

Adyan Foundation and NDU's Faculty of Humanities Organizes International Conference on Cross Cultural Education

2nd-3rd June 2011, NDU

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At the initiative of the [Adyan Foundation](#), Notre Dame University, Louaizé, recently co-hosted a two-day International Conference on Cross-Cultural Education from the 2nd to 3rd June 2011. The Conference featured policy makers, academic leaders, and students from around the globe discussing a plethora of cross-cultural topics ranging from the “Arab Uprising” to interfaith dialogue. At the conference opening the presenters included Dr. Fadi Daou, Chairman of the Adyan Foundation, Father Walid Moussa, President of NDU, and Minister of Culture H.E. Mr. Salim Wardy. The dominating theme throughout the varied speeches was the expressed need and support for dialogue and diversity in the academic and cultural spheres.



At the panel: (from left to right). Dr. E. Sensenig-Dabbous, Prof. G. Auletta, Dr. E. Alam, Dr. Fr. G. Antaby (June 2011).

Dr. Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous echoed these thoughts. A senior researcher at the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC), Dr. Sensenig-Dabbous, represented the initiative on the Cross-Cultural Education and Methodological Challenges panel held on Friday 3rd. LERC was featured prominently in Dr. Sensenig-Dabbous' presentation titled *The Theory and Praxis of Western Research Methods in the MENA Region*. The report began by lamenting the ethnocentric policies of applied Western research methods in an Arab context. It continued by describing the cultural setting of the MENA region and its current academic policies. Researchers have difficulty accessing sensitive information due to excessive censoring, and often lack of government connections necessary when attempting to draw on pertinent data. In fact there is a general question of safety for the researchers within the region. Indeed, the application of these Western research tools in this current context is invalid, and ultimately does not yield proper results. Dr. Sensenig-Dabbous highlighted LERC's continued efforts in rectifying these current errors in ethos. He proposed a central hub of data to assist researchers in the MENA region. This central hub would ensure publications are fully founded in scientific inquiry and would provide adequate sources for the academic community. The emphasis was further deepened by discussing the current East-West divide. Dr. Sensenig-Dabbous elucidated the poignant divide between the two regions further by explaining how research is funded in Western nations, yet nations in the specific region of study, such as Lebanon, simply carry out the field research on the ground. As he explained, LERC is changing these current non-sustainable norms in the region. It greatly encourages dialogue between Western and Eastern researchers, and provides many opportunities for academics from the West to join the LERC staff in Lebanon. This ensures a positive cultural understanding between the two regions, which Dr. Sensenig-Dabbous believes to be a necessary and commendable endeavor. The presentation further developed LERC's work in Lebanon, stressing its prominent research on the effects of dual nationality, on the evacuation during the 2006 war and the importance of remittances from the Lebanese Diaspora. These necessary publications were received with interest from the international participants at the conference, as research of this controversial and meticulous nature is often not available in the respective European academic institutions.

Undeniably, the ethnocentric application of Western research methods in the MENA region reveals a faulty system; however, Dr. Sensenig-Dabbous believes this model can be altered to better suit the cultural norms of the region. Institutions such as LERC espouse Dr. Sensenig-Dabbous' views, and through their collaboration and publications are giving scholarly pursuits in the Middle East an innovative and much needed adjustment.



Souvenir photo of the conference participants (June 2011).