

**PETIKAN CERAMAH
MENGENAI**

'EQUAL OPPORTUNITY THROUGH EDUCATION'

BY

AMINUDDIN BAKI

26 FEBRUARI 1965

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| PUSAT SUMBER INSTITUT AMINUDDIN BAKI (IAB) | |
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Text of an Address by the Chief Education Adviser
Che Aminuddin Baki at the opening of the Malayan
Teachers National Congress Seminar on "Equal
Opportunity Through Education" - Kuala Lumpur -
26th February, 1965.

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It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to be asked to perform this official opening of your seminar and I should like Mr. President to thank you and members of this Congress for this kind invitation and for giving me the opportunity to meet you the leaders of national teacher organizations of this country.

2. Your Congress has indeed chosen timely "Equal Opportunity through Education" as the theme of this seminar because this very educational ideal, I am glad to say, the Ministry of Education has by stages been implementing during these last few years. You will, I hope, excuse me if I were as such to take you on a quick journey through time to view this in retrospect. The time was not so long ago when primary schools although well distributed to cater for the need of both the urban as well as the rural children were in practice mere apologies in so far as schools for the latter group were concerned. It was not more than a decade or so ago when even for primary education the rural children were not satisfactorily provided compared to their urban counterparts; secondary education benefited only few rural children by virtue of its over-concentration in the urban areas and was mainly academic in character and geared to favour the few - the academically able few.

3. This was the system which we inherited at the time of independence. Since then the Government has carried out a scheme to equalize educational opportunity and to democratise education as much as possible. Under the First and Second Five Year Development Plans for Education covering the periods 1955 to 1960 and 1961 to 1965 respectively, plans to improve primary education facilities in the rural areas were effected with priority given to the improvement and increase of educational facilities in the rural areas. To provide opportunity for secondary education,

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3. This was the system which we inherited at the time of independence. Since then the Government has carried out a scheme to equalize educational opportunity and to democratise education as much as possible. Under the First and Second Year Development Plans for Education covering the periods 1955 to 1960 and 1961 to 1965 respectively, plans to improve primary education facilities in the rural areas were effected with priority given to the improvement and increase of educational facilities in the rural areas. To equalize opportunity for secondary education, a beginning was made in January, 1961, by introducing the Secondary Continuation School system to cater for the education of those 70% Primary School leavers who did not succeed in getting into the secondary academic

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schools. Prior to the introduction of this school, action had already been taken to diversify secondary education by departing from the traditional secondary grammar academic bias and establishing such schools as the Sekolah Lanjutan Kampong, the secondary technical schools, in addition of continuing course to the secondary trade schools then already in existence. In this manner there began the germination of a system of education which aims at catering for the different abilities and aptitudes of our children - the rising generations. This reorganization culminated in the establishment of the comprehensive type Lower Secondary School beginning last January.

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5. The reorganization of the Lower Secondary School (Comprehensive) affects only the name in that it replaces the Secondary

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5. The introduction of the Lower Secondary School (Comprehensive) effects only a programme change in that it replaces the Secondary Continuation School as a system and programme of education while still adhering and conforming to the same policy objective of raising the school-leaving age to 15 which Parliament had already accepted in 1960 as a result of the recommendation of the Education Review Committee. Though the introduction of the Lower Secondary School (Comprehensive) it is the intention to ensure a well balanced education for the

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development of the potential of each pupil, to provide him thereafter with diversified education and training at the upper secondary, college and University levels, and thereby to help each child to develop to his fullest capacity with an education and training for himself a livelihood and for the country - the supply of skilled manpower required for development and reconstruction. You will observe therefore that the reorganization recently undertaken in our secondary education was made on the basis of the principle of "Equal Opportunity Through Education".

6. All of us, I am sure, are agreed that equal opportunity is not synonymous with identity of opportunity. We acknowledge the fact that God has created us differently and richly different at that. The two billion of us that make up the human population of this world have different looks, different patterns of finger prints, traits of character, degrees of intelligence, ranges of abilities, interests, etc. None of us are the same and I am sure that we all agree that all these different abilities and capacities should, as far as possible, be given equal opportunity and facility to develop, to bloom, to ripen and to put to full use. In fact any attempt to ignore such difference would be regarded as contrary to the very ideal of equal opportunity itself. So much so, no one in the provision of education is unimportant. None should be left uneducated, no one is uneducable, and irrespective of social status, intellectual capacity, physical condition, economic standards each individual has an equally important function to perform or service to contribute towards the improvement and welfare of our society in particular and of mankind in general. I do not think I can express this universal truth better than to quote one of the famous Kata Perbilangan of the Adat Perpatih of Negeri Sembilan which says:

Jika cherdak sama berunding,

Jika boleh diusahakan diarah,

Jang patah diusahakan jangan lelong,

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Jika cherdik teman berunding,
Jika bodoh di-suruh di-arah;
Yang buta di-suruh menghembos lesong,
Yang patih di-suruh menunggu jemuran,
Yang pekak di-suruh menchuchoh meriam,
Yang berani di-buat kapala laven.

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which I freely translate as :

Intelligent he be a companion to counsel,
If a fool, to be at back and call;
The blind blow the mortar,
The lame, the padi dried in the sun to look after;
The deaf, the cannon to light,
The brave, to lead in scuffle and fight.

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7. These are the ideal principle of equal opportunity in education but how far have facilities in Malaya match with this? I observe that your Committee in preparing for this Seminar has initiated an enquiry into factors which influence the equality of opportunity. An enquiry was made into the availability of educational services and in particular the policy in regard to free education. Free from school fees education as you aware is now fully provided at the primary school level - such that for 1965 the Ministry has set aside 160 million as grants to finance our primary schools out of a total recurrent expenditure estimate of 3288 million. Such free education is also partially obtainable in our secondary schools, those which use the National Language as medium. Of the English medium secondary school about 10% of the pupils therein have their fees remitted and a contribution of 311 million in the form of fees paid by pupils towards financing an expenditure of 368 million in 1965 for secondary education for all types would enable giving one an idea to the fact that although secondary education is not free yet it is heavily subsidised by the Government. A comparative figure for 1964 is 38 million in fees towards an expenditure of 348 million. At the post secondary levels - college and University - even though there is no free education it should however be noted that the Government subsidises heavily such institutions. Our University of Malaya, for example, is subsidised up to about 50% of its expenditure by Government and student fees constitute only about 10% of the total recurrent costs of running the University. Included in this for education is the fees of those Government scholars and bursary holders and in the University here nearly 40% of the students

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8. Generally in addition to this recurrent expenditure grant the Government provides capital grant for the construction of classrooms, lecture rooms, laboratories, workshops, gymnasiums, hostels and other physical amenities. Under the Second Five Year Plan a sum of 387 million was set aside for capital costs of educational projects. During these few years much construction work has been carried out. However it is difficult to say exactly the percentage of school-age population that can be accommodated in available buildings. This is because through economic necessity we have in certain areas resorted to double sessions, such as this is not educationally desirable, in order to make the maximum use of existing educational facilities. The percentage of the school-going age population attending schools i.e. 94% of 6 to 12 year old primary age group and about 25% of 13 to 18 year old secondary school-going age pupils attend schools could in the absence of the exact enrolment accommodation figures provide some comparisons. With the establishment of comprehensive-type Lower Secondary School beginning last January we should ultimately have at least 75% to 80% of the 13 to 15 year old population group in the Lower Secondary School and subsequently improve the school attendance percentage for the 16 to 20 age group - and the secondary school population substantially.

9. Of course provision of education involves not only the problem of the provision of building and accommodation, provision of hostel facilities and assistance - financial or otherwise, distribution and size of school populations but also the availability of trained teachers in the right number and with the right skills. That we are now facing a teacher shortage and we are employing training schemes to overcome this shortage, I do not have to elaborate. Suffice if I were to indicate that as a result of the introduction of the Day Training scheme and its output of about 2000 primary

teachers annually since 1960 we have been able to eliminate the staffing shortage of primary schools. Thus, despite the unprecedented expansion of primary education experienced during the years after Merdeka, in the Sabah Education today, for example, less than 15% of its 21,000 teachers

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not so long ago in 1955. As for Chinese medium Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan we have attained saturation point in the demand for trained teachers by these schools and in fact the supply is now greater than the demand. Bearing in mind normal expansion of education resulting from increase of population and the need to replace staffing wastage we should be able to ride over the hump in 5 to 10 years from now.

10. As for secondary school staffing the introduction of part-time training scheme for Lower Secondary School teachers under the comprehensive education system was unavoidable if the waste in educable talents caused by our 30% only promotion policy to secondary academic school were to be checked and the real wealth of the nation in talents and abilities inherent and latent in the minds and bodies of the young were to be fully developed and utilized.

11. Why not we wait until we have the trained teachers to teach such pupils? Or why not implement the comprehensive education system in stages and by areas as we obtain the trained teachers? These questions have often been asked! A rejoinder to these are - should we let talents of over 100,000 of our children to continue to go to waste every year in the meantime? And, should we favour certain areas of the country over others as would be if the system is implemented by stages and thus introducing regional inequalities in educational opportunities? These were some of the considerations that caused the Ministry to face the bull and boldly take it by the horns. With cooperation and understanding from all and especially you teachers and God willing we should be 4 to 5 years time be able to overcome the initial staffing problem of the Lower Secondary Schools. As regards the Upper Secondary School staffing which ideally should be staffed by graduate teachers, I admit there is shortage. However a plan is afoot in the Ministry to find ways and means to increase the supply of the number of graduate teachers for our Upper Secondary

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12. Equal opportunity in and through education is an ideal. To provide this fully at all levels of education is not only impracticable

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but might, if pursued to its logical conclusion without discretion, lead to wastage as evidenced in the increase of the population of educated unemployed in some countries. A balance has to be struck somewhere and a limit set which normally is self-imposed by the social and economic conditions and motivation especially that which result from the country's economic requirement - its employment opportunities. Furthermore, no country including the developed countries has yet broken down the barriers of inequalities of educational opportunity despite all the facilities provided. A reason amongst others for this has been the attitude of parents themselves who want their children to discontinue education as soon as the law permits despite the existence of opportunities for their children to proceed higher in their education. It seems to be a universal truth that urban children tend to remain longer in schools than do rural children in that mainly for economic reason rural parents generally would want the services of their children as early as the law allows to help the family income whether directly or indirectly. In some leading industrial countries of the West good wages have been a major cause in youth even though talented preferring immediate employment to higher education. In fact at a Conference with somewhat a similar theme as yours organized by the Organization for European Economic Cooperation in 1961, it was revealed that despite the existence of opportunities for secondary education only one in eight of 18 year old in the United Kingdom remained in school, while one in four in Belgium, also about one-third to half of the youth in France who did not avail themselves of secondary educational opportunity have the intellectual capacity to do so and succeed. This, you will agree with me, is a waste in talents and wealth which no country can afford.

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13. I believe that equal opportunity is not synonymous with identity of opportunity. What should be assured is that each of

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13. I have stated earlier that equal opportunity is not synonymous with identity of opportunity. What should be assured is that each child should be given equal chance and equal opportunity to obtain education - general as well as vocational or professional - to equip him for life as a citizen and a worker - and one that must necessarily be diversified

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after a certain level in order to be in accord with the different aptitudes and abilities God has endowed us with. In keeping with this basic principle, the attitude of parents towards education has accordingly to be orientated, to pay equal regard to education and vocation other than academic and professional and to respect no less those blue collar occupation as normally given to white collar professions. Such is the importance of making parents realise and orientate themselves - for then only could they play their role in fully effecting the principle of equal opportunity.

14. Teachers have also a very important role if not the most important to play in this. What is demanded of us is more than just skill in the art of teaching and imparting knowledge but attitude of an educator and wisdom of one privileged to lead, to counsel and to shape the minds of living human materials. We should :

(1) be pioneering in spirit to break down any geographical inequalities in education to serve anywhere in any capacity that we are called upon to do in educating the young;

have a deeper knowledge of the social and cultural environment of our pupils whom we know are from different racial, religious and social origins, know their family background as this exercises much influence on the educational achievement and motivation of our pupils;

be able to identify and recognise their ability to encourage and develop their individual talents,

and lastly we should in order to be able to counsel and guide them to be useful citizens we should ourselves in mind, in spirit, in words and in our deeds exemplify ourselves, all those demand hard work and devotion to duty, honesty and sincerity of purpose and loyalty and dedication to service.

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15. This in fact is the call I would like to make in declaring open your seminar this afternoon.

We have now a system and a machinery of education for the

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purpose of providing equal educational opportunity for all. We have established Educational Guidance Service, and introduced a scheme to provide in-service and pre-service training for teachers in counselling and guidance. Consideration is now being given as to how best to effect a modification to the Lower Certificate of Education Examination with the view to stream pupils to upper secondary education that best meet their individual abilities and aptitudes. In this connection you will have observed that when amending the Education Act 1961 to legalise the secondary comprehensive education reorganisation, trade and vocational education has been given the same due importance and status as ^{upper} academic and technical schools. I do not claim that these arrangements are complete let alone perfect. In fact we have just started and I admit we have many more programmes and facilities to ^{consider and} introduce in order to ensure fully that every child in this country could really obtain education that best meet his aptitude and ability. However we have something to go by now and through assessment and evaluation of our work and pooling of ideas, knowledge and experience we could work this system successfully. We cannot do much to improve intelligence of a particular child but we can help to motivate him and provide him with the facilities to develop to the full ^{leave and} his potential. After such development we could expect such individual to find his way into position which will stretch his capacities to the fullest extent and enable him to make his maximum contribution to the need of society. This is as far as education in our schools and under our charge can do and this is so far as what is expected of us teachers and educators. With continued and greater dedication and loyalty and devotion on the part of us all we could all ensure the reconstruction of Malaysian society through equal opportunity in Education.

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