

## **Universal Education Foundation**

### **The Voice of Children**

#### **General Design**

#### **Vision**

Voices of girls and boys are increasingly and more effectively heard and seen and they are actively participating in shaping their learning environment to become more conducive to their well being.

#### **Voice of Children Initiative**

The Voice of Children is a new initiative which is being designed and planned by the Universal Education Foundation and its partners. The purpose is to engage children and young people more proactively in discussions related to their learning environments. It will also catalyze their participation in reshaping their learning environments to become more conducive to their holistic personal development and well being as well as becoming more responsive to their needs and those of their communities. Four learning environments will be accorded special attention: schooling, information and communication technologies (ICTs), media and health.

Within this initiative, periodic qualitative and quantitative world surveys of children's opinions, perceptions and attitudes towards school, media, health and ICTs as learning environments, will be conducted. The purpose is to identify the impact of these environments on their overall well being as they perceive it, and to understand better the learning needs and concerns of the primary clients of the learning system.

The surveys will indicate aspects of the above learning environments which have the most positive and negative impacts on their well being. Findings will be analyzed against a number of background variables including gender, age group, type of residence (urban, rural,...), etc. Findings will be presented at the Universal Education Forum and will be disseminated to stakeholders in education, health, media and ICT systems.

The insights provided by the surveys constitute significant contribution to the current intense debate on reforming education systems and to the design of new interventions by governments, civil society or business organizations. Bringing the voices of the new

generation to the educational reform agenda is consistent with the global thrust towards widening and deepening citizens' participation and youth empowerment

## **Design considerations**

### ***Qualitative/quantitative***

The survey will consist of two components, qualitative and quantitative.

The qualitative component consists of focus groups and individual interviews conducted with groups of children of certain age-groups. The composition of the groups will try to reflect, as deemed practicable, the socio-economic profile of the country or region being surveyed. The focus groups and interviews will be based on an open approach that enables participants to voice freely and in depth their views, concerns, needs, and perceptions of various issues related to each of the indicators being presented. They will be organized and moderated according to well-established best practices of qualitative research. The findings will be analyzed and reported and comparative analysis will be undertaken according to sets of categorical variables these findings will be disseminated according to a dissemination plan outlined below.

The quantitative survey will be based on the best practices of survey research methodologies. Appropriate samples will be selected from the target population. The sample selection will be probability cluster sampling which reflects the proportional distribution of the various subgroups of the target population. The questionnaire will be designed in a consultative manner which involves students, teachers and parents as well as partner organizations. It is important that the size of each questionnaire is kept small enough to remain manageable given that the target group is young people who in general will not be comfortable with a large, bulky questionnaire. This is important in terms of the quality of data obtained.

In each participating country, the survey will be conducted by a country level credible survey organization. Procedures for quality control will be developed and carefully observed throughout the survey implementation process.

### ***Scope***

During the first phase of the initiative, the qualitative and quantitative surveys will be carried out on pilot basis in at least three countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, namely Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon. Discussions are underway to include three other countries: Morocco, Yemen and Qatar.

### ***Credibility***

The design and methodology of both the qualitative and the quantitative research components will be carried out according to international best practices. It is essential for a global endeavor of such scale that the quality of the data obtained is not compromised by any constraints or limitations.

### ***Periodicity***

The power of a periodic survey is that it enables us to monitor shifts and identify the impact of certain interventions on the various indicators being measured.

The frequency and scope of the components will be determined by the needs and specificities of the country/region in focus as well as by the availability of resources. The intention is to undertake quantitative surveys once a year while the qualitative surveys will be carried out regularly with the aim of working towards annual surveys.

### ***Scalability and replicability***

The basic design of the survey will be global to ensure the overall synergy and direction, as well as allowing for possible cross-country comparisons. A certain space will be provided for country or regional level customization. The research methodology will be essentially the same. However, in addition to the general “global” indicators, there will be room for a number of contextual indicators that reflect the specific cultural, educational, societal or even developmental parameters.

### ***Modularity***

Within this initiative, three learning environments have been accorded special focus, namely schooling, ICTs, media. Examining children’s needs, concerns, attitudes and perceptions of each of these learning environments will imply sets of indicators that reflect the specificities of each one and the holistic approach to well being (i.e. cross-cutting indicators). Due to the multidimensional nature of well being, including the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual aspects, and the particular characteristics of each of the learning environments, the survey may take on a modular character.

### **Target group**

The target group for the pilot survey will consist of 9<sup>th</sup> (14/15 year olds) and 10<sup>th</sup> (15/16 year olds) graders in public and private schools. It is suggested that the sample size is chosen to guarantee a margin of error  $E=+/-3%$  in the obtained estimators.

### **Tentative time frame**

The pilot survey on the first three countries is due to be completed by mid May 2006. A report in Arabic will be published by the first of June.

### **Partnerships**

UEF works to engage partners from education, media and ICTs in the design, planning and implementation of the pilot surveys,.

### **Reporting and dissemination**

- a. Reporting
  - a. The Voice of Children Report
  - b. Press releases
  - c. Country summary reports
  - d. Policy recommendations
  
- b. Dissemination
  - a. Website of UEF and partners
  - b. Universal Education Forum
  - c. Relevant international forums in education and health: WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO,...etc
  - d. Press releases and TV shows
  - e. Policy briefs on country level
  - f. Partners networks