

SPEECH BY TUAN HAJI YA'ACOB BIN MOHAMMED, MINISTER OF
STATE FOR PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, AT THE SEMINAR ON
KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION ORGANISED BY LEMBAGA MASJID
HANG JEBAT ON SUNDAY, JULY 25, 1976.

The percentage of primary one pupils who have had kindergarten education has increased from 68 per cent in 1972 to 89 per cent in 1975. This has been largely due to a decrease in the number of children enrolled in the primary one classes - a fact that attests to the success of our family planning programme. The proportion of our children receiving pre-school education is high compared with that of other countries. We can expect this situation to improve even further in the future if all our parents practise family planning.

Currently kindergarten education is provided by the People's Association, the Ministry of Social Affairs as well as by private institutions. Kindergartens of the People's Association are housed in community centres, and the education provided is part of the services rendered by these community centres to the residents in the area. The creches and children's centres run by the Ministry of Social Affairs also provide pre-school education. Continual efforts have been made by the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of kindergarten education. In order to provide trained personnel for the kindergartens the Ministry of Education has, in collaboration with the Adult Education Board, trained more than 1,200 kindergarten teachers during the last five years. Upgrading and updating of the skills of these teachers have also been done through workshops, conferences and exhibitions.

Important as kindergarten education is, it still cannot replace the informal learning that takes place in the home. After all, when a child goes to kindergarten he spends only two or three hours a day and five days a week there. On an average he is unlikely to be in a kindergarten for longer than two years before he goes to school at the age of six. The rest of the time he is at home. One cannot say that he does not learn anything during this time. In fact much informal learning does take place. Even before going to kindergarten or school2/-

or school he would already have learnt the basic elements of speech, language and counting, besides imbibing attitudes and values from his parents and other members of his family. Neighbours and friends also provide unconscious 'models' for him to imitate. Even with formal pre-school education, parents still have a very important role to play in their child's learning process. To do this parents should give adequate attention and love with the right measure of discipline. It has been shown that a child with a secure emotional base normally performs better in school than one without. Parents could also consciously and continually teach their children new words, new terms and different ways of expression, new concepts, values and good habits. Children who receive much stimulation in a culturally rich, not necessarily materially rich, home learn faster than those who receive little stimulation of the kind just described. All these things are very demanding for the parents in terms of time, energy and imagination. I believe that with smaller families parents will be able to provide a better learning environment for their children. Demanding though the task may be there is no option if we want our children to succeed in life because children need to be brought up. They don't just grow up.

On the occasion of this seminar, I wish to urge "Let us equip our children with better education than that which we had received because our children were born to live in a world vastly different from ours."

JULY 25, 1976.

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