



WELCOME SPEECH

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Assalamualaikum w.b.t. dan Salam Sejahtera

The Honorable Dato' Seri Tan Seri Musa bin Mohamad,
Minister of Education Malaysia Dato' Ambrin bin Buang,
Secretary-General of Education Malaysia, Datuk Abdul Rafie b.
Mahat,

Director-General of Education,

Malaysia Directors and Officers from the Ministry of Education,

State Education Directors,

Directors from Teacher Training Colleges

Principals and Headmasters,

Lecturers and Teachers

Our Friends from the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.



1. A very good morning. Today we are honored to have with us our Honorable Minister of Education to grace this occasion despite his hectic schedule. We are indeed privileged to have this rare opportunity to meet and to share our experiences with practitioners, policy makers and experts in three major disciplines i.e. Science, Mathematics and English.

2. The year 2003 is a year of great significance in the history of education development in this country. This is the first time after 21 years that English is used in the classroom to teach Science and Mathematics. The aim of this policy change is to enhance students' knowledge in these two key subjects through a good grasp of the English language.

Ladies and gentlemen.

3. Malaysia aims to be a producer and developer of technology in the years to come, and no longer simply a consumer. In light of this noble aim, it is necessary that we provide our children with the very best foundation upon which to build the Malaysia of the future. Needless to say, English is arguably the most important global *lingua franca* for science, communications and technology. Most of the world's knowledge is stored in this language. Malaysian students have an advantage in developing these fields if they are familiar with the language in which the greatest amount of research is written.



4. Equipping our students with the instrument to access information is vital to the achievement of Vision 2020, which is a carefully planned response to global change and development. We have now reached a critical juncture in our development – the transitory phase between an information-based society and that of a knowledge-based society. To gain the competitive edge, it is absolutely essential that we prepare our children with the means for retrieving and applying information.

5. The policy to change the medium of instruction in the teaching of Science and Mathematics from Bahasa Malaysia to English poses special challenges not only for teachers who have been trained in the Malay medium but also to those trained in English, whose professional experience has largely involved the use of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction for the past twenty over years.

6. In light of these considerations and to facilitate the switch from Bahasa Malaysia to English, the English Language Teaching Centre or ELTC proposed an English Language enhancement program known as English for the Teaching of Mathematics and Science, now popularly known as ETeMS. That was one and a half years ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen.



7. Today, we are here to listen to our practitioners. We want to know the challenges they face in the classroom and training room, and the strategies they used to resolve these challenges.

8. I have personally experienced myself the trial and tribulations our teachers face, especially those in the remote areas. I am really touched. They are the unsung heroes, the ones whose classroom life is as turbulent as the surge and thunder of the Great Rejang River.

9. We are here to share these wonderful stories, not that there are sweet to the ears but for the realities that they reveal. Teaching is often a lonely job despite the fact that teachers face about 200 students per day. It is not a job for the faint-hearted. Students have to be persuaded to want to learn and to believe that learning is good for them. Parents and the wider society have to be convinced that schools are not factories and that learning takes time. And potential graduates have to be motivated to join the teaching profession. We hope by sharing the sweet and bitter stories, we will come to understand that teaching is indeed a noble profession.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

10. Sharing and listening to our own stories are too limiting. To further enrich and extend our knowledge and experience, we have also invited both local and foreign professionals who have the experience of working with teachers involved in language transition



situations such as those from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Australia and the United Kingdom to join us at this conference. We want to listen to their stories and their challenges. We want to know how they handle those challenges. We want to learn.

11. The change in the medium of instruction should not be seen as so frightful. We should believe in our capacity to learn. We must have this belief in ourselves. We must see change as an opportunity for development and growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

12. Here I would like to take the opportunity to commend our teachers from primary and secondary schools who are here to present their stories. They have taken the time to record their experiences and reflected upon them. Today, they are here to share with us their trials and tribulations in getting the national policy implemented. Bravos to them!

13. I am also very pleased that ELTC has taken the initiative to organize this conference given that it has a very small staff and little resources. However, I am confident that with their expertise, this conference will contribute towards achieving the goals that we have set for ourselves to improve the implementation of the new policy.

14. Lastly, I hope this conference will provide the platform and the opportunity for the sharing ideas and for future networking between



countries and amongst professionals. I hope the interaction will synergize us and further enrich our understanding of the challenges confronting us.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Once again with great pleasure, I would like welcome our Honorable Minister to this conference and to invite him to deliver his keynote address. Thank you.