

By : TAN SRI MOHD. SIDEK BIN HJ. HASSAN  
KETUA SETIAUSAHA NEGARA  
Venue : THE CROWN PRINCESS HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR MALAYSIA  
Date : 16/07/2008  
Title : INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE MUSLIM  
WORLD (ICTEM)

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and a very Good Afternoon.

Y. Bhg. Prof. Dato' Dr. Syed Arabi Idid  
Rector, International Islamic University Malaysia

Deans and Directors

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Alhamdulillah, all Praise be to Allah, by whose Grace and Blessings we, the teacher educators in the Muslim world, have conferred for the past three days to deliberate, and hopefully, to plot a course for the future of teacher education in the Muslim world.

2. It is indeed a great honour for Malaysia and the International Islamic University Malaysia, IIUM to be hosting this conference. May I take this opportunity to congratulate the Institute of Education of IIUM, Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), and the Teacher Training Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia, for taking the initiative to organize this timely conference.

3. I am extremely delighted by the fact that teacher educators in the Muslim world have decided to take a proactive step. The fact that knowledge is power has never been as clear as it is today. Mastery of science and technology has become more crucial in the material well being of nations than it has ever been in the history of mankind. ﷻ½

4. What matters today is not how many natural resources a country has, but what kind of talent it has and how that talent is utilised. The inequalities between the rich and the poor countries of the world are not because there is a shortage of natural resources in the poor countries, but simply because of the unequal distribution of talents. Wealthy countries produce and/or attract more talented professionals than the poor ones. The global power game has shifted from having ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) to IQs. Having the smartest, most efficient, most reliable, creative workforce is now considered the key to national prosperity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. In response to the above realities, our countries are making more investments in educational infrastructures for early childhood, primary, and secondary education. Governments and private sectors are also investing in higher education and professional training facilities. ﷻ½

6. To become centres of excellence in culture, science and technology, Muslim education systems have to go beyond teaching students to gather, memorise, and reproduce information. The ultimate aim is to be able to provide solutions for the problems faced by the entire humanity, thereby actualising the Ummah's duty of being "witnesses" and "mercy" for humanity. This requires excellent teachers and excellent teacher education and training systems.

7. This is an unprecedented conference. Although the themes you have deliberated upon may appear like

what one would have expected from any good academic conference, your objectives extend far beyond what has been discussed here and reach out to the future. The objective of establishing a network of collaboration among Muslim teacher educators and conference participants for developing a quality assurance framework for the accreditation and certification of teachers in the Muslim world is indeed very unique.

8. I am interested in the breadth and depth of the papers presented at this conference. Many scholars from different parts of the world have deliberated on all the important aspects of teacher education in the Muslim world. They discussed the experiences, philosophies and systems of teacher education in different countries, the education of teachers to cater for different subject areas and for different levels of education, as well as accreditation and quality assurance in teacher education. I hope the findings you have shared and the networking initiated will go a long way in helping to enhance the quality of teachers in the Muslim world.

9. Unlike some other conferences, whereby scholars convene, present their papers, and go home, this conference was designed to yield tangible results and ongoing collaboration. All the learned scholars convened here have chosen to venture into the future. This could be the first step which begins our journey of a thousand miles.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. About thirty years ago, a group of learned Muslim scholars conferred in the holy city of Makkah to deliberate about the status of Muslim education in the world and how to move forward. The International Islamic University Malaysia is among the fruits of that blessed conference. Looking at the achievements of International Islamic University Malaysia and her sister institutions, such as IIU Islamabad, IUIU Uganda, and IIU Niger, no one can deny that those scholars took a step in the right direction.

11. Today, the International Islamic University Malaysia is a pride of Muslim nations. Established 25 years ago, IIUM has become a comprehensive university with academic programs in science and technology, medicine, economics, laws, education, as well as the traditional Islamic disciplines. IIUM has students and alumni from more than 100 different countries who now are building networks and connections among Muslim societies.

12. Every year IIUM scholars are winning awards and accolades in diverse international events. The IIUM debating team has many times defeated teams from world renowned to emerge as the global champions and IIUM scientists have won many international prizes for innovation. Scholars at the Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences are on the forefront in creating syariah-compliant financial solutions, while those at the Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws are leaders in the harmonization of Syariah and common laws.

13. I am highlighting the achievements of IIUM for a reason. You may not realize this, but the bold step you have taken in this conference is going to colour the future of the Ummah in the years to come. Thirty years from now, our children will be enjoying the fruits of what you have initiated in these three days, Insha Allah.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. I have been apprised of your commitment to establish a "Council of Teacher Educators in the Muslim World", which is a step in the right direction. As I congratulate those who have been selected to form the Pro tem Committee, I hope and pray that they will perform the task entrusted to them with utmost commitment.

15. With the support of ISESCO, the Teacher Education Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia and Ministry of Higher Education, as well as all the institutions and organisations represented here today, the newly established council will be an excellent platform for teacher educators in the Muslim world to regularly meet and share experiences, establish uniform standards and procedures for teacher education,

certification, quality assurance, and accreditation of credentials. We may even go to the extent of having joint training programs and common credentials.

16. Considering the turbulent times and the formidable challenges the Ummah is facing today, one might harbour doubts about the initiative. This is nothing new. Consider the feeling of the scholars who convened in Makkah thirty years ago. Their proposition to establish institutions like IIUM, which are both comprehensive and Islamic, and at par with any public institutions of higher learning must have looked like an exercise in futility to some observers. The initiators of this idea, however, looked not at the possibility of failure but at the fruits of success. It is because of their determination and commitment that we have these institutions today.

17. Because of the small first step they took and their commitment and dedication to the actualization of their goal, our children have a choice to excel in the worldly sciences while having a firm grounding in their religion. Many of them are working on creating innovative Islamic solutions to the problems of the ummah and human kind at large.

18. To achieve the lofty goal you have embarked upon in this conference, there has to be concerted action. If you take but a few steps and stop, you reach nowhere. Likewise, if you take many steps, but head in the wrong direction, you might never reach your intended destination. From the deliberations you have had here, I trust that you are moving in the right direction. The faster you follow this with subsequent steps, the faster you will reach the destination.

19. I have been informed that you have come up with a follow-up action plan. The faster you embark on implementing it, the better. I am looking forward to participating in a follow-up seminar or conference in the near future during which we will have more concrete steps and clear milestones.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

20. Before ending my brief remarks, allow me to highlight one point. The whole world is looking at us. You are all aware how the Muslim nations, although they are blessed with so many valuable resources, are currently facing formidable challenges. The best way out of the present quagmire is education. We have to provide our children with the best education. We have to equip them with the knowledge and skills fit for global leaders. But before we can do that, we need excellent educators. The future of the ummah depends on the educators who are the heirs of the prophets.

21. I pray to Allah that this International Conference on Teacher Education in the Muslim World becomes a new and positive direction for education in the Muslim world. May Almighty Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, bless the proposed Council on Teacher Education in the Muslim World with success.

21. Finally, with Bismillahir rahmanir rahim, I officially close the International Conference on Teacher Education in the Muslim World.

Thank you.

Wabillahittaufiq walhidayah

Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.