



**P R I M E
M I N I S T E R**

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,
AT THE SEMINAR CELEBRATING WORLD TEACHERS' DAY
WITH THE THEME
“THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND TEACHERS IN THE
NATIONAL IDENTITY BUILDING PROCESS”**

“EDUCATION AS A CORNERSTONE FOR BUILDING DEMOCRATIC VALUES”

**Dili Conventions Centre
12 October 2016**



Palácio do Governo,
Avenida Presidente Nicolau Lobato,
Dili, Timor-Leste

Thank you very much, Mr Minister of State, Coordinator of Social Affairs and Minister of Education

Your Excellencies

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

The Vice-Ministers of Education

The First Lady

The Vice-Chancellors of the Universities of Timor-Leste

Your Excellencies

The Members of the Diplomatic Corps

The Heads of Bodies under the Direct and Indirect Administration of the Ministry of Education

The Representatives from Non-Governmental Organisations

Moderators and guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I want to start by addressing all teachers and congratulating them on their World Day, which took place last week and which the Government, through the Ministry of Education, celebrated over these past two days.

More importantly, I would like to congratulate you for your daily work, effort and dedication, as well as for imparting your knowledge and increasing the cognitive abilities of our students each and every day.

Your wisdom and knowledge make you the most important agents in educating our children. This is why it is always my pleasure to address such a distinguished audience and the reason I now ask for a round of applause for all of you!

Education is a right that is enshrined in our Constitution and that is unquestionably essential to the development of any country. Education teaches students and trains them to apply their new knowledge, so that they may contribute to the various fields of the development of Timor-Leste.

As such, Education must be regarded as more than the transmission of scientific contents. It must be regarded beyond the theoretical knowledge we transmit to our students. This acknowledgement must start with teachers, since it is on your shoulders that rests the rewarding task of educating our students.

The first notion we must realise is that Education is more than the classic idea of reeling off information; it is more than following academic curricula to the letter and teaching languages, mathematics, sciences, arts and culture. One must not forget that when we speak of Education we are also speaking of rearing citizens and integrating them in society.

Indeed, teachers do not evaluate only the scientific knowledge acquire. They also evaluate behaviour in accordance with society's rules and standards.

As such, teachers are also key elements in the shaping of their students' personalities. This means that you teachers convey your students the moral and critical principles that prepare them to exercise their citizenship, based on a democratic State under the rule of law such as ours.

Exercising the principle of citizenship in a democracy implies promoting the potential for individuals to take part in the public and political spheres. Individuals must have their values and principles shaped in a manner that is conscious and free, while their ethical principles must be coherent with the actions they perform and with the behaviours they display.

Raising the awareness of students concerning democracy, human rights, freedom, justice, mutual respect, respect for public goods, respect for other people's goods, equality and equity through active participation should be crosscutting issues in any subject, since they are closely linked with the ethical training of students.

These are subjects that must always be present in the daily lives of the institutions and in the behaviour of their staff and their teachers. Teachers must be embodiments of these subjects, since they be references in the daily lives of their students.

Just a few days ago, during my address at the International Conference on "Citizenship, Peace and Wellbeing", sponsored by the First Lady and by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr José Ramos-Horta, I underlined the importance of citizenship in obtaining peace and stability. Today I say that Education is the bridge linking citizenship to peace and stability.

In view of the above, there must be greater awareness of the broad role played by Education. Naturally this entails not only teachers but also the institution itself, namely the method and the way in which it teaches students, the school environment it provides and the manner in which relationships are encouraged between everyone, in situations of social and cultural equality as well as in situations of social and cultural diversity.

Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

Education provides vital support when building democratic values.

We do not learn from manuals and school books alone; indeed, much is learned through practice. And for students, regardless of the level of education they are in, this practise is embodied in their teacher. If their teacher acts and behaves in a way that is antidemocratic, or in other words authoritarian, at least some of the students will surely grow up to be antidemocratic and authoritarian adults.

Teachers are more than our mentors and our masters in conveying knowledge. Teachers are also role models in the way they act and behave. In addition to the enormous task of facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, teachers must also reflect values and principles to those they teach and to those around them.

Parents and teachers are the persons that have the most influence over children, including in terms of shaping their personality. As such, it is essential that teachers increasingly convey to their students the concepts of the values of democracy.

These concepts are very beneficial to students and may also influence others in their households and in their social spheres, thereby contributing to make them better understood.

As the great Greek philosopher and teacher Socrates said on what it means to be a teacher “I cannot teach anybody anything, I can only make them think”. Indeed, stimulating critical thought and helping to shape mindsets and personalities is putting Education at the service of democracy.

Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

When we speak of “Quality Education” – which, as you know, is the 4th Sustainable Development Goal of the 2030 Agenda, whose implementation is part of the commitment made by Timor-Leste – we are necessarily speaking of all of this.

We are speaking of promoting learning opportunities and of ensuring inclusive and equitable education. We are speaking of education for sustainable development, based on human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity and the promotion of peace.

As such, I urge you all, particularly you teachers, to continue imparting your scientific knowledge and to be role models of the highest principles of humanity and democracy. I am sure you will take great pride in helping to educate our students and to shape their personality.

I would like to reiterate once again the Sixth Constitutional Government’s commitment towards the sector of Education, which is a priority for us. I also want to reaffirm that we will continue working with dedication in order to educate our boys and girls.

Because we are not alone in this effort, I would also like to seize this occasion to thank in particular the Governments of Portugal, Brazil and Cuba, as well as other Governments that have contributed so much to advance Education in Timor-Leste.

I would like to conclude by wishing you – and I see all municipalities represented here by their teachers, including CAFE coordinators – all the best in your work. I trust that this Seminar will further increase your knowledge by enabling you to take part in the panels

that will follow, as well as in other events that may take place during October, the month that Timor-Leste has dedicated to Education.

I thank you all and wish you success in your work!

I hereby declare today's session open.

12 October 2016

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo