

Presentation Speech – Glocal Education Conference (Turkey)

Esteemed participants, Distinguished colleagues,

Today, I am greatly honored to be here with you representing Turkey. I extend my sincere thanks to the Jeollanamdo Education Office and all the organizers of the Glocal Education Conference for bringing together educators from around the world who believe in learning and collaboration.

Today's theme, "Symbiotic Classrooms," actually reminds us of the most fundamental value at the core of education: mutual growth, shared learning, and collective transformation. In Turkey, this understanding strongly aligns with our educational approach that we call the "Maarif Model."

The Maarif Model aims to nurture students as holistic individuals, equipping them not only with academic knowledge but also with moral, social, and emotional intelligence. In this model, teachers, students, and society form a living educational ecosystem as a whole. Each element supports and nourishes the other, just as in symbiotic relationships found in nature. For instance, when compared to Finland's student-centered education reforms and Singapore's pedagogical innovations, the Maarif Model similarly supports individualized learning processes. However, the unique aspect of this model is its effort to integrate Turkey's cultural and historical context into the education system. In other words, knowledge transfer is not merely a technical process; it is also a journey where values, culture, and identity are kept alive.

Within this framework, the Maarif Model aims to integrate cultural and moral values such as mutual aid, respect, loyalty, justice, and honesty with lessons, rather than focusing solely on academic achievement. For example, when teaching the concept of "justice" in social studies, it is associated with the Ottoman judicial system or Mevlana's teachings; thus, students learn to reconcile universal principles with their own cultural heritage. Additionally, education programs examine the understanding of humanity and society by Turkish-Islamic thinkers such as Farabi, Ibn Sina, Yunus Emre, and Hacı Bektas-i Veli, allowing students to connect with their roots and view human values from a universal perspective.

In visual arts and music classes, cultural elements such as Turkish miniatures, ebru art, and folk music are utilized, enabling students to recognize both local and universal aesthetic values. Furthermore, civilization workshops, cultural heritage trips, and value-themed theater activities organized in schools contribute to students' experiential learning about historical figures, traditions, and national identity.

In addition to the Maarif Model, different and practice-based methods are also being implemented in Turkey, especially in vocational education centers.

As a vocational education center administrator myself, I would like to briefly mention these approaches.

Vocational education in Turkey is a system that aims to nurture students not only with theoretical knowledge but also with experiences gained in real work environments.

The foundation of this model targets equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will allow them to transition directly into professional life upon graduation.

With this understanding, we, as Şişli Hamza Saruhan Vocational Education Center, are at the heart of vocational education.

In our school, students spend four days of the week at businesses and one day at school.

This way, learning continues not only within the classroom but also in workshops, restaurant kitchens, hotels, and real production areas.

While students learn the intricacies of their profession from masters at workplaces, they combine this with the theoretical knowledge they receive at school.

Thus, a continuous cycle forms between knowledge and skill, theory and practice, school and the business world.

This process significantly develops our students' self-confidence, entrepreneurial spirit, and adaptation skills.

Businesses, in turn, find the opportunity to meet young people who understand the dynamics of the sector, are willing, and have a high sense of responsibility.

In this respect, vocational education creates a truly symbiotic relationship between school, student, and the business world.

Each party nurtures the other, develops it, and transforms together.

We believe that this interaction is a model that will shape the educational understanding of the future.

Because the greatest power of education emerges at the point where knowledge merges with life.

Additionally, we believe that the greatest success in future education lies in the ability to combine emotional intelligence with digital intelligence.

While technology provides access to unlimited knowledge, a human-centered educational approach—namely empathy, ethical values, and critical thinking—gives meaning to this knowledge.

In line with this understanding, we are considering an international project called "Glocal Culinary Exchange."

Within the scope of this project, we aim for our vocational education students to organize online workshops with their peers in different countries, creating a "cultural culinary dialogue" by introducing local food cultures.

For example, while our students in Turkey introduce traditional Turkish cuisine, students in Korea or Italy will share their local recipes; thus creating a common learning environment in terms of both cultural diversity and gastronomic creativity.

At the end of the project, students will design "multicultural menus" by combining the unique flavors of their countries and experience sustainable gastronomy in practice.

We believe that this process will develop future chefs not only technically but also in terms of cultural empathy, innovation, and collaboration skills.

In conclusion, symbiotic classes are not just physical spaces; they are the embodiment of a collaborative learning culture. This culture emphasizes solidarity over competition, collective progress over individual achievement. And with this understanding, we believe that education is the strongest bridge connecting nations, cultures, and values.

Thank you all very much for listening to me.

