Issues in Education

Ratnawati Mohd Asraf

IIUM PRESS
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
Published by:

HUM Press
International Islamic University Malaysia

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Edited By:

Ratnaawati Mohd Asraf

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Member of Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia - MAPIM
(Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council)

Printed by:
HUM PRINTING SDN. BHD.
No. 1, Jalan Industri Batu Caves 1/3
Taman Perindustrian Batu Caves
Batu Caves Centre Point
68100 Batu Caves
Selangor Darul Ehsan
# TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Ibn Khaldun on the Role of Knowledge, Skills, and Values in the Rise and Fall of Civilizations: Implications for Muslim Educators in the 21st Century  
   *Siraje Abdollah Ssekamanya*  
   1

2. The Concept of Literacy  
   *Kamal J. Badrasawi & Noor Lide Abu Kassim*  
   21

3. Character Development and Islamic Civilization in Uganda: Implications for Muslim Educators  
   *Ssekamanya Siraje Abdallah*  
   35

4. Education for All and Children's Right to Education in Malaysia  
   *Zaleha Kamaruddin, Ismail Sheikh Ahmad, and Syahnaz Sulaiman*  
   53

5. Balancing Cultural Plurality and National Unity Through Education: The Case of Malaysia  
   *Rosnani Hashim*  
   75

6. Standards in Education  
   *Noor Lide Abu Kassim*  
   99

7. Standards in Education: The Meaning of Grades  
   *Ratnawati Mohd Asraf*  
   121

8. Standard Setting Methods  
   *Noor Lide Abu Kassim and Ahmad Zamri Khairani*  
   137

9. Islamic Higher Education: Ensuring and Maintaining Quality  
   *Ratnawati Mohd Asraf*  
   165

10. Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Need for Students' Direct Involvement  
    *Mwebesa Umar*  
    177
THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

Kamal J. Badrasawi & Noor Lide Abu Kassim

INTRODUCTION

In many countries in the world, there is much concern with literacy and numeracy skills. That is because of the vital roles that these two skills play in the development of the individual and the country. They have been found to contribute to the achievement and improvement of the economic growth and the social cohesion of a country (Allowy, Freebody, Gilbert, Muspratt, 2002; Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2000; Department for Education and Skills for Life, 2004; Lankshear & Knoble, 2006).

Most theorists and researchers stress the social effects of literacy, variously crediting it with leveraging up economies, building social cohesion, establishing democracy, and establishing and maintaining levels of civic well-being (Allowy et al., 2002, p. 24).

According to Bhola (cited in Blunch, 2001), literacy and numeracy have a strong relationship with economic and social developments of countries in the world. Blake and Blake (2002) pointed out that the relation between literacy and economic progress is clear and most countries, if not all, have come to the conclusion that developing skilful and literate citizens is instrumental to their economic and social development. This view is reiterated in a recent report in Australia which stresses the need for learners to have higher levels of literacy and numeracy in the globalized world.