

*Daniel Speech at al-Quds University Conference November 21, 2007*

Dear Dr. Anan Masri, Deputy Minister of Health.  
Dr. Hassam Dweek, Acting President of al-Quds University

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honored to welcome you to participate in this conference that has been co-organized by Al-Quds University and ourselves among others, the Universal Education Foundation.

We thank Professor Shaheen the chairman of the conference for offering UEF the opportunity to partner in the organization of this conference. From the beginning, professor Shaheen has made valuable contribution to various activities of UEF in Palestine. Thank you professor Shaheen.

Our vision is “Education by All for the Well-Being of Children”. This vision has been co-created through careful examination of how different institutions and UN bodies have crafted their purpose. The World Health Organization (WHO), for example, defines health as the state of complete mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual well-being, not to be confused with absence of disease and infirmity. UNESCO focuses on the need to support the learning to do, the learning to be, the learning to know and the learning to live together as the comprehensive bases of their work. And in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Children, among other statements, you will find that States Parties agreed that education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

So it is clear and apparent that people throughout the world identify with the need to support the holistic development of each individual child in its various aspects. We have chosen to call well-being the realization of one’s own physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual potential. It is with the harmonious engagement to each and all of those aspects that a person can subjectively experience well-being in its fullest form, within himself and in the community in which he lives.

In the coming day and a half, you will be hearing reports and analyses on the status of the well-being and welfare of Palestinian children. In these opening remarks, then, I would simply like to pose some framing questions which might provide some context for the ensuing presentations and raise a couple of points as to how we might move forward together to improve the well-being of our children, even more so given the difficult circumstances here.

My questions are these:

If everybody agrees, why is it that the support for well-being is not the central purpose of our education system? Why is it that we don’t review products and service from media and ICT for their contribution to the well-being of children? Why is it that the health and public health systems are not more intimately involved in and engaged with the education system? Why our systems continue to delude ourselves that

every child is the same? Why don't we adequately value diversity and therefore create the environment in which every child can grow, learn and communicate in the ways that are most appropriate for that child?

It is in response to these realities that UEF has added to the UN agency statements the notion of education by all – that we are ones, all of us in society, who are responsible for the well-being of our children. Today's education is geared toward successful completion of tests and exams.

Education in the future, in which we will all participate, will be geared toward the well-being of children. Success will be measured by how much we are fulfilling it.

UEF is a global partnership foundation committed to promotion this notion in all countries of the world. To ensure the conscious buy-in of society, we are carrying out nationwide surveys of children's perceptions of their own well-being in the various learning environments – schools, media, ICT and health – through the Voice of Children Initiative our advocacy research project. This will then be followed by the Elham program that will celebrate existing initiatives that are supporting in shaping their own learning environments. The third component will be an ongoing Learning for Well-Being forum where media and ICT will be asked to join with Education and Health to develop new cross-sectorial initiatives for the well-being of children.

We are honored and proud to be launching this initiative first in Palestine in partnership with the Ministries of Education and Health, UNRWA, The Palestinian Information and Technology Association and with the support of the Palestinian Investment Fund and the Welfare Foundation through the leadership of Professor Awartani who will report on our findings in the region. Palestine, then, will become the model after which other countries will adapt this initiative to their own needs and realities, as is already happening with the creation this past September of Education by All for the Well-Being of Children Wales.

I wish to close by expressing our desire at UEF to develop a multifaceted collaborative relationship with Al Quds University.

Thank you.