

AUF, A New Masterpiece of the Australian Multicultural Mosaic

an interview by Zafer Polat from Zaman Australia Newspaper

Yavuzlar, CEO of the The Australian Universal Federation, AUF, says: "AUF is mostly made up of Australian's who hold a Turkish background and have successfully transitioned into the Australian multicultural society. These people aim to pass on their cultural heritage in to the environment made up of our various communities.

The Australian Universal Federation of Education and Culture, AUF, was formed quite recently. Could you please explain the aim and purpose for the establishment of the Federation?

AUF was legally established in 20 August 2012. The AUF is structurally made of several institutions located in the major cities of the five states. The common attribute of these institutions is that they give priority to the advancement of education and cultural values. Galaxy (formerly Feza) Foundation which is located in Sydney has 5 schools, Selimiye Foundation located in Melbourne has 6 schools, McYESS Foundation located in Adelaide has 2 schools, Baris Foundation located in Perth and the Queensland Foundation located in Brisbane has a school each that is running under their control. However along with their efforts to promote education, these Foundations have also been trying to promote the Turkish Culture through the holding of festivals, seminars, conferences and other events. In addition, they have services which provide financial and moral assistance to those in need of it.

Even in previous years these Foundations have collaborated together to design new projects. The increasing need for these projects have made those within the institutions such as school principals, teachers of the same faculty, accounts department and public relations officers to join together, exchange ideas and create new organizational systems so that these projects can be made effective. We can also add the preparation of educational material and the testing and evaluation of these new systems to the list. On one side these member institutions are involved in the exchange of knowledge and experiences, while on the other side we are planning projects that will increase the success of our schools. Projects which aim for member schools to surpass the Australian education standards, showing guidance in fiscal matters, and matters of professional development are all part of the future agenda of the AUF.

Recently schools have started the new year. As the Federation's CEO, what message do you have for the teachers who are working under the umbrella of the federation and for all teachers in general?

Teaching is the world's most blessed profession. It is through our teachers that the new generations' develop their character and academic skills. Generally, students start intense studying in years 11 and 12. In my opinion this is not right. Educators should not stand as idle spectators to this issue. Enjoying learning, and having a solid foundation should begin in the first years of the school life. Without applying pressure, teachers should aim to get students to like their subjects and to follow a steady study schedule.

Teachers have two important duties. Firstly; with their subject and material preparation and class management skills, they should be performing their jobs as if they were an actor in a theatre show. Secondly; through a student-centred teaching approach they should try to motivate the students so that they could be active both in the classroom and at home. They should try to bring them in to the community as 'self-motivated' individuals.

What type of activities will be running through the cultural arm of the Federation?

As seen from its name, the federation's areas of interest are mainly comprised of educational and cultural advancement. In Australia, multiculturalism is a government policy. Our federation is made up of those who have successfully lived through their period of transitioning in to Australia albeit their Turkish backgrounds. It is these same people who will be pouring out their religious, national and cultural

inspirations in to the colourful communities of Australia. Along with this, they will be part of the mosaic which consists of more than 100 nationalities. To best display our rich culture, we plan to organise seminars, panels, conferences and festivals. Similar events have been organised over the years by our member foundations. In light of supporting cultural displays, our member foundations have been attending to and supporting the events organised by Turkish Cultural Centres. Over tens of thousands of people have attended the festivals which were organised in Sydney and Melbourne last year. The festival grounds were teeming with people from all sorts of backgrounds. They visited the stalls, listened to music, and observed the artistry of 'Ebru'; they showed great interest in the historical works and of course had a taste from the Turkish cuisine.

The federation's member foundations and their related entities have recently undertaken a name change. What is the underlying purpose of these amendments?

We want to contribute to Australia's multi-culturalism. We are very sincere in this regard. In our everyday lives we are in direct contact with people from different backgrounds. However there is no doubt that the most influential and lasting interactions is in the educational institutions. By giving our foundations and schools English names, we thought that non-Turkish parents would be more comfortable with the idea of sending their children to our schools. We are resolute with our educational and mentoring principles. To date these values have made us successful and so we shall continue following this path. We are certain that the Australian youth will be satisfied with our existing educational system and its quality. We want our services to encompass not only the Turkish and the Muslim populace but also the whole of the Australian community.

The schools under the member foundations of the federation have obtained great success in the university entrance exams. What advice would you give to those students who are about to embark on their university lives?

I am assuming you are referring to our latest graduates. First and foremost, I would like to congratulate them on their excellent achievement which was made possible by a busy period of preparation and hard work. This year, our schools have again shown great success in placing their students into the top universities. The community gives great importance to all trades and professions. However the values obtained from University education cannot be undervalued. University education is somewhat different. In high school you are in a more constricted and controlled environment. When you attend university you will feel, for a short period of time, like a fish taken out from the sea. The actions of those who are lost, reckless and irresponsible should not be an example to follow. They will understand what I am saying when they receive their first University results. Maybe they will understand the reality of university life and its expectations, but we cannot know whether it will be intelligence and reason that triumph or whether it will be pleasure and entertainment that overpowers. I will advise them to hold on tightly to their moral and spiritual attainments. Our students are like pure white pages that represent their each and individual community. We expect them to add knowledge and wisdom to these pages during and after their University lives. I wish success to all our students in their educational and professional endeavours.



Mehmet Yavuzlar (right) with Cem Giray, the Curriculum Director of Amity (formerly Sule) Colleges, and Tayfun Ozdemir, the highest achiever of the school, at 2012 HSC Award Ceremony.