

**Elham Palestine National Consultative Meeting**  
**Fostering Inspiring Initiatives**  
*Towards*  
**Education by All for the Well Being of Children**

**Speech made by Daniel Kropf, Executive Vice-Chair, Universal Education Foundation**

Your Excellency Dr. Nassser El-Dein El-Sha'er, Minister of Education  
Your Excellency Dr. Radwan Al-Ahras, Minister of Health  
Your Excellency Dr. Mustafa Barghuti, Minister of Information and Media  
Director General of the Welfare Association, Dr. Atallah Kuttab  
Chief Education Program/UNRWA, Dr. Muhannad Beidas  
Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

Salam aleikum

I do not speak Arabic. However, I have lived many experiences that have showed me how Palestinian families care for their children and I am particularly struck by a famous proverb

*Auwladuna akbaduna tamshi ala el a'rd*

**How can we all (together and on our own) create learning environments that nurture the well-being of children?**

That is the issue that we at Universal Education Foundation asked ourselves.

To answer that, we had to agree **first** on how we describe well-being.

The WHO definition of Health says:

***Health is a complete state of physical emotional mental and social well-being not to be confused with the absence of disease or infirmity***

and the four pillars of UNESCO are:

***learning to be -- learning to do -- learning to know -- and learning to live together***

Agreeing with those definitions, we concluded that if we wanted to communicate in a relatively simple way we would say:

***Well-being is the realization of one' own physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual potential.*** 3

Our vision therefore is: ***Education by All for the Well Being of Children***

As parents we know that our values, customs and the way we behave, will influence our children. Children do what you do and not what you tell them to do.

They are also influenced by their teachers, coaches, what they watch on TV, the games they play with computers, the behavior of other children and adults, what they are told to do when they are not well and so on.

Education doesn't just happen inside schools and within the school day. It happens in every aspect of children's life.

So education is the responsibility of all – therefore the larger community needs to be involved.

***So why is that so important?***

The different institutions and businesses that influence our children are often focused on parts of the whole – very important aspects but not on well-being as a whole.

The school system is focused on creating an opportunity for children to be part of society and, in the end, to find the means to sustain themselves.

The health and public health systems are focused primarily in preventing and curing diseases.

The Media systems are focused on creating sufficient stimuli and arousal so that they can reach and keep their targets and audiences, satisfying advertisers.

ICT wants to be innovative and of service, pushing the science of new technologies and meeting what the customer may want. However, well-being and the impact of these technologies are not always a primary concern.

Additionally, if we want to deeply understand what well-being means for our children, we need to bring together different disciplines -- such as psychology, sociology, pedagogy, anthropology, genetics, public health, medicines (the approaches from the

West and the East), neurosciences, spirituality, sports and nutrition just to name a few – *they have different terms of reference and they rarely communicate with each other.*

**So again, how can we all create learning environments that nurture the well being of children?**

The first thing to do is to ask them, ask our children. *They are our client -- our raison d'etre.* They instinctively know what is good for them and they are able to express it if we listen to them with curiosity and desire to learn.

That brings us to our purpose: we *seek to inspire people to listen more to children and to take initiatives for their well-being* in these various learning environments.

We want to inspire and we want to bring together different sectors of society – especially the areas of Health and Public Health, Education, Media and ICT so that, together and on their own, they can find their passion and responsibility – the way and means to rise to the challenge of being the parents of all the children, interested in and dedicated to their well being.

Again as parents we know that each one of our children is unique -- each is the actor/actress, camera operator and editor of the reality he/she experiences. We know that each child needs and deserves special care and attention.

Today, with the ICT and Media technologies available, we can address the uniqueness of each child, if we pull our resources together by creating new connections between sector mandates and disciplines.

*We can treat each child as a unique treasure whose unfolding potential is at the heart of our purpose.*

**Education by all for the well-being of children role is, therefore, to create a neutral platform, serve as a catalyst and propel a movement where we can facilitate the conditions for others to act, inspired by this shared vision and purpose**

The UEF board - a board composed of people from Asia, the Middle East, Europe, South Africa and the USA - was here last November and was very impressed by the commitment of your Ministry of Education and other sectors of society to improve children's well being. We came to the conclusion that, even if the conditions here are so difficult due to the current situation, your willingness to take responsibility, your creativity, coping skills and endurance are an inspiration to the world. As such UEF

decided to move on with our pilot here, at the same time as the one in Wales, trusting that in the spirit of venture philanthropy we will find local partners to support it.

In Wales we have licensed our program to the University of Wales Institute Cardiff of which the Prince of Wales is the Chancellor. They are in the process of launching the Voice of Children Survey and setting up Education by All for The Well-Being Of Children in Wales. That will include their Children's Parliament, the Minister for Children that spans across 8 different Ministries and other key players from their society. Professor Awartani our Secretary-General and my dearest friend has been inspiring and instrumental in creating the momentum for that to happen.

He will be speaking in more details about our activity here, but before that I want to bring you the wishes and congratulation of all our partners:

- the European public Health Alliance,
- the European Institute of Education of Education and Social Policy
- the Madariaga European Foundation,
- Media in Education Trust,
- the Global Alliance for ICT and Development'
- the United Nations Fund for International Partnership,
- the International Partnership Network',
- World Education,
- Academy for Educational Development
- and last but not least our partners the Education Development Center

***The success we hope you achieve in Palestine, despite all the difficulties and uncertainties you encounter, will continue to be an inspiration for many other countries.***