

**HYPOTHETICALLY SPEAKING**

## **The Nation's Three-Year Olds Experience 12 Hours of Pre-school Education A Month**

453 words

My dream is to help children un-leash every drop of their ability to become globally responsible citizens on behalf of the UAE.

Why? Because I believe that we have a great nation that has done great things in 40 short years – and its greatest assets are its people.

Professor James Heckman has a name for this - The Economics of Human Potential.

“Nurture development from birth to five, and gain a more capable, productive, valuable workforce that pays dividends for generations to come,” according to the multi, award-winning sage of childhood education.

He says that children under three who experience a professional early learning programme bring the highest return in productivity in later years.

I can't quite remember being three or being four, but I do recall going to pre-school, and I do recall my curiosity in asking how, when and why things happen the way they do.

My hunger for learning was instilled by my loving parents, my curiosity was sated by my aunts and uncles, and my character was shaped through the laughter-filled interaction with my siblings and cousins.

To this day, my parents still love to read and share their observations on life. As a child, most late afternoons as the sun set over the Arabian Gulf, the discussions would begin and I would listen, chipping in with my two-fils worth.

Fast forward, to 2021.

I see every three-year old in the United Arab Emirates being entitled and provided with 12 hours of funded education a month. Presently, less than five per cent of Emirati children under five attend a professional pre-school.

I see an established and effective pre-school education sector that nurtures physical, emotional, social and intuitive skills, alongside a well-rounded education to support the Emirati women that will make up half of the local workforce, up from around 25 per cent today.

And, I see quality crèches and pre-schools serving, in partnership, all organisations with sizable workforces.

The UAE's Vision 2021 comes of age that year, and my sense is that every aspect of that Vision will become a reality.

By being United in Responsibility, United in Destiny, United in Knowledge, and United in Prosperity, there is no doubt that the UAE will become a global benchmark for social and economic sustainability.

I see tangible world-class childcare development programmes proving their worth in enriching the lives of current and future generations.



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SPEAKING  
in the words of  
BADR AL-OLAMA**

Hypothetically speaking, this is my dream of reality.

I warm to actualities and facts.

And, as the chairman of Bidayaat, the region's first childcare development company, I commit to playing my part in establishing new benchmarks, programmes and facilities for the development of human potential in children in the UAE, and beyond.

To the end of infinity.

**ENDS**