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Sabah-born teacher named world's best educator by Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards

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Sydney Engelbert was born and raised in Tambunan, a rural area in Sabah. - Pic credit Facebook kvkeningau/

KUALA LUMPUR: An English teacher from Sabah has been named the world's best educator by the Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards.

Sydney Engelbert, a teacher at Keningau Vocational College, also emerged the overall winner of the 2024 Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards from among 14,800 nominees from 140 countries.

Engelbert, who was born and raised in Tambunan, a rural area in Sabah, attributed her success to the support of family, friends, colleagues, and students, adding that she could not have achieved the award without their support.

"I am grateful and speechless. For starters, I never would have thought to be selected as the regional winner as other nominees were all amazing and I am truly honoured to be nominated amongst them.

"Yet, the overwhelming support that I have from my family, friends, colleagues and my students made me realise that I am not alone in this often challenging journey," she was quoted as saying by the Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards website.

Engelbert started teaching in 2019, where she learned to address her students' limited proficiency through various language art activities.

The 30-year-old said her passion for teaching was inspired by both of her parents, who were teachers.

"Both of my parents are teachers and growing up, I witnessed how many lives they touched and inspired throughout their careers."

Following this, she completed her tertiary education and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

"Despite receiving awards and recognition for their years of service, my parents would often say that the proudest thing about being a teacher is when their former and current students still remember and respect them.

"Many of their former students still remember them fondly for being their teachers. That is what made me pursue this profession."

In 2022, she co-pioneered an online exchange class programme with several vocational schools in Southeast Asia, with each cycle lasting three months.

Within two years, the programme has directly benefitted nearly 400 students and 50 teachers from the participating schools.

Engelbert is also actively involved in other internationalisation programmes, such as hosting foreign students at her school.

She is the second Malaysian to win the prestigious award, after Khalifa Affnan, who won the award in 2022.