

PERDANA DISCOURSE SERIES *11*

" THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT "



Keynote Address by

TAN SRI MUHYIDDIN HJ. MOHD YASSIN

Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Education, Malaysia



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THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



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TUN DR. MAHAJIR MOHAMAD

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e-mail: upena@salam.uitm.edu.my/perdana@perdana.org.my

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Editors : Zarina Abu Bakar
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Rasimah Aripin
Ahmad Suhaimi Ismail

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Khairun Nisa Kamal
Nur Fara Melissa Mohd Mujab

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Tun Abdul Razak Hussein
Tun Hussein Onn
Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad
Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

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PREFACE

Youths are the hope and future of a nation, particularly in the process of nation-building and development. As future leaders, they need to be educated in science and technology to keep abreast with time, while preserving the fundamentals and inherent values of society. Recognizing the importance of education in leadership training, the Eleventh Perdana Discourse Series were held on 30th June 2010, with the theme, 'The Role of Education in Leadership Development'. A total of 350 participants comprising university students, academicians, government officials, private sector representatives and the public attended the event.

The keynote address was delivered by YAB Tan Sri Muhyiddin Hj Mohd Yassin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, who spoke on how to create knowledgeable and wise leaders of tomorrow through education. According to him, good leaders possess the ability to think critically, weigh the consequences of an action and fully understand the factors that underlie an event. Therefore, the curriculum from primary through tertiary education must incorporate elements of learning beyond memorization. He also highlighted the importance of society understanding the history of the country, as well as inculcating good values and ethics. At the end of the keynote address, the audience posed questions to YAB Tan Sri Muhyiddin related to the Malaysian education system.

A panel session followed, moderated by Ms Zuraidah Hj Musib. The panelists were YBhg. Tan Sri Datuk Arshad Ayob, YBhg. Datin Freida Mohd Pilus, and Professor Dr Ahmad Murad Noor Merican, who presented their views on the issues and answered questions at the end of the session. The audience were interested in issues related to problems faced by the national school system and leadership in institutions of higher learning.

Editors

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We would like to thank the Board of Perdana Leadership Foundation (PLF); its Executive Director, Tan Sri Nik Mohamed Nik Yaacob; and the Vice Chancellor of UiTM, Prof Datuk Dr Ir. Sahol Hamid Abu Bakar for their continued support and confidence in the Perdana Discourse Series. In this eleventh discourse, we are honored to have YAB Tan Sri Muhyiddin Hj Mohd Yassin, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Education, to deliver the key-note address on the Role of Education In Leadership Development. His vision on the future of the Malaysia education system is very clear. We are also grateful to have with us the following distinguished personalities in their respective fields: Tan Sri Datuk Haji Arshad Ayub who has an extensive work experience in public service and higher education; Datin Freida Mohd Pilus, the founder of Cempaka Group of Schools; and Dr. Ahmad Murad Merican, an academician whose research interests include Malay Media and Journalism Studies.

Our gratitude goes to the staff and committee members from both PLF and UiTM who have worked tirelessly to ensure the success of this event. The same goes to the transcribers and the participants who took an active part during the question and answer sessions. Finally, we would like to thank Pusat Penerbitan Universiti (UPENA) UiTM for publishing this manuscript.

PROLOGUE

Three important institutions play a crucial role in shaping the outlook and future prospects of every child. These are the family, the school and the community. It is within these institutions that a child socialises, inculcates values and norms, as well as sets anchor. These institutions educate, train and shape the young, both formally and informally, into a valuable adult. Leadership values and capabilities are similarly shaped from young, through the family environment, schools, universities and workplace. While leadership development is not a primary objective of education, it is an inevitable spill-over of the process. Students have to maintain relationships with the authority and their peers, manage time and keep discipline in formal learning institutions. Therefore, formal learning institutions are fertile grounds for breeding future leaders. The question is, how far does Malaysia's education system encourages leadership qualities in students?

Every education system serves the philosophical, economic and cultural needs of its society. In Malaysia, the underlying philosophy of our education system is to produce well-rounded individuals who are balanced in terms of mental, emotional and spiritual development. The education system in Malaysia seeks not only to build young Malaysians who are knowledgeable about the world, but it also aims to provide sound moral grounding and spiritual development. Whether or not this has been achieved, this is debatable. What is clear, though, is the crucial role played by education in developing the nation's future leaders.

Schools usually provide the first opportunities for the young to assume informal leadership roles and develop leadership skills. Consequently, there are several questions concerning the role of education in leadership development that need to be addressed:

1. How can institutions of learning encourage and nurture leadership development better?
2. What factors support or constrain students from developing leadership skills?
3. What is the role of parents and extended families in influencing leadership development amongst the young?
4. What are the shortcomings of schools and institutions of higher learning in nurturing leadership potential amongst their students?
5. Do the national school curriculum and the national school system contribute positively to the growth of leadership skills and attributes?



KEYNOTE SPEECH

TAN SRI MUHYIDDIN HJ MOHD YASSIN

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wa barakatuh, Salam Sejahtera, Salam 1Malaysia

I thank the Perdana Leadership Foundation for inviting me to address this august audience of future leaders. I am very glad to be with you here today to share some of my thoughts on the role of education in developing our future leaders.

Being with young people always reminds me of my younger days. As a young politician then, I used to be described as a man in a hurry. And now, I still am. As the Deputy Prime Minister, my main task is to assist the Prime Minister in executing his plans and realizing his vision for the country. And the fact is our Prime Minister has a bold plan and a great vision for Malaysia.

We aspire to become a high-income nation with per-capita income of US\$17,000, from the current US\$7,000. This we must achieve in a span of only ten years. And the high-income nation that we envision not only provides material prosperity, but also a sense of purpose and belonging for its multiracial citizens. Guided by the concept of "1Malaysia: People First, Performance Now" we want to transform Malaysia into a land of greater prosperity blessed with economic affluence, social cohesion and a responsive government.

This vision is achievable provided that we put our hearts and minds into it. But again, realizing this vision is not an easy task; it requires hard work and intelligence; it demands sacrifices and perseverance. And as we live in an era of rapid global change, we have no time to rest on our laurels. We have to move fast lest we get left behind. In a nutshell, realizing this great vision requires every one of us to be “a man in a hurry”.

What then drives us to achieve this vision? I would say it is our determination, our conviction, and above all, it is our idealism. I would define idealism as a strong will for a state of perfection. In the context of a nation, idealism entails a vision for material prosperity, social justice, political stability and national unity, not only for the present, but more so for the future. To me, a nation cannot be lacking in idealism. Once it lacks idealism, there will be no driving force that moves the nation and its people forward.

But idealism alone will be futile if it cannot be transformed into a reality. For idealism to become reality, it must be first transformed into a clear vision for the country and then translated into real actions. And this, of course, requires strong leadership. We are grateful that our nation has been blessed with visionary leaders who have transformed their ideals and their vision for the country into reality. We could not have imagined living in a harmonious, modern and prosperous Malaysia without the strong leadership provided by our past leaders.

Now, let me turn to the subject of leadership. What we need now are capable, effective and visionary leaders who will rise to the challenge of our time. Leadership in this sense is a collective endeavour, a collective will of the people to realize the goals of the nation. It is true that leadership begins with individuals in leadership positions. But the fact is, success of a nation does not rest on the brilliant work of those in high positions alone. It depends on the collective will of the people to work hand in hand for the realization of a collective goal.

Leadership development thus entails developing the leaders in each and every one of our citizens, especially among the young. Leadership in this particular context is not the privilege of select individuals, but a collective individual's obligation to the entire population. Imbued with benign ideals, as the young are often identified with, I believe that our young citizens will rise to the challenge of our time and provide strong leadership for the country in the future. Steering our nation on the path of prosperity thus entails harnessing the right leadership potential of our young generation in a holistic manner.

The role of education could not be more essential in developing leadership potential of our young generation. Indeed, education is a conduit through which leaders are born. As education today creates the leaders of tomorrow, we need to provide quality education that will produce visionary, effective and capable leaders.

Now, let me turn to the subject of education, which is my favourite subject now. But before I continue, let me first define education. Education to me is a process of transmitting knowledge, skills and values that transform a person into a good individual. A good education is one that harness the full potential of an individual – intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually – providing him with the capacity to use his potentials for the betterment of himself, of his community and his nation.

Education is therefore a holistic process of developing the right potential in each and every individual. Apart from teaching and learning in classrooms, education also encompasses learning experiences that a person gains beyond the formal process of transmitting knowledge and skills. This includes experiential and exploratory learning that enriches students' knowledge beyond the confines of the textbooks and stimulate their creative minds. Creativity and innovation of our workforce, which is a prerequisite for a high-income economy, can only be enhanced if creative and innovative learning becomes a major component of our education.

As we urgently need to produce the right human capital that will drive our economy into the next level of development, we cannot be content with the old ways of doing things. We have to move forward and take bold steps to reform our education so that it will deliver the desired goal of transforming Malaysia into a high-income nation by the year 2020. Guided by our National Education Philosophy, we need to re-evaluate our curriculum and the way we assess student's progress and achievement. An effective and holistic system of assessment must be put in place to allow teachers to identify true potentials of the students and nurture those potentials to the fullest. If we fail to identify and nurture the right potential of our young people now, we run the risk of failing the nation in the future. We can never take this risk, so we have to act now.

How does reform in education relate to the business of creating future leaders? We know that the ability to synthesize information in order to understand the bigger picture of the real world is essential to enable future leaders to address the increasingly complex global problems. We are living in a world that is highly inter-connected and inter-linked. An event in one part of the world can have tremendous impact on the rest of the world. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the economic and financial sector. As we have witnessed, the crisis in Greece is not just Greece's problems. The crisis in the United States is not confined to the Americans. With the rising tide of globalization, these problems are also our problem.

As our global village becomes smaller and more connected, the leaders of the future must be able to have a good grasp of events and trends unfolding across the globe. This ability to gain information, to analyze information, and to form opinions which inform decisions, can only be earned through deep learning and active enquiry that transcends the four walls of the classrooms. We need to create through our education knowledgeable and wise leaders of tomorrow.



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