

SPEECH BY MS INDRANEE RAJAH, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF LAW AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE OPENING OF THE WORLD ASSOCIATION OF LESSON STUDIES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2012 ON WEDNESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2012, AT 8:45 AM AT THE LEE KONG CHIAN LECTURE THEATRE, NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Professor Lee Sing Kong, Director of NIE,

Associate Professor Christine Lee, President of the World Association of Lesson Studies (WALS) and Chair of WALS 2012 Organizing Committee,

Mr Chan Poh Meng, President, Academy of Principals, Singapore,

Good morning

1. I am happy to join you for the World Association of Lesson Studies 6th International Conference. I understand this is the first time that the WALS international conference is being held in Singapore and we have an overwhelming response with nearly 2,000¹ participants from over 24 countries. To all of our guests from overseas, welcome to Singapore - I hope you will take full advantage of the opportunities over the next few days to make new contacts and exchange ideas.

2. We are living in exciting times. The 21st century has been, and will continue to be, an age of rapid social, economic and technological changes. Every country in the world is seeking to improve its education system not only because they want to keep up with these changes, but more importantly, because all nations also recognize that the education of children is of inestimable value to the future of society. With educators and educational researchers representing Asia, Europe, USA, the Middle East, Australia and Africa, this International Conference provides an excellent platform for the rich sharing

¹ For SMS' info; there are 1180 participants

of research and experiences on the themes of Challenging Practice, Enhancing Partnerships and Nurturing the Child.

3. In Singapore, we recognize the need to closely examine our education system and plan ahead to ensure that every child will have access to high quality education. We are having a National Conversation with Singaporeans from diverse walks of life to examine our practices, enhance our partnerships and discuss how we can nurture our children to be global citizens of the 21st Century. I see that this Conference is one of many platforms that allows our Singaporean educators and teachers to carry on this conversation, and to engage with their overseas counterparts from all over the world on these ideas. I am keen to hear from our Singaporean delegates their learning points from this Conference and how these can push forward the National Conversation on education in Singapore.

4. I understand that Lesson Study and was told that Lesson Study involves teachers coming together and looking at student learning and saying: "Is this working for students? And if it's not working, how do we as teachers change it to make it work?" I also understand that in Japan, where a form of lesson study originated, it is seen as a powerful means of enhancing teacher capacity and heightening teachers' sensitivity to how their students are learning. As a policy-maker, I was interested to read that lesson study has also become a useful means of informing policy-making in Japan. To quote Catherine Lewis, a leading Lesson Study expert from the United States, "In Japan, policy makers realize that even the most carefully crafted policies are just blots of ink on paper until teachers bring them to life in a classroom". I look forward to hearing from Professor Akita from Tokyo University as she shares on *Building Learning and Caring Communities through High Quality Lesson Studies* in her keynote address.

5. I am told that many other countries have instituted their ways of studying teacher practice and student learning, and that many papers and symposia are being presented at this Conference on these diverse forms of inquiry into teacher practice and student learning. For example, Hong Kong and Sweden have Learning Study based on

Variation Theory, and, in China, there are the public lessons. Lesson study is a wonderful way of getting teachers to rethink their classroom practices. It is fitting therefore that one of the themes for this conference is “Challenging Practice”.

6. I am, therefore, encouraged that 737 of our teachers from 151 schools are at this Conference presenting 130 papers on their experiences in action research and observations of student learning. More than two-thirds of our schools have teams engaged in Lesson Study. Teachers in our schools are partnering educational researchers from NIE and MOE to conduct lesson study cycles and action research in their classrooms. For example, the Educational Technology Division of the Ministry of Education has partnered North Vista Primary School and Paya Lebar Methodist Girls’ School and will be presenting a symposium on applying Lesson Study to the professional development of teachers in an ICT-based Mother Tongue Language Programme.

7. The World Association of Lesson Studies plays a significant role in bringing educators and educational researchers from around the world to promote this concept of enhancing teacher capacity and heightening teachers’ sensitivity to how their students are learning. The fact that we have representation from over 24 countries here at this International Conference is testament to the importance of the second theme of this conference, “Enhancing Partnerships”. It is at international gatherings such as this, that a cross-pollination of ideas can take place, as academics, educators and practitioners from around the world share and exchange findings and experiences. I am sure potential research collaborations and partnerships across nations will arise from this conference.

8. The main goal in challenging practice and enhancing partnerships is to find the best possible ways to enhance the development of our students holistically, and nurture them as learners. I am sure that, at this Conference, you will be sharing many ideas and studies on how to improve our children’s learning.

9. I want to congratulate the co-organizers of this conference – World Association of Lesson Studies, NIE and the Academy of Principals – for coming together in partnership to provide educators and researchers with an opportunity to be engaged in generative conversations about improving children’s learning.

10. I wish all of you a fruitful and productive conference as you continue to challenge practices, enhance partnerships and nurture learners.

11. Thank you.

Prepared by : National Institute of Education

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