

# PERDANA DISCOURSE SERIES: "EDUCATION"

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## PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION PUTRAJAYA

### **Prologue: Some Points on Education**

Malaysia's four leaders' perspectives in building the national identity of Malaysia as a nation are summarised as follows:

1. Tunku Abdul Rahman promoted the idea of managing the race relations of the country's plural society (A Managerial View)
2. Tun Abdul Razak added on the need for economic equity. He proposed that wide economic disparities across ethnic boundaries would eventually weaken societal bonding. He strategised through affirmative action, making the economic cake larger by introducing the New Economic Policy (A Structural View)
3. Tun Hussein Onn focused on building and protecting the integrity (moral basis) of civil society. He emphasised the need of a nation to have people with strong ethical foundations that practiced and valued democratic principles (A societal View)
4. Tun Dr. Mahathir set a new dimension to what a national identity was. He took the approach of focusing on achieving results while the approach determined the extent of bonding the people involved in the process, emanates. He promoted the idea of conformance to a world-view that to be accepted as a good nation, Malaysia must be a global player in ensuring modernity and economic resilience (A Substance-Conformance View)

Education is responsible in bringing people together, to believe in the same guiding principles, to strive towards the same goal and to practice a preferred, more idealistic way of life. Formulated wisely, the education system of a country can help that country realize its mission of nation-building

The Perdana Discourse Series is a one-day semi-structured communication platform where a prominent presenter will speak to selected cluster of audience on a predetermined topic, addressing its definition and tracing issues like policies, strategies and possible models used during the tenure of the past Prime Ministers. Discussions and issues arising from the discourse will be documented and mapped.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To offer a platform for research on thoughts of the past four Malaysian Prime Ministers
2. To allow knowledge sharing on the leadership style of the country's statesmen
3. To map the continuity of thoughts of the past leaders

## Keynote Speech

### Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh dan salam sejahtera para hadirin sekalian. Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Azman Hashim, Yang Berhormat Timbalan Menteri Pelajaran Tinggi, Yang berbahagia Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Dato'-Dato', seterusnya tuan-tuan dan puan-puan hadirin sekalian.

Firstly, thank you once again for giving me this opportunity to speak in this series, the Perdana Discourse Series, and today we are talking, we will talk about education. This morning when I went to my office, I found in the file an old book that I have written, and in this book, there was one chapter was dedicated to education. This, this book I managed to scan through and give me some idea as to what I should be speaking. The reason why this book was on my table is because I've asked for it since someone wants to translate it into the Albanian language, and they want, they want me to write an introduction of ?all of three? I am not going to write in the Albanian, I will have to write in English and I hope I will be able to translate my English. In any case, this is the saying that aaa- we should be discussing education, a subject that I was very keen upon and this book was written in 1986, quite sometime ago. And I, I think, the more we understand the subject, the better educated we will be.

Well, firstly a definition of education, or rather my definition of education. To me, education is the, the methodical spread of knowledge, the methodical spread of knowledge. Off course there has always been knowledge been spread but in a rather unsystematic way. We gain knowledge off course from our parents. When we were young, when we were small, we learn some things from them. We learn how to behave, we learn how to distinguish from what is good and what is bad, and sometimes they even teach us other subjects, but in a very unsystematic way. They have, wouldn't have classes for us, but somehow in between times they will try to impart knowledge to us, and we become educated. You may have noticed that every generation is better educated than the last generation. I will elaborate on that later on. But the systematic spread of knowledge gain momentum during the, the Islamic civilization.

As we know, people wanted to study; mainly the Qur'an and they usually gather or sit at the feet of knowledgeable people who in a very, systematic way will try to explain to them the religion. Usually ?is done? In a mosque, and the mosque are provided with corridors and shady areas and pillars. Pillars are very important because most of these learned people were very old, and they need to lean on something. So you see pictures of them learning against the pillar in the mosque and with a number of younger people gathering around them. But it was not very systematic. Nonetheless, it grew, the system begins slowly improved and as a result, the university, the Al-Azhar University was started from the madrasah in Cairo. That started of the concept of higher education in a systematic fashion. But off course over time people felt that the systematic spread of knowledge should begin very early. They should have places where the children can go and be trained, be, have knowledge imparted to them by people who are especially dedicated to the training of all the spread of knowledge.

It, it will seem very peculiar that actually we begin not from the lower end but from the upper hand. The systematization of education begins at the university level, before it comes down to the primary level and then the secondary level and then on, off course to the tertiary level. But the idea of the systematic spread of knowledge thought on and it was felt that the best time to teach would be when people were young, when they were much more able to absorb new knowledge. You will understand this when some of the, the whole people among us including myself try to play around with the computer. Old people take a long time to learn and probably never learn at all. But the young people, whether they are brilliant or not, somehow rather seems to relate themselves as the computer, and they use the computer very, very fast, and they gain knowledge from the, the very short space of time. It is simply because young people still have a lot of spaces I think, in their brains, and not clock up With all kind of unnecessary things like loving somebody or hating somebody or quarreling with somebody or feeling dissatisfied with the salary and the increasing pay that the government is giving and etc., all these things crowd out the knowledge, but young people are not worried about little children, are not worried about all these what is to them minor things.

So, there's a lot of space for them to absorb knowledge. That is why children can learn much faster than us. Try learning a new language and you will find out difficult it is. Yet, children learn their mother tongue very easily, without books they can learn very quickly

and if there are two people who, who speaks different language, languages, in their, during their childhood days, they can speak both languages. They can even speak three languages, and they move from one language to another without any difficulty at all. Off course, if you know Mr. Tony Buzan, the man who teaches us how to draw the mind map, he tells us that the number of cells in the brain so huge can go into trillions that there must be a lot of spaces. Still not taken up even in the whole people but somehow rather we have not been able to access those cells. I think only a limited number of cells in our brain can accommodate new knowledge.

So, when education became something that is recognize as important in the development of a child for the future, education became very systematic, improved all the time. Instead of just sitting at the feet of the learned man, they begin to have schools, schools improved, the methods of teaching improved, the number of subjects improved, and as the child grows older and moves into the secondary, and tertiary level, it begins to learn more about less. This is very peculiar thing, as you get older; you learn more about less things. You know doctors; they become specialists, and how they become specialists? First, they learn generally about medicine, then they decided to study one part of the human body, or one discipline, and then from that discipline, there is a special section of that discipline which requires further learning. So, you can see from the big subject it has become smaller subject, but more knowledge and then even smaller area with greater knowledge. Now if you follow this to the, to the limit, to the end degree, what will happen is that this specialist doctors would learn more and more about less and less until they came to the stage where they will know a lot about nothing.

Well, that can happen off course, so far it hasn't happened, but the logic of it is that if you keep on studying a low, a smaller area all the time, eventually you'll be studying one simple cell in the body, and you know everything about the cell and then from that cell, you go to the components of the cell and so on, so that you will be very knowledgeable about almost nothing. However, we, we think it is useful, but we think that we should make use of this methodical spread and absorption of knowledge in order to improve the quality of society. Now, we know that we cannot go through all the experiences and do all our research in order to acquire knowledge. Somebody has to do this for us first, and then we learn these things second hand or third hand.

However, there is nothing wrong with that. Others have done research work and we learn from them, and because they have done good research, work and we can gain this second hand knowledge much faster and that means that we can have more knowledge over time. In other words, the early people will have some knowledge about something, but later on, others will add to the knowledge and finally off course when they come to ask all the knowledge accumulated through the ages, would be available to us if we want to acquire that knowledge. Off course now, we have to come to the stage where the amount of knowledge available is too big for us to learn or so, even at the young age, you may have to specialize. But then that does not matter because there are other people specializing in other areas. So, within the society, there would be people knowledgeable about all kind of subjects and that society would be very educated society.

Now, why do we need education? It is simply because we want to avoid the mistakes of the past. By learning about what happened in the past we would know what was right and what was wrong and we would reject what was wrong and carry on with what is right. I like to quote from the sayings of George Santayana. I think people have heard me quoting this, maybe it is a little bit boring, but to me, it is a very important saying. What he said was that "Those who forget the lessons of history are condemned to repeat that mistakes over and over again". So, when you learn something it must be from the past. It maybe from yesterday, it maybe from hundred years ago, it maybe from the thousand years ago; it maybe from Socrates, or it maybe from Karl Marx. Therefore, the process of learning has been going on and we can access and recognize what was, what was bad, avoid what is bad and carry on with what is good and use the knowledge that we have in order to better society.

Knowledge for knowledge sake is off course not worthwhile. There are some people who feel that they must know about things, whether it is useful or not, does not matter. But some societies can afford that. I am told that if you ask a German to write on the mosquito, he will produce ten volumes. I think if you ask a Malaysian to write on mosquito, it will take one page. "It is cause dengue", period. That is all. But the thoroughness of some people enables them to go deeply into any subject, maybe it is not immediately useful but we never know whether it will turn up to be useful later on. Off course, we cannot afford at our stage of development to spend too much time on gaining

knowledge for the sake of knowledge. We want to wait, gain knowledge, and acquire knowledge that can give us some advantage that can help us to develop ourselves and to develop our society. Therefore, if the curriculum is very well drawn up and our pupils study and study very hard, we will go to have a very educated population, a population, which understands things and is conversant with knowledge in every field and this knowledge, is useful for the development of our society.

Knowledge determines whether you make progress or not, and one other things that we should notice is that knowledge seems to be inheritable, that means to say that the next generation, somehow or other, seems to possess the knowledge all by themselves. This conclusion is made because we know that every generation is much more advanced than the last generation. We are more advanced than our fathers, our grandfathers our great grandfathers. Look at the history of Malaysia, what was it like hundred years ago, or even twenty years ago. It was not as develop as sophisticated as we are now. It means that when we acquire knowledge, somehow or other, it passes on to the next generation. So when you are studying something, please remember that you are actually studying for your children, and if you think that you are doing these things for your children, not for yourself alone but for your children, I am quite sure you will study harder, unless off course you don't love children. I love children, never have enough of them. So it is a duty on the part of a society, members of society to acquire as much knowledge as possible because knowledge is what builds the quality of life, builds and contributes towards development.

I assume that all of us want to progress. We want to be better than what we are now. We want to be as good as what other people more advance than us are. We want to become by the year 2020 a develop nation. Obviously if you want to become a develop nation, you must have the ability, you must have the capacity and knowledge which you acquire through systematic education which will contribute towards that capability. Off course in today's world, because of the huge amount of knowledge that is available and that is useful, it is necessary for us to divide ourselves and acquire different knowledge for different people. It would be a tragedy if you all want to study only one subject. Supposing all of us want to study law, imagine what kind of world would be if all the people in this room are lawyers, it will be a great disaster. You know lawyers can argue both side; you just assign them, he can defend the crook, he can also become the

prosecutor. Next day he may become the prosecutor, and he will try to put the crook into the jail. So, when we have too many lawyers, my apologies to those people who are trained as lawyers, you know somebody said referred to my quotation on Shakespeare. It's not my words you know, this comes from Shakespeare, Shakespeare said, "First thing we do, we hang the lawyers". I forgot in which play it was, but this from Shakespeare. So when I quoted that, the Bar Council took umbrage and thought that I am anti lawyers, but at the moment I need a lawyer very badly.

But, but what I'm trying to say is that we have to divide ourselves to study different fields so that the society would have people who are able to do different things because there is no way in the present world for us to be able to, everything that we need to do. There must be a division on labor. In the good old days off course, the farmer would do everything by himself including shaping his own plough or sharpening his, his *tajak*. But nowadays, we have people who drive this harvesters and ploughing machine. They will do it for the farmer. The farmer need not leave his house at all, he just asks somebody else to do it, he will stay at home and that, that means that today we have division of labor within our society. There are some people who would like to study religion. The Muslim people feel that if you study religion, it will give you merit for the after life. Now, if you get married and I was a daughter gets no married that is not fair. So I could, should study religion, I shouldn't have become a doctor for, for becoming politician. Although off course those who study religion can also become politician, but if in this country we have only religious people, who will know everything about the Qur'an, the Hadith and everything, the rituals, the performance of the rituals that we must to, must to, everybody is capable of becoming the Imam, and everybody wants to become the Imam, who is going to be the Ma'mum? There will be nobody behind the Imam because everybody is capable.

So, some people study religion and study well, but other people I think should focus on other things, which are equally important for the society, and that way I think society will be able to cope with different problem. We face many, many problems and we need expertise in order to tackle these problems. We may have to defend our country. I think people who defend our country must be given a merit for the afterlife also. Then there are people who needs to, to look after the welfare of people needs to look after the health of the people, needs to look after all kind of facilities needed in a develop country,

in a developing country, in any country in fact. So there will be specialist in many areas. It is important therefore that we recognize the needs of society and we provide education to meet the needs of society. Far too often, people decide to take a subject that they like. But it's not just a question of liking; it is also a question of having to meet the needs of society, if that society wishes to develop.

So, our education system has been so designed that people can specialize in many fields. Initially off course, they just acquire general knowledge. In school, they acquire general knowledge and then as they move up into the secondary and then the tertiary level, they begin to focus on certain specific areas, which are needed for the development of society and of the country. This is something that everyone must understand; the role of education, the role of education for some people is simply to equip them with the ability to earn a living for themselves. The bigger the income, the better. Therefore, which line would give you the best income? You may conclude that in a profession perhaps the doctors would earn the most. So as you know in this country, everyone wants to study medicine. Well rather, every Indian wants to study medicine. They think that they would be eligible, they will get good dowry if they are doctors because people with eligible doctors have to pay very high dowry. Is not the same as the Malays. The Malays, the man has to pay the dowry with the Indians, is the, the girl side will has to pay the dowry. If you are doctor, you get bigger dowry. I don't know whether that is the motivation or not, but a lot of Indians want to become doctors. You go anywhere in the world, I went to Ukraine, there were Indian students study medicine in Russia and then I went to Greenland, there were Indian medical student, I went to Bali, yes there were Indian medical students, ss- speaking fluent Indonesian. Off course, they would never speak fluent Malay but when they are in Indonesia, somehow rather they acquire fluent Indonesian. So I think there should be also among the Indian, some division of labor. If you don't get a place to do medicine, do something else.

We also require people who are skilled in other areas. We want to have a society that has a portion, its people correctly so that they can do the kind of work that society needs and the, the society needs a lot of people who are trained in different fields. And off course at time certain fields are much more important than others, but what ever it is, we need to have some kind of balance yes ?that? day I was talking to the Islamic conference on Jesus or something like that, and I have found out during my visits to the

Middle East that the very rich Arabs feel that the only thing they need to do is hire people to do things for them. They themselves don't need to do anything. Some of them are qualified doctors and engineers but because they have so much money, and working as doctors would, would not earn them anymore, they decide that they hire faultiness. If you do that, you will suffer from brain atrophy, shrinking of the brain. Because like everything else, you don't use, it shrinks. You don't, if you don't walk, my wife have wants me to walk all the time, but I still have got good legs, if you don't walk, just imagine if you're made to lie in bed for one month or two months, and then one day you were asked to get out and walk, you're going to feel very *gigil*, your legs will be very weak, and you may fall down simply because you don't use the legs. If you don't use anything over time, it shrinks, and if you, if you don't use your brain, it shrinks, in a way it shrinks. So, that would cost you brain atrophy. So it is very important for us to make use of our brain all the time. To support the use of our other limbs and our capacity to do things, and the brain becomes very powerful if it carried to the, a lot of knowledge.

It is quite obvious that the society that is very knowledgeable is more likely to progress and develop, than an ignorant society. We know there are ignorance societies, there are still primitive people in this world and they are quite unable to make any progress. They seem to remain primitive through generations, but they have certain skills, which we do not have. Their skills related to their way of life for example if you ask the *Penan* to use his blowpipe to bring a monkey down, he can do that very easily. But if you ask Einstein provided with a blowpipe and tell him "please bring down that monkey", he wouldn't be able to blow even three yards in front. So, our skills are different. Whatever you do you, if do it often enough, you are going to be very skillful and that brings me to this problem of acquiring knowledge. The problem is that some people seems to have an infinite capacity to acquire knowledge. They can learn anything very, very quickly. But some people find it very difficult to acquire knowledge, to acquire any skills. But here we are fortunate, we are fortunate because God has endowed us with this capacity of acquiring anything, any knowledge any skills provided we are prepared to do it repeatedly. Whatever you do, if you do it again and again and again, you are going to become skillful. If you want to learn something in a book, if you did once you're not going to remember, but if you did twice you'll remember more, if you read ten times you remember even more, then you think yourself capable of.

Now when I went to the medical college, I had the, among I was among those with the least qualification. All the other boys the boys from Singapore and Malaysia, they all went to medical college with at least six distinctions, six, seven, eight distinctions. They were brilliant. I had only three distinctions the, and that was the highest among the Malay boys. So I was the brilliant in, you know, in a small pond, you feel big. When you enlarge the pond, you feel you are small, this is. Therefore, among the Malays I was the best. However, when mixed up with all these Chinese and Indian boys I felt very small indeed. And they told me actually to pack my bags and go home, because medical course is not for me really. With three distinctions what can you do? So, because of my consciousness that I was not up to the mark, I had to adopt certain strategies. One of them was to really concentrate and read again and again and again. I remember when I took my pathology examination, I read the pass book, I don't know how many times, so must so when I was answering the question, I could actually see the page that was relevant to that question. I could practically read the page and see the illustrations, so it was easy for me just to extract from what I see, which is already in my mind. So we do it repeatedly, it is possible for you without any effort really, not trying to memorize, I didn't try to memorize, but I, I look at the page, I read the page over and over again until somehow rather it becomes a picture in my mind. So if you do things repeatedly you will learn.

The other day I had this Chinese professor whom I persuaded the Ministry of Education to hire him. Now, he is a Math expert and he teaches children how to memorize, how to remember ?queueish? Figures, how to multiply or add queueish? figures of maybe twenty or twenty five figures times another twenty five figures and get the answer. First, off course, it is difficult, but you will be surprised to see a six-year-old child able to multiply twelve figures by fifteenth figures, and give the, answer right away without any writing. How does he do this? You know the abacus, you calculate on the abacus. This is the greatest computer ever invented in the world, must give the Chinese credit for that. They built this comp, this computer way back, I think two thousand, three year, three thousand years ago and the abacus is a calculator you move the beads up and down and you know what is the answer. After sometime, after doing, using the abacus repeatedly, the child remembers the abacus. In his mind, he can see the abacus and when he calculates, what he does is that in his mind, he pushes the, the beads up and down and he gets the answer from the abacus. So, when he is given a figure to

calculate, immediately he can see the figures on the abacus, he then moves the, the abacus because he had done the abacus, they'd seen the abacus, operated the abacus so many, many time, although he was really six years old, and remember, children remember much better than we do, that he can calculate these big numbers very quickly using the mental abacus. Why is he able to do that? He is able to do that not because he is extra ordinary brilliant, no. it is simply because he does something repeatedly.

So, we sometime have an inferiority complex, we think we cannot learn because we are stupid, we are not as brilliant as the other guy, but if you are prepared to do things repeatedly, do it again and again and again, Insya-Allah you will become as good as anybody else. This, I believe, because that is what happened to me that's now I got through my exam. This also is what I have observed, and in particular, I have observed these little children able to calculate so quickly in their minds complex calculation. Off course Tony Buzan he has a different method, he uses pneumonics in, in medicine, also we use pneumonics in order to remember the muscles of the thighs, for example we say "Say Grace Before Tea". So that Semitendinosus, Gracilis and ss, something, I forgot them now, you see. Why? because I am not repeat it often enough. Nowadays, I am asked to write political speeches and such nonsense, no longer about learning medicine, but if you use pneumonics, you associate something with something else then you're going to remember things.

The other day I had some preparation served to me in Langkawi and I was trying to tell my wife, what was, somehow rather I couldn't remember the word. So I went back to see the thing medically and I related it to another thing, which is similar to that, and I got, I got the name. You see because it was, what was served to me was pancake, and I had to go back to crepe suzette, crepe suzette is pancake, and what was served to me was pancake. So, you go to have a pro Like that takes a little bit of time but with training again by doing things repeatedly you will learn. Therefore, I am very hopeful, I am very hopeful that in Malaysia we can all do much better than we are doing now. Whether you are Malay, Chinese or Indian, the main thing is the will, the drive, the dedication, the desire to do it and if you have to repeat a thing a thousand times, you must be prepared. If you have to, a book many, many times, read, read it anywhere, but read. Do everything repeatedly; even if it is maneuver work, it is the same. I as you know, I dabble with, with a woodcarving, all the woodcarvings I do. The first one looks horrible, the

second one was better, the third one was even better. In, eventually after doing it many, many times, I get the things right. I carved an aeroplane for example, a bit difficult using the wood and machine you can have the body and then it's a matter of carving the rest and eventually I did get the wood model aeroplane. So even if it is maneuver, you can become skillful provided you willing to do it repeatedly. And off course if you do it when you were small, you are going to be just fantastic.

You, you will remember the *orang asli*, the, the *Mahmeri*, the *Mahmeri* people in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. They are great wood carvers. Off course, you don't think much about the devils they like to talk about, but in their minds, they can see these, these ghosts, these devils and they can carve. You try carving it. I don't think you can produce as good devil as they can. Why can they do that? They can do that because that is the skill that they train themselves or the thing they do very often and over time they become skillful. So, if we feel that we are inadequate, that we are not capable of doing what others can do, remember that if you are prepared to drive yourself to do it again and again, you are going to become skillful as skillful as others. Maybe not one hundred percent but certainly you will not be far behind and this is realization of your ability. The, the genius inside us, this realization is very important if you want to be educated. We had an inferiority complex, four hundred and fifty years we were under foreign domination, either colonized by them or under their influence. Four hundred and fifty years from 1511, when the Portuguese conquered Malacca until 1957, we, we under foreign domination, and during that time, we really believe that we were stupid. That we cannot do what the *Orang Putih* can do. They are something special, some superior creature. But I look at them, they had two legs like us, and also ten toes, two hands, ten fingers just like us, except they, they have no color, we have great color. You see, they lost their pigment somewhere. So, there's no difference. So, if they can do it, why cannot we do either way? I have been reading the and, thank you, and we have proved it.

We have proven that in many ways we could have done better than them. So, the first thing that we have to do really is to convince ourselves that we can do what they can do. Now knowledge and education is great, is great for developing our country. It will help the country to develop, perhaps faster than those without education, than those countries where the people are without education. But there is one thing that has bothered me quite a long time. All this while, we have concentrated on spreading

knowledge, on people imbibing their knowledge through the education process and so they become very knowledgeable. But when you are knowledgeable, you become a very good person or a very bad person. We had seen a lot of very bad person now. Now I don't know anything about computers but think of the hackers, the people who are able to go into somebody else's data and make use of them or disturb the whole thing and sometimes they put in virus somethings like that. No these are not stupid people. They must be very clever people. They had knowledge, but they don't have the right kind of values. It is important, therefore that if we want to spread knowledge among our people, we need also to implant in them the right values, that the knowledge is to be used for the good of himself and his society, not for him to commit crimes using his knowledge or to do things that are really not beneficial. Today the scientists in the America are very happily developing new ways of killing people more efficiently. This bad, that's what I mean they are using their knowledge of science and mathematic and their computer skills in order to kill people. This is the result of merely imparting knowledge without accompanying that with the right moral values.

Therefore, even as you spread knowledge, you have also to focus on the quality of the people who will make use of this knowledge, and the quality of the people can only be through their acceptance being taught the right values. They must know what is good and what is bad, they must know that this knowledge that they have is for the good of the people. In the good old days off course among the Malays when somebody has some knowledge, he will not give it to anybody else, because he fears the abuse of that knowledge. It can off course, knowledge dies with him. But today, knowledge is available to everyone. You can learn how to make the atom bomb through the Internet, if you are smart enough. But is that a good thing to do? This is the question. A lot of things that are happening today, that are happening because the people with the knowledge are abusing their knowledge. They are making use of their knowledge to do bad things. So if we have to give knowledge to people, we must also develop the personality of the people. They must understand that this knowledge is for doing good things, for benefiting himself and society, for developing his nation, for the people, for humanity at large, that's what knowledge is meant to do for him.

So, the training of people in moral values becomes now an essential part of the education process. If you don't implant good moral values, then the knowledge will

wither be wasted or they will be abused. Now how do we implant good values in people? The best thing off course is when they are still receptive, when they are still very young, when the brain cells are still not use up yet. When they are young, they are much more receptive, and this off course the duty of the parents to instill in the young good values. To tell them this is good and this is bad. Don't do this because this is bad, it is going to harm you. It is sinful, and you will have to pay you will be punish for that. But this is good, and when you do that, you will be rewarded yourself and you will be rewarded by others. That should begin with the parents. But after the parents we have the teachers. Teachers today specializing in different subjects, they are not bothered about teaching good values, that's not part of their duty. Off course in the good old days, the respect for teachers so great that you try to emulate the teachers. But today teachers are specialist and they only teaches subjects that they were asked to teach.

So in this country, we have introduced religious education and moral education. Having introduced to that, we really did not oversee the teachings, and I am sorry to say that some of these teachers, especially the religious teachers, do not really teach good moral values. Yes, they do teach religion, mainly about the rituals that must be performed in order to earn merit, *pahala*, but they do not teach good Islamic moral values, and all Islamic values are good. I don't know about you, but I have studied as much as I can in a language I can understand, the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith, and none of them as far as ?I can make out? are bad. But some people do not focus on the moral values that need to be implanted in the Muslim person. Instead, off course, they teach you the, the color of, green color is good, blue color is bad, you see. So, that is not part of moral values, actually. But I am sorry to say that I feel that the religious teachers have failed to develop a good personality, to implant good Islamic values in our children, so that they will reject what is bad on their own and do what is good. I'm sorry to say again that if you read the papers, almost everyday, is the Malay child, the Malay man, or the Malay women not so much to ..., who seems to be involved with all kinds of activities which are actually forbidden against the law and against the teachings of Islam everyday.

Now we also have moral classes, but I don't know there are Malay parents who requested that there are children attend moral classes rather than religious classes. This is a slap on the face for the people who teach religion. When Malays do not want to,

their children to be taught religion, but rather to be taught moral values, there must be something wrong with the teachings of religion, and this is something that is not good for us to deny. This is the problem, this is the problem that we face and we need to take action to correct it. It maybe to late now to do in the schools but at the university level, there must also this concentration on moral values. Relative to, or in connection with the particular discipline that you are in. if you are studying science, if you are studying mathematic, if you are studying computer science, teach also how not to abuse your knowledge. If you don't, then I'm afraid that they will be knowledgeable people, but they will not be good people, and if we have an educated population in this country, whose moral values are very bad, very low, we're not going to achieve anything.

If for example corruption, even if you are brilliant, but if you are corrupt this country cannot move ahead. Today, corruption is a bad major problem in our country and we should begin to teach that corruption is evil right from the stage when they were kid in the kindergarten. Anything that they'll do that may resemble corruption should be stopped at once. They must be told that this is a sin and this is bad, this is going to destroy you and it is going to destroy your country. They must be implanted in the child when he's small, but if it is too late, we can still implant in those whoa re already in the universities. They must graduate perhaps with some little annotation to say that they have now achieved a certain level of knowledge about what is good and what is bad; moral education. I would like to say religious education, but religious education that is stewed towards implanting good moral values, good Islamic values. So, I do hope that this discourse will result in our getting better understanding of the role of education in this country, and in other countries off course the role of education in determining whether we are going to be good progress or we are not. I thank you.

**SPEECH BY YBHG TAN SRI DATO' AZMAN HASHIM**  
**CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION**  
**FOR PERDANA DISCOURSE SERIES 3 OCTOBER 2005**

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Bismillahirrahman-nirrahim

Y.A.Bhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Former Prime Minister of Malaysia and the Honorary President of Perdana Leadership Foundation

Y.A.Bhg Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali

Y.Berhormat Dato' Dr. Haji Shafie Haji Mohd. Salleh, Minister of Higher Education, Malaysia

Y. Bhg. Dato Prof. Dr Abdul Halim Mohd. Nawawi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, UiTM

Y.Bhg Professor Dr. Rahmat Mohamad, Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Institute of Knowledge Advancement, UiTM

Y.Bhg Tan Sri(s), Datuk(s), Professors, Distinguished guests,

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

A very good morning to all.

Welcome to the Perdana Leadership Foundation.

The Perdana Discourse Series is part of the Foundation's aims to collect, preserve, develop and disseminate information on Malaysia's past leadership. The Foundation was set up in 2003 just for this purpose – to find out more about Malaysia's past leaders, to analyse and research their policies, strategies and approaches to nation-building, and to stimulate more debate and research in this area by making all this information accessible to the public.

Ladies and gentlemen, it was the policies and initiatives of our past Prime Ministers that have shaped Malaysia into what it is today – an economically thriving, socially harmonious and politically stable country, highly respected in the world arena. It is also by learning from our past leadership that future leaders of Malaysia can chart a better course for the country.

Another factor that spurred the set up of this Foundation is the many queries our fourth Prime Minister received on Malaysia's blueprint for success: other foreign leaders want to know how Malaysia successfully transformed its economy from being agriculture-based to one that is industrial-driven, how Islam is managed in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment, and how Malaysia handles its race relations.

The answers to these questions lie with the policies and strategies that Malaysia's Prime Ministers have adopted. What Perdana Leadership Foundation intends to do is to house these answers under one roof for further study and research.

To achieve its objectives, the Foundation has a host of programmes lined up, including

- the digitisation of documents, speeches and audio video materials on all our past Prime Ministers;
- the offer of research grants to qualified scholars for in-depth study of Malaysia's past leadership,
- The Perdana Discourse Series, which aims to connect future leaders of the country with past and present policymakers.

As part of the Foundation's broader objectives to promote global understanding and world peace, we will be organising the Perdana Global Peace Forum from 15th to 17th December this year to heighten the momentum of peace efforts worldwide.

We hope that through these programmes, we will be able to encourage more active interest in Malaysia's nation-building past and generate awareness of the role the country can play in influencing the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, today's Perdana Discourse Series is on a topic pertinent to us all – "Education: Cause and Effect on Nation-Building", a theme that shall describe the role of education in building Malaysia as a nation and simultaneously look at the effect of nation building on the further development of education in the country.

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." I wholeheartedly agree.

In a world where change is rapid, education is the tool our nation must wield effectively to compete; for a multi-ethnic country like Malaysia, education is also the vehicle to build this country into a unified nation. The education system of our country indeed plays a crucial role in facilitating our nation-building.

Today, we are fortunate to have with us a host of distinguished speakers to speak on various aspects of education in the Malaysian context.

I thank our former Prime Minister, YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, for agreeing to be our keynote speaker for today; our highly esteemed panelists, in particular, Yang Berhormat Dato' Dr. Haji Shafie Haji Mohd. Salleh, our Minister of Higher Education,; Dr.

Collin Abraham and Miss Adiba Shareen, who have spared time to share with us their views.

We are also privileged to have among the participants people who played key roles in government, such as Yang Mulia Tengku Tan Sri Dato' Seri Ahmad Rithaudeen Tengku Ismail, YBhg Tan Sri Dato' Seri Sanusi Junid and Ybhg. Tan Sri Dato' Seri Musa Mohamad as well as several highly esteemed academicians such as YBhg. Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Mohd Rashdan Baba. Your participation will greatly add to the depth of the discourse and we sincerely hope you will lend your views during the breakout sessions as well.

I urge all of you to make this Discourse a great learning experience and encourage everyone to engage in the question and answer as well as the breakout sessions that we will have.

Now, to start the Discourse going, please join me in welcoming our keynote speaker for today, our former Prime Minister who was once himself the Minister of Education and is someone who believes in the power of the educated mind; a man who gave Malaysia a vision to aspire to and who taught us that we can always be smarter and better than we are, YABhg Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. YABhg Tun, if you please.

## PLENARY SESSION:

*GROUP: 1*

*GROUP LEADER: Ziad Razak*

*PRESENTER: Ziad Razak*

*SCRIBE: Zain Azrai*

- Ziad Razak
- Roslinah Azarai
- Zaszima
- Khairul Hazwan
- Ngeow Yen Wan
- Zain Azrai
- Suresh
- Shfik Sidek
- Wilson Ten
- Muhd. Rafique Hafeedzy
- Nor Azizi Azizan

### *Group Analysis on the Contribution of the Past Premiers on Education*

- Tunku Abdul Rahman:
  - Education for all races for national unity.
  - Malay language as medium of instruction.
  - Independence of education administration & planning.
- Tun Abdul Razak:
  - Strengthening of Malay language
  - Establishment of new Universities (i.e. UKM)
  - Overseas scholarships.
  - Science education (i.e. MRSM, SBP)
- Tun Hussein Onn:
  - Maintenance & strengthening of education policies.
- Tun Dr. Mahathir:
  - UIAM
  - Vision Schools
  - KBSR, KBSM
  - Falsafah Pendidikan Negara
  - Liberalization of Higher Education (+private universities)
  - Science and Mathematics in English
  - 3rd language in schools.

### *Current Issues on Education*

- Inculcating good attitude
- Critical thinking
- Ability to articulate
- Lack of fluency in English
- Curriculum not flexible to meet changes in industry demand
- Obsessive focus on exams
- Need for financial/entrepreneurship education
- Teachers not adequately prepared with the competencies to meet modern challenges (i.e. IT, innovation)
- Administrative burden on teachers

### *Possible approaches to rectify the issues*

- Inculcate good character/attitude:
  - Skill gaps analysis model
  - Benchmarking
  - Quality teachers
  - Teacher salary
  - Co-curriculum / Sports – build character
- Critical Thinking:
  - Innovation components in syllabus
  - Make learning fun
  - Essays and public speaking
- Lack of fluency in English:
  - Science and Mathematics
  - Promotion based on English fluency
  - Quality of English books – more fun!
  - Innovative & fun teaching methods.
- Inflexible/Out-of-date School Curriculum:
  - e-Learning components
  - Variety of choice for minor subjects (i.e. US Bachelors education)
  - Feedback from academia & industry – exposure to latest ideas/practices
  - Identify student education needs thru skills gap analysis
- Obsessive focus on exams:
  - Final assessment not 100% exam dependant (i.e. I.Bacc – social work, etc.)
  - More emphasis on sports/co-curriculum activities
  - Compulsory attachment/internship for students
- Admin burden on teachers:
  - Professional input of schools (free teachers to teach)
  - Skills gap analysis + competency model + targeted training
  - Outsourcing of marking exam paper

- Teachers not equipped to meet challenges of modern education:
  - Bachelor degree for teachers
  - Professionalism of teachers (chartered teachers – exams + practical experience)
  - Student evaluation of teachers
  - Skills gap analysis for teachers – targeted training + competency model

*GROUP: 2*

*GROUP LEADER: Sonia Nasim*

*PRESENTER: Mohd Zuber Zain*

*SCRIBE: Veronica Augustine*

- Mohd Zuber Zain
- Karthigesu A/L Muniandi
- Zaniariah Johari
- Sidek Moh
- Veronica Augustine
- Ho Wee Leong
- Dr. Asiah Ali
- Mohd Shafiq
- Izza Izelan
- Wan Zul-Atfi
- Mohamad Faizul
- Baharuddin
- Rifqy Nasis
- Steve Peter
- Jack Lim

#### *Current Issues on Education*

- English language as an issue
- Exam orientation:-need soft skills
- Different levels of teaching
- Grades validity and reliability for real work life
- Are students are being educated to think?
- Communication skills
- Denominators and minimum requirements

#### *Approaches To Rectify the Issues*

- Family Factors
- Exam and multiple criteria
  - co-curriculum
  - soft skills
  - public speaking
  - critical skills
- Method of teaching

- Finishing school
- Social responsibility
- Teacher /educationist quality
  - Efficiency of resources: Temporary measure (insufficient teachers) – utilize unemployed university students: tuition at villages, temporarily teaching at schools
  - Dedication to quality and role model for practical and ethical behavior.
- Attitude
  - You are the government
  - Don't blame others
  - Malu tak kene tempat
- Morale and ethics
  - Education starts at home
  - Challenge of peer influence
  - Importance of positive attitude
  - Incorporate media and innovative methods in teachings
- Text books for primary and secondary school should be standardize.
- Apathetic society
- Strengthen formal and informal education system
- Do not be over dependent so much on national education
- Reading Habits: speed reading

*GROUP: 3*

*GROUP LEADER/PRESENTER: Logandran*

*SCRIBE:Nurliyana Hanim*

- Adiba Shereen
- Lee Kwan Leong
- Anwarudin
- Nor Hakim
- Pn.Dr.Hawa
- Daljit
- Muhd.Fakhrul
- Romil
- Hasmawati
- Mohd Iqbal
- Azizudin
- Megat Zulhazmi
- Mohd Souffi
- Stephen Chia

*Group Analysis on the Contribution of the Past Premiers on Education*

- Razak Report manages to unite all multiracial groups in the country through the education system.

- Many changes took place in the education system i.e: LCE->SRP->PMR , MCE->SPM, which resulted in the gain of momentum over the years.

#### *Current Issues on Education*

- Position of the English language.
  - >emphasis
  - >speaking out
  - >exam driven
- National unity through education.

#### *How Education has Changed Our Nation?*

- Made us happier

#### *Possible approaches to rectify the issues*

- Elite schools system.
- Cross-cultural communication.
- Industry.
- Rural communities

#### *GROUP: 4*

*GROUP LEADER: Sumithra*

*PRESENTER: Sharmini*

*SCRIBE: Helena*

- Pooi San
- Zainab
- Dr. Sidney
- Muhammad
- Siti
- Vanita
- David
- Cheng
- Aida
- Mujahid

#### *Possible approaches to rectify the issues*

#### Short Term Problems

- English Proficiency
  - Revamp syllabus - Cambridge A Levels
  - Official business language - most knowledge is in English
  - Mastery of education - yearly testing
- Update Curriculum
  - Cut red tape
  - Going with the momentum

- Lab intensive education, industries within IPTA's
  - Re-branding Teaching
- Make it attractive – salary, benefits, campaign
- Higher entry standards
- Teaching skills, not only knowledge

#### Long Term Problems

- Teacher's attitude
- Make it honourable again
  - Holistic approach
- Make people want to learn
  - Educate the parents
- Children become parents

*GROUP: 5*

*GROUP LEADER: Edzuan Zakaria*

*PRESENTER: Edzuan Zakaria*

*SCRIBE: Khaizan Sharizad Razak Ali*

- Nor Azleen Abd Rahim
- Larissa Manyie Dasan
- Md. Zenon Md Zain
- Mohd Ismail Ahmad
- Kenny Kuah
- Khaizan Sharizad Razak Ali
- Edzuan Zakaria

#### *Group Analysis on the Contribution of the Past Premiers on Education*

- Tunku Abdul Rahman
  - Initiation of Local Education System
  - National Language
  - Introduction of chinese and tamil schools
- Tun Abdul Razak
  - Systematic approach with the Razak Report on Education
  - Provide education to the masses
  - Compulsory education for 6-12 yr olds i.e. primary school
  - Quota system
  - RIDA to expose Malays to business world

- Tun Hussein Onn
  - Graduates for Industrial Training
- Tun Dr. Mahathir
  - Expansion and establishment of private universities
  - More boarding schools were built
  - Smart Schools to provide knowledge workers for MSC status companies i.e. MMU
  - Assessment and exam reform

#### *Current Issues on Education*

- Burden of teachers
- Failure of implementation and translation of education policies
  - Transition of powers between ministers
    - Change of policy
    - Sudden change
- Knowledge workers
- Standard one to standard six (primary)
- Objective of education policy
  - Quality and quantity
- Science and maths in english
  - Majority of students more comfortable conversing in Bahasa Malaysia
- Too academically oriented

#### *How Education has Changed Our Nation ?*

- Compulsory education for masses
- Equal opportunity and access to education
- More knowledge workers
  - Creation of more middle-class workers

#### *Possible approaches to rectify the issues*

- E-learning
  - Using computers to aid limited numbers of teachers to students
  - Can compensate bigger amount of students due to more efficient method of teaching
    - Visual aid
- Provide more English coaching for younger age i.e. from lower primary
- Have more hands-on i.e. Industrial/Practical Training
- Industry should play a more active role in assisting undergraduates

*GROUP: 6*

*GROUP LEADER: Cheah Wee Leong*

*PRESENTER: Amir Zharif*

*SCRIBE: Ong Suet Yeng*

- Chua Hung Tatt
- Amir Zharif
- Noor Izziddin
- Mafeitzeral Mamat
- Cheah Wee Leong
- Mohd. Zairul Ridzuan
- Satya Narayanan
- Dr. Zahrul Faizi
- Yau Chau Fong
- Luqman B Abd Rahman
- Dr. Rashdan Baba
- Ong Suet Yeng
- Khairun Nisa

*Group Analysis on the Contribution of the Past Premiers on Education*

- Historical Context
- Pre '57 No Std. Edu. Policy (British Edu for Reasons Convenient to them), English, Chinese & Pondok Schools.
- 1957 – Bahasa Malaysia as Unifying Language
- 1970, after Riots, National Edu. Policy to Eradicate illiteracy, Bridge Racial Gaps, Equal Opportunities
- 80s, Structured Syllabus, i.e. KBSR, KBSM
- Dewan Bahasa Malaysia as Malay Language “Police”

*Current Issues on Education*

- Critical Thinking (Memorise & Repeat)
- Followers instead of building opinions
- English = Global Language, hence Std. should be improved.
- Discrimination on use of English at Univ.
- Lecturers should be passionate, qualified & well-versed in their field rather than pay driven.
- Univ. should have public lectures to “learn out of the box”
- Less Political Restraint, allowing Union, student voice

*How Education has Changed Our Nation?*

- Positive = Developed Professionals, Human Capital;  
Racial Tolerance & understanding  
Social Upliftment & Mobility  
Attracted Foreign Investments
- Negative = Moral Failure = Parents Responsibility,  
Teacher Lacking Motivation

Negative Peers influences  
Quality of Teachers  
Although 20% of National Budget, is there  
misappropriation of funds?

*Possible approaches to rectify the issues*

- Teachers
  - additional Benefits, incentives to perform
  - Teacher being a noble profession, recognition
  - Better Teacher training Centres (tit-for-tat)
  
- Critical Thinking
  - Less MCQ & more student teacher interaction
  - Project Based Learning , interaction graded 30%
  
- Culture
  - More open to PoL in Kebangsaan schs.
  - Society/ Student Union Participations
  - Parents shouldn't be reliant on teachers

## **Panelists:**

### **Dato' Dr. Haji Shafie b. Hj. Mohd. Salleh Minister of Higher Education, Malaysia**

Malaysia's Minister of Higher Education, Dato' Dr Shafie Salleh, obtained his tertiary education in University Malaya (B.A. Hons) and Western Michigan University (MA in Sociology and Development), and his doctorate in Development Studies from the University of Wales in the United Kingdom.

Before entering politics, he was the Director of Policy Research and Planning at the Ministry of Human Resource; Director at JAIS, Head of the Education and Planning Bureau of INTAN and the Deputy Director of the Centre for Development Studies in the Prime Minister's Department.

Within the government administration, Dato' Dr Shafie Salleh has held positions as the Parliamentary Secretary and Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Finance before being appointed Minister of Higher Education in 2004.

### **Dr. Collin Edmund Rajasingam Abraham**

Dr. Collin Edmund Rajasingam Abraham was educated at the University of Malaya in Singapore where he obtained B.A.(Hons) in Economics, History and English. He obtained his Masters of Science in Sociology of Development from the University of Wisconsin (Madison) US in 1969 and his Doctorate in Race Relations from Oxford University in 1977. Dr Collin also holds a Diploma in Social Administration from the India's TATA Institute of Social Sciences (now TATA University of Social Sciences) and a Diploma in Social Policy from the Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands.

Dr. Collin has extensive experience in the education sector, particularly in the private education sector, where he lectured and oversaw the teaching programmes at Olympia College (1995 - 2002), coordinated the London School of Economics/University of London External Degree programmes as Dean of University Studies at Stamford College (1990-1995) and monitored the A-Levels programme at HELP Institute (1986 - 1990).

He was Founder Member of Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, where he developed the first ever teaching programme in race and ethnic relations, not only in the university but also in the country. He retired from the University as Associate Professor in Sociology in 1986 but returned in 2002 to review the social research teaching programme and prepare new syllabi and curriculum with an emphasis on relevant social research to enhance national integration. A pro-tem President of the Malaysian Association of Social Impact Assessors, Dr. Collin has also worked with the Ministry Of Rural Development and the Economic Planning Unit. Dr. Collin is now a freelance education and social development consultant.

**Miss Adiba Shareen bt. Al-Ayubi**

Ms Adiba Shareen was educated in Senior Methodist Girls School Kuala Lumpur and is currently pursuing her tertiary education in the renowned University Technology MARA (UiTM), in LAW. She is as of now in her final year reading law.

Ms Adiba has extensive experience in the Debating Arena, having been selected to represent UiTM in various National and International Tournaments, such as the World Universities Debating Championship in South Africa, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, The Australasian Debating Championship in Australia and The All-Asian Debating Championship in Bangkok, Thailand. She has also participated in various National Competitions all over Malaysia.

Ms Adiba was also selected to Represent Malaysia in the Voices for the Future of APEC held in Santiago Chile in 2004.

She has been the Convener of Various University, National and International Tournaments and is also the Executive Advisor of the University Technology MARA English Debating Society.