



SPEECH BY
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THE PREMIER OF SARAWAK
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
OPENING CEREMONY OF SARAWAK PRESCHOOL
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2022
(KONVENSYEN ANTARABANGSA PENDIDIKAN
PRASEKOLAH 2021)

GRAND BALLROOM
PULLMAN HOTEL, MIRI
26 AUGUST 2022; 3.00 PM

[SALUTATION]

(INTRODUCTION)

1. Alhamdulillah, praise be to Allah S.W.T. as for with His bounty and grace, we can gather here today, at the opening ceremony of Sarawak Preschool International Convention 2022.

2. First, I would like to express my special thanks to the Minister of Women, Early Childhood and Community Wellbeing Development, Dato Sri Hajah Fatimah Abdullah for inviting me to officiate at the opening ceremony of this Preschool International Convention 2022.

3. This is the second international convention organized by the ministry after the first one last year for the benefit teachers, care givers, practitioners, preschool and childcare operators, parents and those who are passionate about early childhood care and education.

4. Last year, it was held virtually, and this year as the situation permits, the ministry is able to organize it in hybrid mode. On that note, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ministry for organizing this international convention, bringing together both local and international speakers to present papers; and educators to participate as well as share experiences with regards to early childhood care and education. Well done and congratulations for your continuous efforts in ensuring Sarawak leads in early childhood care and education.

Early Childhood Care and Education

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. We envision that Sarawak will be a thriving society driven by data and innovation where everyone enjoys economic prosperity, social inclusivity, and sustainable environment as planned in our Post-Covid Development Strategy (PCDS) 2030. In our journey to achieve this, it is very important for us to have quality human capital. The formation of quality human capital of course starts with a very strong foundation of early childhood care and education.

6. The Sarawak Government has been putting great emphasis in early childhood care and education (ECCE). Quality ECCE is indeed important as a foundation in providing the building blocks for educational achievement, character building and societal wellbeing. Participation in high-quality early childhood care and education is crucial for the personal development, social integration, successful lifelong learning and later employability.

7. Realizing the importance of early childhood care and education, in 2020, the Sarawak Government decided to hand-over SeDidik, a state-owned early childhood provider which was previously under Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), to the Ministry of Women, Early Childhood and Community Wellbeing Development headed by Yang Berhormat Dato Sri Hajah Fatimah Abdullah.

8. We strongly believe that the step taken to hand over SeDidik to the Ministry was appropriate and timely, in line with the establishment of Early Childhood Development Division of the Ministry in 2017. Sarawak, through the ministry, can give more focus on early childhood care and education.

9. The responsibilities of the Ministry include reviewing and realigning existing policies as well as formulating new ECCE policies for the state. This is to ensure we lay a strong foundation in shaping our future human capital through ECCE. Besides, the ministry can implement suitable programs pertaining early childhood care and development that suit our context and needs in Sarawak.

10. However, the responsibility to produce quality human capital does not only rely on educators, parents and society at large play important roles too. The whole ECCE ecosystem should be encouraging and supportive for healthy growth and development of our young future leaders.

11. Educators and care givers however, play a more important role in educating the children helping them to achieve their full potentials, nurturing them with good values and facilitate or encourage them in their socialization with their peers.

12. In carrying out these tasks, our educators and care givers should have appropriate knowledge and skills. Continuous professional development programmes will be of great help to their knowledge and skills to ensure they provide quality ECCE service.

13. International convention such as this is one of the ways to equip our educators and care givers on the latest and up to date ECCE knowledge and skills to meet the current demand and expectations. The presentation of papers especially by international speakers will enable the to widen their horizons and perspectives in ECCE.

14. In shaping our Sarawak human capital, our young children should be taught and guided to global learning experience without losing the Sarawak local and cultural elements. Educators and care givers should be proactive in developing and enhancing their skills and knowledge through reading materials which are readily available in libraries, bookstores or even online.

15. Quality ECCE educators and care givers are somehow an important essence to quality ECCE services, which will later contribute to quality children. This will eventually help to elevate and grow Sarawak economy, raise household income and reduce urban and rural development gaps in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

16. Covid-19 has significantly impacted us, with no inclusion to any sector. We are impacted economically, socially and emotionally. Education was badly affected; schools had to be closed, face-to-face teaching, learning and physical activities were suspended, and the learning experience of our children were disrupted. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about massive disruptive changes and a threat across multiple sectors that are essential to children's optimal development.

17. It was then when some were forced to leverage on technology, especially to conduct meetings, classes and trainings using various platforms like Google Meet and Zoom. And now, having to live with pandemic everyone should be able to adapt to the new norm, and the new way of doing things.

18. Thus, our ECCE educators and care givers should be always ready, as we do not know what our next challenge might be. We

should all be ready to change based on the current and future demands in order to remain relevant to the industry, and this context in ECCE.

19. Working with young children requires multiple skills, patience, and passion. Innovation and creativity are equally important in engaging the young minds to be actively involved in the activities conducted.

20. Thus, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage educators and care givers to produce and share creative and innovative ideas and practices in ECCE. These can be presented both locally and internationally. You will be amazed of the impacts that you may have on ECCE as well as on your personal development as an individual.

Ladies and gentlemen,

21. The key point that I would like to focus here is the importance of developing quality ECCE teachers. Continuous Professional Development Programmes should be prioritized to ensure educators and care givers have certain standards to stay competent and relevant to the ECCE industry.

22. On the other hand, educators and care givers should have positive attitudes in learning and embracing new ideas, methods and skills for their personal development as well as to help our young children.

23. I am very glad to know that the ministry will embark on digital literacy and coding program for our young children. The ministry will surely get my strong support for such programme. I believe this program will have positive impacts on both the educators and children. With this, I would like to again congratulate the Ministry for organizing this convention with the theme relevant to our current situation and also for implementing various initiatives and programmes towards quality ECCE in Sarawak.

(CLOSING)

Ladies and gentlemen,

24. To conclude, once again I would like to congratulate the organizer, Ministry of Women, Early Childhood and Community

Wellbeing Development as well as all the strategic partners who are involved in making this convention possible. To all the participants, I hope that you can make full use of the knowledge gained, be creative and innovative educators and strive to be the best in everything you do.

25. With the words of Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, I declare open the Sarawak Preschool International Convention 2022 with the theme "Adaptability and Resilience In the New Norm".

Thank you.