yidan Prize
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Who's changing the world through education?

The Yidan Prize is the most significant accolade in education. Tell us about the individuals and teams with the greatest potential, and we could help them on their way.

Here's everything to know about our nomination process



“My research has identified the importance of linguistic rhythmic patterns for children’s reading.”

Professor Usha Goswami

Director of the world’s first Centre for Neuroscience in Education
Yidan Prize for Education Research Laureate 2019



“We’ve built a community of over 32 million learners around the world, and partnered with 150 prestigious universities, corporations and institutions.”

Professor Anant Agarwal

Founder and CEO of edX
Yidan Prize for Education Development Laureate 2018



“My work shows children who have a growth mindset – who believe they can develop their talents and abilities through hard work – achieve more.”

Professor Carol S. Dweck

Author of bestselling book, *Mindset* and Professor of Psychology at Stanford University
Yidan Prize for Education Research Laureate 2017

In this guide

Thank you for your interest in the Yidan Prize. This guide is for anyone who'd like to understand our nomination process better, whether you're a nominee, a nominator or a supporter – someone supporting a nomination.

- **[What dates should you know about?](#)**
Let's pencil in the major milestones.
- **[What is the Yidan Prize?](#)**
Understanding our award and the philosophy behind it.
- **[Who can apply?](#)**
An overview of who is eligible for the Yidan Prize.
- **[How do you apply?](#)**
A practical walk-through of our process.
- **[What are the Judging Committee looking for?](#)**
An introduction to our judges and their criteria.
- **[Where do I find more information?](#)**
Where to go if any of your questions are unanswered.

Dates for your diary

OUR NOMINATIONS CLOSE ON

31 March 2021
at 12pm HKT (UTC +8)

WE'LL ANNOUNCE THE LAUREATES IN

September 2021

AND PRESENT THE AWARDS TO THE LAUREATES IN

December 2021

“The Yidan Prize is future-oriented. While the Judging Committee evaluates applications on their past achievement, what’s more important is what the nominees would do with the Prize project funding, if successful.”

Dr Koichiro Matsuura

Former Director-General, UNESCO
Chairman, Judging Committee, Yidan Prize

Getting to know the Yidan Prize

We launched the Yidan Prize Foundation in 2016 for one reason: to build a better world through education. When learning flourishes, so does society, and we're here to champion the people who make that possible.

An all-encompassing education accolade

Each year, we award the Yidan Prize to individuals and teams in two areas:

Education Research

The theory of learning – science, psychology, statistics – that can help educators understand different approaches with a methodical lens.

Education Development

The practice of learning – new methods, ways to make education more widespread – so we can champion techniques that work.

We award each year's laureates a gold medal. In addition, a total of HK\$30 million (around US\$3.9 million) of prize funds is awarded to the individual or team (shared equally) from each category, half of which is cash prize while the other half is project funds. They could use this latter half to expand their reach into a new region, begin a new project, or keep doing more of the same brilliant work: it's their choice.

We've deliberately chosen these awards to inspire change and conversation

We see these prizes – and the events, workshops and networks surrounding them – as a way to bring bright minds together to exchange ideas. That's why the two prizes work in harmony: to build a network of educational experts who're as strong in research as they are in practical application, in classrooms across the world.

Remember, we award these prizes to teams

Our prizes are open to teams of up to three. That could be a research group working on a project together, or even several people contributing to the same idea from separate organizations – they don't have to work together.

If a team does win either award, they'll each get their own individual medal and certificate, and split the cash prize and project fund.



Meet our Founder, Dr Charles CHEN Yidan

Dr Charles CHEN Yidan is a Core Founder of Tencent – one of China’s internet giants.

Dr CHEN has cherished education since his school days

Today, he recognizes the doors that have opened for him have done so because of his lifelong love for learning. “My grandmother was illiterate,” Charles once wrote. “She lived through war, famine and poverty; she raised my father alone – the first college graduate in the village.”

“She always encouraged me to study, too: boiling red eggs for luck on my first day of school, sitting with me as I did my homework. I call her an illiterate educator: ordinary as she was, she taught me the value of education – and showed me it should be open to everyone.”

The Yidan Prize exists for this reason: to open education for everyone

The best way to do that is through connections and conversation. By recognizing and bringing together the brightest minds in educational research and practice – and building a global community around them – we’ll be able to exchange ideas faster, and improve access and quality of learning across the world.

We also follow this spirit of openness in our nomination process. We take a meticulous approach to choosing laureates fairly: appointing an impartial, independent judging committee of experts, working to [set criteria](#) and welcoming nominations from many different nations and sectors.

Who can make nominations for the Yidan Prize?

We welcome all nominations; [our process](#) is open to everyone. You don't need to be invited to nominate a team or individual for either the Education Research or Education Development prize.

That said, we do have guidelines to make sure nominations stay fair. Here's a checklist for nominators.

Can you speak to what impact the team or person has had?

Officially, you need to be a "credible witness" to their impact: you need to have a thorough understanding of the work. In terms of your role, most of our nominators tend to be members

of government bodies, non-governmental organizations or professional associations; or they're professional educators or respected figures in the sector. But you don't have to tick one of those boxes: we welcome nominations from all.

Can you source two other supporters?

On top of your nomination, we need two recommendation letters from supporters. These people should also understand the work of the team or person you're nominating; they might even have a unique perspective that you don't. (You are allowed to nominate yourself – you'll just need three supporters instead of two.)

There's a handful of exceptions

You can't make a nomination if:

- You'd like to recognize a member of your family
- You're one of our directors, or on our Judging or Advisory Committees
- You'd like to recognize someone posthumously

"The Yidan Prize is really for transformative and innovative ideas, and even for divergent thinking in a way. There're so much innovation and research happening in education, in schools, in classrooms and in different environments, not only through universities. We encourage young researchers to put forward their applications."

Mr Andreas Schleicher

Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills, OECD
Head, Judging Panel, Yidan Prize for Education Research

How do I make a nomination?

Here's the process to follow: we just ask for all your documents and descriptions to be in English.

To get you started, we've included sample forms for [Education Research](#) and [Education Development](#).

1. Register for a nominator account at nomination.yidanprize.org

We'll need to take your full name, email address, post address, phone number, organization and your role at this point. We'll also need a scan of your business card – any card issued by your organization with your contact details on.

2. Biographies

Add biographies for each nominee. Biographies should be 200 words or fewer.

3. Explain why they deserve this accolade

Write up to 500 words to explain the work of the nominee(s) and the achievements or outcomes their projects have created. You can include both the impact their work has now and what you think they could achieve with the help of the prize funding.

4. Tell the judges how your nominee(s) meet the criteria

When our Judging Committee assesses applications, they're particularly looking for nominations that meet our [four criteria](#). Please write a maximum of 1000 words under each.

5. Upload a two-minute video from the nominee(s)

This is a good chance for the nominee(s) to say in their own words how they'd use the HK\$15 million project fund. The video must be in MP4, MOV, M4V, or AVI format under 84MB, ideally with 1920 x 1080 (1080p) dimensions. (If you struggle to upload your video, you can link to it instead.)

6. For Education Research, share the nominee(s)' relevant publications

Please share at least one published work (or up to five). Research should be peer-reviewed, but we'll also accept books, book chapters, articles, teaching materials, presentations and digital media (such as videos). You can upload them as PDFs or links.

7. Upload the [supporters' letters](#)

Each letter should be less than 5000 words, and we need at least two (or three if you're self-nominating). You can either scan in these letters (on official letterheads, please), or paste the text into the text box. Either way, we'll need contact details for each supporter, and a scan of their business card, too.

Using the nomination platform

We only accept nominations submitted online, using our platform. If you've never used it before, here's what to expect:

1. Once you've [created an account](#), we'll send you a confirmation email. Please open this when it arrives – you'll need to click the link to activate your account.
2. Once that's done, you can start your nomination straight away. You can complete the form in any order, and come back to edit as often as you like before submitting. Save as you go, so you don't risk losing any work.
3. When you're ready, press 'Preview & Submit'. Check it through and make any edits you need. Once you're happy, hit 'Submit'. You can download a PDF of your nomination, and we'll email you to say we've got it.

That's everything. If you have a question for us later on, get in touch with our Secretariat [by email](#), quoting your 'form ID' (it's in your last confirmation email). But please don't send any extra information in by post or email – we can't review it.

Re-submissions

If unsuccessful, your form will be kept for the following year. We'll prompt you when the next round opens so you can log back in, make updates and apply again, if you wish to do so.

Tips for your nomination

Making the most of the video upload

This is the nominee's moment to speak straight to the judges. It's not only a good chance to talk through their plan for the HK\$15 million project fund; it's also an opportunity to show their enthusiasm.

Don't worry about the production quality. The judges are interested in the video's content, not style. The nominee is welcome to record in their native language – in fact, sometimes that can make it easier to show passion – we just ask you to remember subtitles, too.

We only use this video for judging. We won't circulate it or publish it without permission.

Writing a shining letter of support

If you're writing a letter of support (or asking someone else to), it's up to you how you'd like to explain the impact of the nominee(s)' work – you might have felt that impact personally, or observed it in action. We already ask for details on their idea and project, so think of this as a time to add a human touch. How has this nominee changed lives (or how could they change lives) with their work?

Uploading supporting documents

The online nomination form lets you upload any extra documents that you think would be handy to see, so do make the most of this – for example, is there any external press coverage you'd like to share? For Education Development, we encourage you to include any independent evaluation reports on your nominee(s)' work here.

If any of these aren't available in English, please include translations.

Having everything to hand

It's much quicker to upload your nomination if you've already got all the materials and details you need. So let's see: have you got these things at the ready?

- The personal details of your nominee(s) – including full name, address and date of birth
- CV(s)
- Biographies
- Two recommendation letters from supporters (or three if you're self-nominating)
- Supporters' personal details – full names, addresses and a scan of their business card
- Up to five relevant pieces of research (if you're nominating for Education Research)
- A two-minute video

You can fill in your nomination form in any order, and save as you go without submitting. We recommend you save every time you finish a section, just in case.

Apply sooner rather than later

When you apply doesn't make any difference to the outcome of the judging, but it means we have time to tell you if you've missed anything. If you apply by the end of February 2021, we'll let you know if there are any gaps so you can update and re-submit your nomination before the deadline.

Meet our Judging Committee

The Judging Committee is made up of two independent panels of experts. It's their role to review nominations and decide on each year's laureates, and as they do, they hold themselves (and are held) to the highest standards of fairness, openness and non-bias. It's a meticulous process, designed to recognize the most worthy recipients.



Dr Koichiro Matsuura

Chairman of the Yidan Prize Judging Committee

With over 40 years' experience in international relations, Dr Matsuura is a diplomatic expert, and served as the Director-General of UNESCO for 10 years. He was elected for his first term in 1999, and his significant accomplishments – such as reforming universal basic education and preserving living arts and cultures – meant he was re-elected for a second term in 2005.



Mr Andreas Schleicher

Head of the Education Research Judging Panel

Serving in two capacities at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills, OECD and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary General – Mr Schleicher's analysis and policy advice advances economic growth and social progress. He currently oversees several education-based programs, such as benchmarking education systems and surveying adult skills. Before joining the OECD, Mr Schleicher was Director for Analysis at the International Association for Educational Achievement (IEA).



Ms Dorothy K. Gordon

Head of the Education Development Judging Panel

Ms Gordon serves as Chair of UNESCO's Information for All Programme, and she's also a board member of their Institute for Information Technologies in Education. A leading activist in African technology, education, policy and society, she was previously Director General of the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT. In that role, she encouraged more women to participate in STEM subjects, supported Ghana's start-up economy and built global tech partnerships.

Ms Gordon and Mr Schleicher are joined in each area by a panel of other recognized experts: professors, directors and philanthropists, from universities, research organizations and not-for-profits alike. These judges are appointed by invitation from our Board of Directors, and they make final decisions on both awards collectively.

What are the judges looking for?

To make the process impartial, the judges assess nominations against a set of four criteria: to what extent is the nominees' work future-oriented, innovative, transformative and sustainable – either in terms of solving a problem or achieving a potential goal?

Although those headlines are broadly similar for both the Education Research and Education Development prizes, their specific criteria are different.

	EDUCATION RESEARCH	EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT
Future-oriented	<p>Does this research address one or more critical issues in education, with results that have (or look likely to have) a wide global impact?</p> <p>Does the research (and nominee/s) have the potential to shape the future of education, address new challenges and spread inclusive and fair education for all?</p>	<p>Does this idea or project address one or more critical issues in education, with results that have (or look likely to have) a wide global impact?</p> <p>Does this idea or project have the potential to shape the future of education, address new challenges and spread inclusive and fair education for all?</p> <p>To what extent does the idea or project anticipate problems and opportunities in education?</p> <p>To what extent is the idea or project creating an education system that addresses new global challenges? Will it make a positive contribution to the future?</p>
Innovative	<p>Is this research original? In fact, is it groundbreaking in its field?</p> <p>Is it a model for research of the highest scientific quality?</p> <p>Does this research (and nominee/s) share new, creative approaches to education?</p> <p>Could this approach cultivate skills, knowledge and self-awareness that will shape society for the better?</p>	<p>Is the idea or project groundbreaking?</p> <p>Is it disruptive?</p> <p>Does it display creativity?</p> <p>Does this project (and nominee/s) share new, creative approaches to education?</p> <p>Could this approach cultivate skills, knowledge and self-awareness that will shape society for the better?</p>

Transformative

EDUCATION RESEARCH

Has this research had a demonstrable effect on the thinking of leading educators?
Do the research and nominee/s both look likely to create a better world through education? Can both influence and inspire a global community of learning leaders?

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

What are the project’s goals for systemic change? What systemic impacts have been achieved so far – quantitatively and qualitatively?
How does this idea or project involve and influence a wider community or peers? Is it likely to inspire collaborative action?
How will the idea or project change the current system – either totally or incrementally? To what extent is it creating a new, better system?

Sustainable

Has the research already stimulated change in educational practices in some settings? Is there potential for the research to spread change to many settings?
Does the research and nominee/s have the potential to create a long-lasting change that enlightens humanity?

To what extent has this idea or project grown and scaled so far – in its own country and across borders? And to what extent could it be scaled and replicated further?
Does the idea or project have a governance model to make sure there’s transparency and accountability?
Is there a business model? Has that model ensured financial stability so far?
Are there any legal or regulatory threats to the organization or project?

The judges also have one final consideration, which changes depending on the prize...

EDUCATION RESEARCH

What is the potential impact?
What does the nominee hope to achieve in three years?
What are the key areas of focus?

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

What problem could this solve?
What is the severity and scale of the problem being addressed – now and in the future?
How many people are impacted by it?

Unsure about something?

We understand that there's a great deal of detail to take in when you're nominating someone or being nominated. Here's where to find more information.

To learn more about the Prize's philosophy and processes, take a [look at our website](#)

You'll find a wealth of information about our founder, our various committees and structures for keeping our nominations fair. You can also find links there to our social media pages where we share videos and articles that might help you understand the prize better, like speeches and talks from previous events and project work from our current laureates.

We're often updating our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page

So we'd recommend treating that as your first port of call if you have issues with your nomination, or need to check any of the requirements. We cover both the broader responsibilities of the Foundation as well as the specifics – like documents and dates – of nominating someone.

If you're still unsure about something, reach out to our Secretariat

We have a team dedicated to keeping the nomination process ticking along, so if you have questions or concerns about your application, email nomination@yidanprize.org

“For Education Development, the range of issues is very broad. So if you have an innovative idea that is transforming lives that touches on any area of education and making impact, we are very happy to receive your application.”

“Sometimes we see strong nominations, without sufficient supporting information. Please be as comprehensive as possible in your application, including relevant links and resources aligned to the key prize criteria.”

Ms Dorothy K. Gordon

Chair, UNESCO Information for All Programme

Head, Judging Panel, Yidan Prize for Education Development

