

Social Transformation, National Identity and Education Policies in Malaysia

Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid

Professor of Political Science

Universiti Sains Malaysia

Email: afauzi@usm.my

Mohd Hariszuan Jaharuddin

Research Fellow

Institute of Malaysian & International Studies (IKMAS)

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Email: hariszuan@ukm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This article argues that recurring communal problems in Malaysia can be traced to not only economic and social policies undertaken by pragmatically rather than ideologically-inclined National Front-led governments, but they can also be located to weaknesses of their educational policies which have failed to disentangle Malaysians from colonial knowledge which had epistemologically moulded the conceptions of ‘race’ and ‘nation’ as prevalent in Malaysia. The article seeks to show that, despite the apparent success of Malaysia’s national education system in producing a relatively large number of skilled and semi-skilled workers who went on to form constantly expanding vibrant middle classes, these cohorts of new labour market entrants have largely failed to live up to expectations of them as socially progressive in the way envisaged by *Wawasan 2020* – a liberal, rational, inclusive, scientific and progressive Malaysian nation. As a matter of fact, after fifty years, Malaysia’s educational system remains unsuccessful in tackling its twin problems before independence – communal and class

polarisation. We hereby argue that the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, notwithstanding the hulabaloo which accompanied its launching, not only also fails to confront the critical issue of identity and nation-building, but it also lacks credible solutions beyond the colonial-designed educational framework which accepts communal divisions as a *fait accompli*.

Key words: *social transformation, national identity, education policies, politics of education, ethnic relations*

Introduction

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, released in two stages – as a Preliminary Report in September 2012 and later in 2013 covering pre-school to post-secondary education,¹ showcased several accomplishments of Malaysia in the realm of educational policy for the slightly over half a century or so of its existence as a nation state. For instance, the literacy rate among the adult population of fifteen years and above stood at 92 percent by the year 2010. School enrolment at primary and lower secondary levels hovered at almost 100 percent each, and reached a praiseworthy 80 percent for the upper secondary level. Around two-thirds of students further their education at post-secondary level at various tertiary institutions, which encompass pre-university matriculation courses and skills training at various centres offering vocational education (Malaysia 2012, 2013).

However, after a continuous period of more than forty years of economic development and social engineering under the rubric of such schemes as the New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971-1990) and its successors as initiated by Prime Ministers of the time: Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's National Development Policy (1991-2000) and *Wawasan 2020* (National Vision Policy 1991-2020), Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Islam Hadhari and National Mission (2006-2020) and Najib Razak's 1Malaysia: People First, Performance Now and the New Economic Model (NEM), public discourse in Malaysia at both elite and grassroots levels have failed to extricate itself from divisive ethno-religious polemics. The hype accompanying public policy declarations, which has become abundant since the onset of

Najib Razak's increasingly embattled premiership, does not appear to be in sync with the multiple faultlines that have driven overlapping wedges among Malaysians of various ethnic, religious and cultural identities. The search for a cohesive national identity becomes all the more futile when organs of the state or individuals associated with them intermittently issue cavalier statements which seek to appeal to the primordial sentiments of a segment of the Malaysian population rather than to Malaysians as a whole.² In short, regardless of the noble intentions professed to by national leaders to cultivate a truly national identity in driving Malaysia forward during challenging times, the stark reality is that a blurring of national identity has to all intents and purposes taken place.

This article argues that recurring communal problems in Malaysia can be traced to not only economic and social policies undertaken by pragmatically rather than ideologically-inclined National Front (BN: *Barisan Nasional*)-led governments, but they can also be located to weaknesses of their educational policies which have failed to disentangle Malaysians from colonial knowledge which had epistemologically moulded the conceptions of 'race' and 'nation' as prevalent in Malaysia (Shamsul 2003: 105-112).

The article seeks to show that, despite the apparent success of Malaysia's national education system in producing a relatively large number of skilled and semi-skilled workers who went on to form constantly expanding vibrant middle classes, these cohorts of new labour market entrants have largely failed to live up to expectations of them as socially progressive in the way envisaged by *Wawasan 2020* – a liberal, rational, inclusive, scientific and progressive Malaysian nation. As earlier pointed out in the Razak Report (1956), the questions of identity and unity are fundamental issues in the making of educational policy:

“..Kami percaya juga yang tujuan dasar pelajaran di dalam negeri ini ialah bermaksud hendak menyatukan budak-budak daripada semua bangsa di dalam negeri ini”

[We believe that the purpose of educational policy in this country is to unite pupils of all races in the country]³

As a matter of fact, after fifty years, Malaysia's educational system remains unsuccessful in tackling its twin problems before independence – communal and class polarisation. We hereby argue that the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, notwithstanding the hulabaloo which accompanied its launching, not only also fails to confront the critical issue of identity and nation-building, but it also lacks credible solutions beyond the colonial-designed education framework which accepts communal divisions as a *fait accompli*.

Since colonial rule had never been premised on the intent to unite segments of society residing in what was then an admixture of the Federated Malay states, the Unfederated Malay states and the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca, educational policies of independent Malaya and since 1963, the Federation of Malaysia, in inheriting the colonial legacy have given only lip service to unity-based concepts and institutions such as the national language, national schools and civic education. They were not geared towards solving problems of an identity flux bound to beset a cosmopolitan population, whose homogeneity within each communal group was taken for granted. Each ethno-religious cohort was assumed to be contented with organising itself politically, economically and socially within the consociational rubric as managed from above by ethnically-based political elites (Lijphart 1977).

As we proceed to an educational regime under the auspices of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the question arises whether the Blueprint offers sufficient antidotes towards helping arrest the problems of an opaque national identity, which has arguably contributed to a serious deterioration of communal relations observable for the past few years. A united nation whose members rally around a common identity remains far-fetched in spite of the rich rhetoric consistently spewed by Malaysia's leading politicians and policy-makers, as laid out in pompously announced educational roadmaps, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 being the latest manifestation.

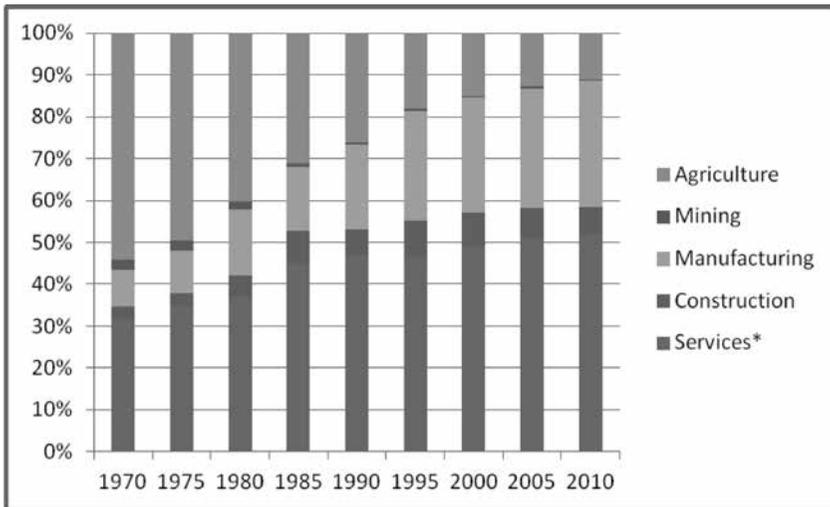
Social Transformation through Education

While inter-communal socio-economic polarisation had its origins in British colonial policy, contemporary policy-making among independent Malaysia's consociationally-oriented politicians acted pragmatically in balancing between the noble aims of national unity and the pragmatic benefits of communalism in holding on to power. In 1971, beginning with the Second Malaysia Plan, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO)-led government sought to intervene actively in the processes of economic development and social restructuring. Although officially instituted only from 1970 until 1990, the spirit of the NEP continues to undergird the government's economic strategies and praxis. Manifold changes have consequently been wrought on Malaysia's socio-economic landscape since the last forty years, with political repercussions reverberating particularly strongly during the past one and a half decade, calling into question the legitimacy of rule by a dominant multi-ethnic coalition as externalised in the broad-based but UMNO-led BN, which was officially formed in 1974 to replace the triumvirate *Perikatan* (Alliance) coalition made up of Malaya's ethnic parties, viz. UMNO, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC).

Diagram 1 shows the extent to which economic transformation has taken place in the space of four decades, revamping the structural base of the economy from an agricultural-based to an industrial-based and an increasingly service-based one.

As the economy began to industrialise, new townships came into being as the growth of manufacturing plants led to a boom in the urban population. The urbanisation was fuelled by an unprecedentedly hectic pace of rural-urban migration especially among the youth. New industrial conurbations grew into centres such as Pasir Gudang in Johore, Prai in mainland Penang and Shah Alam in Selangor. From having a population in 1970 of just around 10 million, of which 26.7 percent were classified as urban dwellers, the numbers swelled throughout the official duration of the NEP, reaching a staggering 70 percent in 2010. The proportion of urbanites was even

Diagram 1
Malaysia: Growth of Labour Manpower 1970-2010 (%)



*Note**: Services can be divided into three categories: government-based, non-government-based, and others, encompassing sectors such as electricity, gas, water, transport, storage, communications, bulk and retail trading, hotels and eateries, finance, insurance, property development, and other types of business-related services.

Source: Adapted from Rahimah Abdul Aziz (2000: 62), Department of Statistics (2012).

bigger in industrial states such as Penang and Selangor. Together, industrialisation and urbanisation contributed towards a rise in class consciousness, with the middle and working classes making their impact felt on a nationwide scale for the first time in Malaysian society (Abdul Rahman 2001: 90-91).

The socio-economic shifts above were supported on a long-term basis by a parallel expansion of educational opportunities. As the provider of human capital, educational infrastructure served an extremely important function in any developing economy. In the Malaysian context, the post-1970 reconstruction policies unleashed among other things a process of democratisation of education, which in turn became a major catalyst for the formation of a dynamic, vibrant and reform-oriented middle class in the space of a mere one generation (Abdul Rahman 2002).

Several approaches exist in the creation of the middle class through shifts in occupational structure. First, by encouraging inter-generational movements in social mobility. This necessitates an expansion of educational opportunities for subsequent generations, especially in technical fields and higher education for *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM: Malaysian Certificate of Education) dan *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia* (STPM: Malaysian High School Certificate) school leavers. For sections of the population targeted to benefit from affirmative action, this approach provides a route to penetrate high-skilled economic sectors in which their participation is traditionally low. In order to encourage both inter- and intra-generational social mobility, the government combines three other methods, viz. direct intervention in higher education, establishment and expansion of public enterprises and intervention in private sector businesses. Out of these methods, the government has focused more on the first, by raising educational opportunities in higher and technical education (Torii 2003: 221-242).

In 1970, there were 2.24 million students at all levels of Malaysian schools. The total student population rose to 3.15 million in 1980 and 3.80 million in 1988 – an average annual increase of 3.7 percent for the period of the NEP. In 2014, the figure burgeoned to 5.12 million. At the primary level, registration of pupils which stood at 1.68 million or 75 percent of overall student population in 1970, has grown to 2.7 million in 2014, corresponding to Malaysia's own demographic expansion.⁴

At the secondary level, the number of registered students of 0.54 million or 24.1 percent of total student population in 1970, multiplied to 3.3 million or 35.1 percent of total student population in 1988. By 2011, the enrolment rate for lower secondary students had reached 91 percent, while for the upper secondary level, the enrolment rate almost doubled from around 45 percent in the 1980s to 78 percent in 2011 (Malaysia 2012: E-3, Malaysia 2013: E-3).

Additional higher education institutions and technical institutes were founded to cope with the increase in total student numbers in primary, secondary and vocational schools. The largest beneficiaries of these developments were the rising cohorts of Bumiputera

students, who were allocated more places at the institutions following the implementation of the quota system via a 1971 amendment to clause 8(A) of Article 153 of the Federal Constitution (Malaysia 1998: 108). The NEP, however, also heralded an era of tighter regulation over higher education with the inauguration of the University and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971. Through several amendments over the years, the UUCA has emerged as the major mechanism of scuttling freedom of thought among students, academics and university administrators alike, prompting most of them to adopt self-censorship in an environment where a 'culture of silence' prevailed, with negative repercussions on scholarship, tenure and promotion prospects if they were to run foul of ruling politicians (Mohd Azizuddin 2010: 60-65).

Before the May 1969 riots and the introduction of the NEP in 1971, Universiti Malaya (UM) was the only university in Malaysia. At UM, Malay-Muslim students constantly made up around just above a quarter of the total student enrolment. The probability of a Malay candidate gaining entry to university was 2 per 1,000 as compared with 6 per 1,000 and 8 per 1,000 for Malaysian Indian and Malaysian Chinese students respectively (Abdullah Hassan 1991: 56). In 1970, Malay enrolment at the bachelor's degree level stood at 3,084, or 40.2 percent of total student enrolment, as compared to 3,752 of Malaysian Chinese and 559 Malaysian Indian students, which correspond to 48.9 percent and 7.37 percent of total student enrolment respectively. For other ethnic categories, the figure was a lowly 282 or of 3.7 percent of total student enrolment.

By 1980, this scenario had changed considerably. Admission of Malay students had grown to such an extent that their total of 13,610 now made up 62 percent of students registered at higher learning institutions. The proportion of non-Malay students correspondingly decreased to 31.2 percent for the 6,848 Malaysian Chinese students, 5.7 percent for the 1,252 Malaysian Indian students and 1.1 percent for the 234 students identified as being of other ethnic categories. In 1988, the number of Bumiputera students registered at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in local institutions of higher learning was recorded at 30,085, which is equivalent to 60.4 percent of

total student population, as compared with 15,869 Malaysian Chinese students and 3,587 Malaysian Indian students, or 31.9 percent and 7.2 percent of total student numbers respectively.

The profile of the Malaysian student population at overseas tertiary institutions was, however, different. While Malays accounted for 14,531 or 34.3 percent of Malaysian students enrolled abroad in 1988, the comparable figures for the Malaysian Chinese, the Malaysian Indian and Malaysians of other ethnic groups were 21,733 (51.3 percent), 5,695 (13.4 percent) and 424 (1.1 percent) respectively. While the Bumiputera students were largely state-sponsored, the majority of non-Bumiputera students enrolled for various degree courses in overseas universities and polytechnics were self-funded. One of the main reasons prompting them to further their education abroad was the lack of places available in local tertiary institutions (NEAC 1991). A significant number of them chose to relocate overseas on a permanent basis or for a productive period of their working life, citing among other things better career prospects, more attractive emoluments and the inability of Malaysia's economic profile to accommodate their expertise, hence contributing to Malaysia's acute brain drain problem.⁵

From having just UM, Malaysia widened its higher education terrain with the founding of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in 1969 and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in 1970. Both universities were intended to support national economic development and modernisation based on scientific and technological advancements, with UKM shouldering the additional responsibility to bolster the national education system and the position of Malay as the national language (Shaharir 1994). As the UUCA became internalised in Malaysia's higher education, more universities were established: Universiti Pertanian (now Putra) Malaysia (UPM) in 1971, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) in 1972, the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) in 1982 and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) in 1984. In the 1990s, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) were added to the list of state universities (Osman Rani 2000: 256-257).

From 1982 until 2010, the number of graduates entering the labour market rose year by year, except for the year 2007. Graduate unemployment peaked during the recession in 1987 at 5 percent of total unemployment, and reached the lowest rate of 1.5 percent in 1996, just before the Asian currency crisis ushered in another economic downturn. In 2005 however, graduate unemployment commenced a steady decline from 3.8 percent, falling to 3.1 percent in 2010. In fairness to the government's efforts to arrest the problem of graduate unemployment, it had begun revising national human resource policy in 1990, when a Human Resource Development Programme was initiated by a newly organised Human Resource Ministry, which replaced the Labour Ministry. Under the programme, labour policy was amended from being mainly demand-driven to being supply-driven, in order to raise local technological capability.

Changes in national educational policy followed from the shifts in labour policy, as reflected in a host of new legislation: the UUCA (Amendment) (1995), the Education Act (1996), the Private Higher Education Institution Act (1996) and the National Council of Higher Education Act (1996). The scenario of higher education in Malaysia consequently transformed. For example, the Private Higher Education Institution Act authorised the Minister of Higher Education to approve applications to establish private tertiary institutions. As a result, private universities were founded by corporate entities. Among them are Universiti Telekom, Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Universiti Tun Abdul Razak, Management and Science University and Al Bukhary International University. The government also welcomed foreign universities that wanted to open branch campuses in Malaysia, starting with the consent given to Australia's Monash University (Osman Rani 2000: 254-259).

According to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), up till December 2014, approximately 900,000 students were pursuing their higher education in 20 public universities, 61 private universities, 34 private university colleges, 9 foreign university branch campuses and 409 private colleges.⁶ In 2013, there were 560,359 students enrolling in public higher education institutions and another 484,963 registered

as students of private higher education institutions (PHEIs).⁷ An ethnically slanted quota system, in place at all public universities in 1971-2001, restricted the number of non-Malay students, particularly the Chinese, in local universities. As a response, PHEIs emerged, some of which were financed by Chinese-controlled companies and Chinese tycoons to cater to this excess demand. The increase in the number of PHEIs undoubtedly benefited the non-Malays and the rich, as it became relatively cheaper now to pursue a degree locally with relaxed entry requirements (Muhammed 2014). In 2009, former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir was reported to have estimated the proportion of Malay/Bumiputera students at PHEIs to hover around just ten percent, as a result of their limited financial capabilities.⁸

It is safe to assume, despite the absence of official figures of students by ethnicity at tertiary institutions, that non-Malay tertiary-level enrolment was higher than that of the Malays, by virtue of their numbers in private college and universities out-stripping their Malay counterparts (Muhammed 2014). This was despite there being more Malays than non-Malays in public institutions of higher learning. In 2005, for instance, enrolment in public universities was about 69.9% Malay/Bumiputera, 21.9% Chinese and 5.1% Indians – but this estimate excludes The Bumiputera-only Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)'s enrolment of nearly 100,000 students (Lee 2013). Although the ethnic quota policy was officially replaced by a supposedly merit-based policy in 2001, the proportion of students admitted by ethnicity has remained more or less the same as when the ethnic-based admission policy was in effect (Lee 2009).

In terms of social engineering, developments in higher education as narrated above has not only helped the country fulfil its industrial needs, but also facilitated the lower classes in enhancing their socio-cultural capital so as to be able to upwardly rise to the middle classes (Abdul Rahman 2001, 2002, Saravanamuttu 2001).

Creation of the Middle Class via Education

Capitalist development driven by Malaysia's developmentalist state since the late 1970s not only entailed socio-economic restructuring

but also crystallised the formation of a middle class. Unlike in the pre-NEP era, when the middle classes were invariably composed of the Malaysian Chinese and a handful of Malay civil service administrators, the post-1970 period witnessed the emergence of a multi-ethnic middle class holding a variety of vocations such as doctors, architects, lawyers, academics, and professional technocrats and managers (Abdul Rahman 2001: 83). Apart from these professional and managerial middle classes, the traditional middle classes also expanded, forming a new entrepreneurial middle class. The lower middle classes, although remaining secondary to what classical scholarship had identified as the bourgeoisie, were not necessarily marginalised, for their fate progressed hand in hand with the new middle classes (Abdul Rahman 1995). More significantly, perhaps, is the fact that these upcoming middle classes, whose presence were palpable in urban areas throughout the country, were a motley group of diverse ethno-religious affiliations (Abdul Rahman 1999: 117-121).

Crouch (1996), Kahn (1996a) and Abdul Rahman (2000, 2002) stress that Malaysia's embrace of industrialisation and pro-Bumiputera policy had intensified the creation of a middle class. Statistically, as measured by income, the new middle class expanded from a meagre 4 percent of the population in 1957, to 5.9 percent in 1970, 11.2 percent in 1990, and 15.2 percent in 2000 (Abdul Rahman 2001: 86).

Based on The Household Income Survey (HIS) conducted by government's Economic Planning Unit, in 2012, 18.4 percent of households in Malaysia earned between RM3,500-RM4,999 and another 33.6% earned RM5,000 and above.⁹ The data also indicated the rapid growth rate of middle income households in urban areas of Malaysia. The numbers were steadily growing as more and more Malaysians gained access to tertiary education which enabled them to secure jobs in professional occupational fields, for example as company executives, accountants or lawyers. The country's workforce is formed by 40 percent of this middle income group. Not only are they the country's major tax payers, but they are also the major force in consumer spending (Wong and Khan 2014).

While one would have conventionally expected a vibrant trans-ethnic civil society to have emerged in tandem with the flourishing of a socially engineered middle class, stirrings of such civil society activism became impactful only from the late 1990s, particularly since the onset of the *Reformasi* euphoria arising from the unceremonious dismissal and humiliation of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998. In the 1980s, civil society activism was largely confined to non-Malay civil rights movements (Kua 2005). The emergent Malay middle class, created largely out of the womb of the NEP and expansion of state-sponsored education, was still mired in a government-dependent mentality which regarded UMNO as the de facto patron of Malay-Muslim hegemony. The pillar of this class was then the Malay-dominated bureaucracy, whose ethos by and large failed to distinguish between party and government of the day. Rule by UMNO was assumed to be sustainable by the intricacies of Malaysia's extant political economy and social set-up.

An independent Malay middle class did not come about instantaneously from the various privatisation projects which the government embarked on in the mid-1980s. Although ostensibly free from state control, Bumiputera capitalists who thrived on privatisation ventures remained culturally shackled by the patronage networks that they were embroiled in as part of the UMNO and BN nexus. Wealth was slow to percolate through to the unconnected masses; hence, while the economic cake as a whole expanded, distribution was skewed by a myriad of unethical practices. Corruption, cronyism, collusion, lack of regulation and lack of transparency in the awarding of contracts became symptomatic of the malaise befalling Malaysia's political economy at the dawn of the regional financial crisis of 1997-98 (Gomez and Jomo 1999).

Abdul Rahman (2002: 30), citing Norani (1997), elaborates further this trend among the new middle classes. Abdul Rahman argues that the middle classes' dependency makes them rather poor bearers and agents of modernity in Malaysia. It is found that despite their high education and their facility in at least two languages (their mother tongue and English), only a small number appears to have a sustained interest in the 'higher and finer aspects of life', while most members of

the middle class have not developed a strong intellectual and cultural tradition, lacking strong reading habits and sophisticated cultural tastes. Many are basically consumerist in orientation, involved in material pursuits and acquiring status items as symbols of 'having arrived.'

In terms of political culture, the rising middle classes exhibited multiple contradictions – a hangover from the feudal politics most of their forefathers had been attached to in the 1960s-70s, in contrast with the emphasis of contemporary politics on universal rights and values. Crouch (1996) and Kahn (1996a) are skeptical of the direction of the middle classes' political orientation. Abdul Rahman (1998) and Loh (2003: 272-273, 2005) are more inclined to examine the middle classes' political culture as one that transcends party political boundaries. Saravanamuttu (2001: 103-105), nevertheless, summarises the apparently contrasting portrayals in two perspectives. First, the middle classes are supportive of the status quo by virtue of their own dependence on the government for economic survival. As their lives are drawn into the rat race obsessed with maintaining if not advancing their material standards, democratisation becomes a peripheral issue by default. Added to the fact that members of the middle class are divided along ethno-cultural and religious lines, the achievement of political cohesiveness becomes far-fetched. Secondly, the middle classes are seen as wont to championing a multitude of not necessarily coherent issues. Despite being organisationally fragmented, they do espouse consciousness of universal values such as democracy, human rights, gender and environmental concerns, which cut across ethnic boundaries.

Regardless of intra-group incoherence, the phenomenon of a rising middle class in Malaysia offers alternative discourses to the conventional ethnic-centric and class-centric perspectives that have dominated national politics all along. An emergent new discourse, as yet not fully developed, foregrounds the role of Malaysia's new middle class as consisting of political actors harbouring the propensity to act according to a multi-ethnic and multi-class praxis which opposes state-orchestrated over-regulation, domination and undue pressure unto citizens (Saravanamuttu 1992). In response to such a perspective, scholars have proposed a paradigm that views members

of the rising middle class as comprising many middle classes instead of a single middle class which claims sole credit in the fight for democracy in Malaysia (Kahn 1996b, Abdul Rahman 1999: 115-116, 2002).

Fomenting National Identity through Education: The School as an Agent of Social and Cultural Reproduction

Malaysia's higher education enrolment reached a reasonable 48 percent in 2012, representing a 70 percent rise in one decade, with 1.2 million students registered in both public and private institutions of higher learning in the country.¹⁰ Expansion of educational opportunities in Malaysia took place parallel with structural economic adjustments such as the reorientation of the workforce from a labour-intensive and agriculture-cum-mining-based one to one driven by higher order skills and information technology (IT). This shift was in sync with the expansion of the middle classes, driving a socio-economic wedge within Malaysian society. While *Wawasan 2020* had significantly jolted economic and infrastructural development, such material progress was not met with commensurate advancements in intangible fields conducive to the establishment of a liberal, rational, inclusive, scientific and progressive Malaysian nation. On the contrary, new faultlines dividing society even further have kept on emerging without being effectively addressed by the powers that be. The communal-orientedness of the whole educational system has not been removed by the top-down changes introduced throughout the years within the context of supposedly comprehensive educational reforms.

The challenge of modernisation facing Malaysian political leaders demanded from them a delicate balancing act between the aims of robust economic growth and the concoction of a truly national identity which all Malaysians, irrespective of ethno-cultural and religious backgrounds, could be proud of and willfully embrace. At the surface, such a project would have been straight-forward, for the dynamics of modernisation are thought to have cross-cultural and

trans-ethnic ramifications to some degree (Black 1967). However, the national identity project struggled to keep pace with inexorable economic development, being held back by political entities and educational institutions which took for granted Malaysia's consociational arrangements. Even as a new brand of cross-cutting new politics beckons, a significant number of political stakeholders remain ensnared whether intentionally or not in the trappings of ethnic-oriented old politics.

As a nation state currently in transition between old and new politics, Malaysia has been beset by unending contestations over national symbols, meanings and narratives (Loh 2009). Once carefully constricted under the secure domain of educational institutions controlled by the powers that be, explosion of information and political liberalisation enforced upon national structures for the past two decades have jolted concerned segments among civil society to offer counter-narratives and alternative proposals to official visions and programmes offered by the BN-led establishment. At the same time, just as the middle classes are not homogenous, civil society is also polarised, with some non-governmental organisations preferring to resort to uncivil methods and to continually appeal to ethnocentric sentiments which may or may not jive with those of the ruling elites.

Among proponents of citizenship education, it is axiomatic that schools play a cardinal role as agents of socialisation. While socialisation by itself may be grounded on sublime objectives, it often ends up as a means of prolonging the hegemony of ruling elites, for whom preservation of power is the utmost priority of any political undertaking. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), for example, perceive school-based socialisation as no more than a vehicle of economic and cultural reproduction. Giroux (1980) sees the formal educational process as amounting to acting as mediator between social practices and cultural beliefs; the upshot being continual domination at the hands of elites manoeuvring themselves through official corridors of power and even legitimising their skewed worldviews via the stealthy use of conciliatory rhetoric. As he argues:

“...A more fundamentally political and critical approach to school socialization would begin with the premise that one of the critical elements in the power of a dominant class resides in its ability to impose, though not mechanistically, its own set of meanings and social practices through the selection, organization, and distribution of school knowledge and class-room social relationships...”

(Giroux 1980: 333)

With regard to the landscape of Malaysian education, more than 20 different settings have been available for parents to choose from. At primary level, there exist national schools (SK: *Sekolah Kebangsaan*), national Chinese-type schools (SJKC: *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina*) and national Indian-type schools (SJKT: *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan India*). Community Religious Schools (*Sekolah Agama Rakyat*) offer opportunities for parents wishing to add to their children’s Islamic religious instruction out of conventional schooling hours. Although limited in number, special education schools cater for children with disabilities and special needs. Private schools are also allowed for parents who can afford it. With 94 percent Bumiputera students, 88 percent Malaysian Chinese students and 100 percent Malaysian Indian students being enrolled in SKs, SJKCs and SJKTs respectively, ethnic homogeneity prevails in each of the different school environments (Malaysia 2012: 3-23, Malaysia 2013: 3-23).

Meanwhile, a more recent trend has witnessed more non-Chinese parents sending their children to Chinese primary schools. As evidenced in 2014, about 15 per cent of students at Chinese vernacular schools were non-Chinese. This growing trend has created an unprecedented scenario – some Chinese vernacular schools have become more ethnically heterogeneous compared to national schools, and in some vernacular schools, the student population are all Malays (Ming et al. 2017: 39). Thus, the notion that the national school system is the sole outlet offering mainstream education that prioritises nation-building is being challenged, at the practical level at least, ironically, by the vernacular system.

While polarisation at the basic level of education does seem to pose a problem with respect to national unity, the Malaysia

Education Blueprint 2013-2025, rather ironically, claims that inter-ethnic interactions inside and outside classroom are at satisfactory levels, despite the allotment for the Student Integration Plan for Unity (RIMUP: *Rancangan Integrasi Murid Untuk Perpaduan*) having been significantly slashed. No indication, however, is given of the methodology used by the Schools Inspectorate and Quality Assurance (JNJK: *Jemaah Nazir dan Jaminan Kualiti*), whose review provided the basis for the claim (Malaysia 2012: E-7, 3-24; Malaysia 2013: E-7, 3-24).

At secondary level, national secondary schools (SMK: *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*) account for 88 percent of enrolment. Additional options exist for students to pursue education at technical schools, vocational schools, sports schools and special needs schools. Enrolment at private schools has also increased in recent years, now making up 4 percent of secondary level students. The biggest provider of private secondary education for many years has been the *Dong Jiao Zong* (United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia), whose schools use Mandarin as the instructional language and prepare students for the United Examination Certificate (UEC) instead of the SPM examinations (Malaysia 2012: 3-23, Malaysia 2013: 3-23). *Dong Jiao Zong's* repeated requests for the government to recognise the UEC as an entrance qualification to local institutions of higher learning have until now been turned down, hence turning away their graduates to further tertiary education in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia among other countries (Tan 2005: 222-223). As the champion of Chinese vernacular education, *Dong Jiao Zong* opposed the government's proposal to make Malay as the instructional language for the subject *Malaysia Negaraku Tahap 1* (Malaysia My Country Level 1) in all primary schools. It was also at loggerheads against the government on the latter's plan to provide additional time for the subject *Bahasa Melayu Tahap 1* (Malay Language Level 1) in all national-type primary schools (Kartini 2012: 7).

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 employs the term *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language) rather than *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language) for the national language, which is also regarded as the language of unity (Malaysia 2012: E-10, Malaysia 2013: E-10). This

may be construed as a political design to de-racialise the language, irrespective of the fact that Article 152 of the Federal Constitution clearly states that the national language is *Bahasa Melayu* (Malaysia 1998: 106). While the move to replace English with *Bahasa Malaysia* or *Bahasa Melayu* – the government has over the years vacillated over which is the correct term to use,¹¹ as the medium of instruction in national schools began in 1982, SJKCs and SJKTs have retained their respective mother tongues as their media of instruction (Joseph 2008). *Bahasa Malaysia* proficiency, as measured by public examinations results, has thus been unsurprisingly better among SK students. As a remedy, the Blueprint proposes the introduction of a standard *Bahasa Malaysia* syllabus for all primary schools beginning in 2014 (Malaysia 2012: E-12, Malaysia 2013: E-12).

While the Blueprint's antidote looks feasible on paper, the success of its implementation depends to a great extent on the government's and ruling elites' political will. An inclusive outlook on language policy will necessitate all stakeholders to view *Bahasa Malaysia* as a national language rather than being a symbolic representation of Malay-Muslim supremacy. As the language evolves, for example, it may be advisable for such national institutes as the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP: *Institute of Language and Literature*) to consider the inclusion of select words from dialects of all ethnic groups in Malaysia into its expanding bibliography, and not just terms from lingos culturally identified with the Malay stock such as Javanese, as it has been doing in recent years. This can be done without diluting the Malay-Muslim essence of the existing Malay language, which remains nonetheless a component of *Bahasa Malaysia*. A subsequent move in the foreseeable future would be for example to introduce a constitutional amendment specifying the national language as *Bahasa Malaysia* instead of *Bahasa Melayu*, while retaining position of the latter as an official but not national language.¹² One can perhaps learn from Singapore's use of English as its main language of unity and communication, despite the position of Malay being formally mentioned in its constitution.¹³

The fractious politics, while being endemic to Malaya since independence (cf. Roff 1967, Ibrahim 1981), has exacerbated as a

result of the BN-UMNO state out-sourcing the fight for *Bahasa Malaysia* to Malay language purists who conceive of Malaysian language and culture in exclusive terms. Being an element of culture, which has since 1971 been essentialised in the form of a contentious National Culture Policy (NCP: *Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan*), language is treated by such purists and their political supporters from among the ruling establishment as an invaluable tool to assert the cultural dominance of the indigenous population. The NCP was born out of the womb of a National Cultural Congress held at Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, in 1971, in a post-May 1969 introspective political environment. The state-funded Congress arrived at three resolutions which were published in its proceedings as the bases of a national culture and consequently accepted as the pillars of the NCP. They are, in short, first, the national culture has to be based on the culture of indigenous peoples of this region; second, appropriate and worthy elements of other cultures can also be accepted as part of the national culture, and third, Islam is an important element in the formation of the national culture (Mandal 2008: 277-278).¹⁴ While the wording of the official document has its drawbacks in specifying what seemed to be a watertight boundary between a definitive culture and other cultures based on relative indigeneity, it was tolerant enough, for a post-May 1969 soul-searching environment, to provide for the gradual absorption of these other cultures into the rubric of national culture.

Unfortunately though, at the hands of Malay language and cultural purists, to whom the political elites relied on for the reification of the concept of national culture, the dynamic path of gradual acceptance never happened. An example of a high-profile event which sought to concretise the NCP was the *Pertemuan Dunia Melayu* (Malay World Meeting) held in Malacca from 18 to 21 December 1982, where such figures as Ismail Hussein, Firdaus Haji Abdullah, Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, Zainal Kling dan Aziz Deraman presented their thoughts. In his paper, Aziz Deraman pin-pointed three cardinal objectives of the NCP as follows: to strengthen national and state unity, to inculcate and protect national identity, and to enrich the humanistic and spiritual qualities of life so as

to be balanced with socio-economic development. In rectifying a common confusion that culture is 'adequate with dances,' to borrow a quotation from former Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, Aziz Deraman explained the concept of culture as 'the whole complex way of good life, whether in material or non-material form, in the diverse fields of language, custom, arts, law, morality, rural development, socio-economic amenities.' Disconcerting though was Aziz Deraman's stern warning that the practice of minority traditions and cultures in Malaysia cannot reach the extent of over-shadowing the aims of the NCP (Aziz Deraman 1983: 6-15). In other words, there existed from the outset an assumption that ethnic cultures would continually be placed outside the rubric of the NCP. In his officiating speech, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad who was then Prime Minister for slightly over a year unflinchingly emphasised on Malay culture as the pillar of national culture. Apart from arrogating to the state the right to plan and crystallise the national culture, Dr. Mahathir uncompromisingly labelled critics of the NCP as threats to national unity. On the whole, ethnocentric elements heavily coloured the proceedings of the whole Meeting (Mandal 2008: 285-287).

Operating on such an exclusive trajectory as set out by the Malacca meeting, the NCP has elicited concern and opposition from non-Malay groups. Malaysian Chinese and Indian organisations, for instance, presented their own memoranda on national culture in 1983 and 1984 respectively (Kua 2005: 115-125, 127-137). The post-1971 'politics of ethnic identification,' whereby 'these differences and power imbalances along the various social, economic and educational dimensions that are linked with the official political ethnic categories in Malaysia' made its way into Malaysian schools via the formalisation of exclusive Malay-Islamic categories (Joseph 2008: 184, Ahmad Fauzi and Mohd Haris Zuan 2018: 41-43). This is substantiated by the ethnically tendentious curricula of subjects such as Civic Education and History as taught in state schools (Santhiram 1997, Cheah 2001: 58-59). This deplorable state of affairs continues to take place despite assurances by official educationists that ethno-cultural categories of all communal groups have a legitimate place in the formal teaching and learning process in schools. Such a guarantee can be found for

instance in the Education Regulations (National Curriculum) 1997, which vouches to provide for, as per the Education Act of 1996:

‘an educational programme which includes curriculum and co-curricular activities which encompass all knowledge, skills, norms, values, cultural elements and beliefs to help a particular student’s overall development physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally, also to instill and raise desired moral values and to disseminate knowledge.’¹⁵

The polarising ambience continued through the 1990s, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad’s proclamation of *Wawasan 2020* with its attendant notion of a *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Nation) notwithstanding (Ooi 2004, Mandal 2008: 288-297). Temporarily ameliorated during the economic boom years of the early to mid-1990s, the linguistic-cultural faultline reappeared following the recession of 1997-98 in the form of the heated Malaysian Chinese Organisations’ Election Appeals or *Suqiu* of 1999. *Suqiu* demanded, among other things, a phasing out of the Bumiputera – non-Bumiputera distinction, redelineation of electoral constituencies so as to better reflect the principle of ‘one person one vote’, improvement in human rights standards, eradication of public sector corruption, a more equitable economic policy as in the abolition of a quota system in favour of a means-tested sliding scale, a review of privatisation policy, a fairer treatment of mother tongue education of ethnic minorities, revocation of the plan for *Sekolah Wawasan* (Vision Schools) whereby schools of different mediums of instruction are placed in one compound though retaining separate administrations, recognition of the UEC qualification and official support for the propagation and flourishing of all Malaysian religions (Kua 2005: 187-195).

The BN-UMNO elites, however, derive political benefits either way from the presence of vernacular education and their lobbyists. Their existence gives rise to wide opportunities for political bargaining and horse-trading. On the one hand, for instance, Dr. Mahathir, faced with widespread Malay-Muslim resentment following the shabby treatment afforded to Anwar Ibrahim, capitalised on the *Suqiu* saga to position himself as champion of the Malays in their

fight against communist-like enemies.¹⁶ On the other hand, a few years later, in order to soothe the non-Malay lobby, he allocated ten percent of places at the previously mono-ethnic *Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (MARA: People's Council of Trust) Junior Science colleges to non-Bumiputera students, earning him the displeasure of Malay rights lobbyists.¹⁷ This was announced, however, when he had more or less set sights on retirement, for within a few days, Dr. Mahathir dramatically announced his resignation from all party and government posts when delivering the closing speech at the UMNO General Assembly, only to retract it after one hour upon the coaxing of UMNO Supreme Council members (Ahmad Fauzi 2003: 136-137). One of Dr. Mahathir's most controversial decisions ironically brought together both Malay language nationalists and Chinese educationists on a common platform. This was the government's decision in 2003 to revive English as a medium of instruction in mathematics and science subjects in all state schools (Lee 2008: 16). Their determined opposition, taking on even the form of street protests, eventually led to abrogation of the policy in 2012.

Since September 1998, Malaysian politics has been enveloped by demands for large-scale reform as encapsulated in resonant cries for *Reformasi* (reformation). Following the unceremonious sacking of and humiliating treatment given to Anwar Ibrahim - until then Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy President of UMNO and heir apparent of long time Premier Dr. Mahathir, amidst a flurry of corruption and sodomy allegations, civil society and opposition parties have coalesced in trying to make headway with an ethnically transcending brand of new politics. The long-awaited attempt to put forward a counter-discourse can still be said to be in its formative stages, having undergone countless tribulations and trials in the form of Anwar's incarceration from 1999 to 2004, an electoral defeat in the Thirteenth General Elections (GE13) despite the *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR: People's Pact) opposition coalition garnering a popular vote majority, fresh allegations against Anwar followed by his trial and the Court of Appeal's overturning of his acquittal, and internal troubles within PR on such contentious issues as the Islamic state and the introduction of the Islamic penal code of *hudud*, over which two PR component

parties, namely the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the *Parti Islam SeMalaysia* (PAS: Islamic Party of Malaysia) have constantly been at loggerheads with each other.

Concluding Remarks

As a post-colonial state, Malaysia's official educational policies clearly outline their political objectives of building inter-communal integration and fostering national identity, apart from the utilitarian aim of supplying workforce for national development. Failure to address effectively this national identity issue will continuously embroil Malaysians in old-style communal polemics, which are an obvious obstacle hindering progress towards more matured new politics where interests of political actors cut across ethno-religious considerations. Unfortunately, education in Malaysia remains stuck in its utilitarian goals, without critically assessing its nation-building priorities, let alone acting on them. Even the middle classes which had grown out of the segmented educational system – from the primary, secondary, and up to tertiary levels – are divided along communal lines, hence creating fertile ground for the emergence of a civil or rather 'uncivil' society groups that thrive upon the exploitation of narrow ethno-national and ethno-religious prejudices. Not only is Malaysia's educational system segmented along ethnic lines, but it also deliberately accentuates communal identities, without concrete efforts at introducing more inclusive syllabi and teaching and learning approaches.

Malaysia is at a critical juncture in its path as a nation state, politically, economically and socially. The transition from an 'old politics' obsessed with ethno-religious segmentation to a 'new politics' which seeks to transcend divisive societal boundaries has not been all that smooth. In the political realm, an increasingly convoluted state of affairs can be seen in its practitioners, discourses and institutions. While some in each of these categories have shown willingness to move on with progressive agendas which carry global and constructive messages, others remain stuck in an old order beset with ethno-nationalist priorities and imperatives. At the level of

political practice, growth of a vibrant civil society, for instance, has been rivalled by a ferocious ‘uncivil’ society which spews all kinds of malicious arguments in the public realm, mostly carrying an ethno-religious slant. These conflicts, which at times get frighteningly intense, are not dealt with effectively by the state for the simple reason that the ruling elites are more often than not dictated by pragmatic considerations, as defined by narrow political interests, than by larger national concerns.

Discourse of a section of Malay-Muslim civil society, as represented by organisations such as *Pertubuhan Peribumi Perkasa Malaysia* (PERKASA: Association of the Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples of Malaysia), *Pertubuhan Kebajikan dan Dakwah Islamiah* (PEKIDA: Islamic Welfare and Missionary Association) and *Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia* (ISMA: Muslim Solidarity Union of Malaysia), is obsessed with defending the status quo pertaining to what they perceive as the elevated status of Bumiputeras. To them, affirmative action as institutionalised in the NEP for example is a constitutional birthright rather than a temporary measure to alleviate socio-economic imbalance. Contestations over religion strewn by these groups converge with that of the state in unduly essentialising Islam into a homogenous faith which enjoins a conservative praxis.

Under the UMNO-driven regime of Islamist conservatism, alternative interpretations proffered by unorthodox groups such as Shi’ites and *Sufis* (Muslim mystics) - as exemplified by the Darul Arqam movement (1968-1994), are equated with deviancy, with their followers being subjected to harassment, preventive detention, demonisation in the state-controlled mainstream media and indictment in *sharia* courts (Ahmad Fauzi 2000, 2013; Mohd Faizal 2013a, 2013b). While the state seeks to avoid intra-religious tension at all costs, ostensibly on the basis of maintaining Malay-Muslim unity invariably depicted as being fragile and threatened by alien cultures, liberal segments in Malay-Muslim society have reacted strongly against the monotonous version of state Islam as projected by the Department of Advancement of Islam of Malaysia (JAKIM: *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*), by founding groups which aspire to foreground progressive interpretations of religion, such as the gender-

driven Sisters In Islam (SIS) and the Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) (Norani Othman 2008, Shahanaaz Habib 2012).

It is the contention of authors of this article that educational policies in Malaysia, while showing signs of endeavouring to apprehend the above trends, has not been effective in counterbalancing the negative repercussions that arise from them. The primary reason behind this failure, which has transpired despite the state officially embracing such pompous slogans as *Bangsa Malaysia*, *Wawasan 2020* and now OneMalaysia, is that those responsible for the policies, i.e. the ruling politicians and bureaucrats entrusted with their implementation, are conditioned more by narrow and vested political interests rather than by national interests. The lofty hopes foregrounded by the afore-mentioned slogans are lamentably shelved amidst political rhetoric and ulterior motives. Only time will tell whether the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 suffers the same disappointing fate as some of the past educational projects, doomed because of poor delivery and lack of political will, a far cry from the hullabaloo accompanying its officiation. As far as contemporary ethno-religious issues and the BN-UMNO state's political trajectory under Najib Razak's administration are concerned, the scenario, however, does not look promising (Ahmad Fauzi 2013).

Endnotes

- ¹ Both documents are available for downloading at the Malaysian Ministry of Education's official website at <http://www.moe.gov.my/en/pelan-pembangunan-pendidikan-malaysia-2013-2025> (accessed 19 July 2014).
- ² The concept of 'primordial sentiments' that lead to social cleavages among the populace of a polity was introduced by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1963) with reference to newly decolonised societies in the period just after the Second World War.
- ³ Quoted in Malaysia (2006: 40). *This Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan 2006-2010* (Educational Development Core Plan 2006-2010) is available for downloading at [http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Malaysia/Malaysia% 20 PIPP%202006-2010%20Malaysian.pdf](http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Malaysia/Malaysia%20PIPP%202006-2010%20Malaysian.pdf) (accessed 4 August 2015).
- ⁴ Figures from the Ministry of Education, as derived from <http://emisportal.moe.gov.my/> (accessed 23 July 2014).
- ⁵ See the Economic Planning Unit (EPU)'s report on the magnitude of Malaysia's

- 'intensive' brain drain problem at http://www.epu.gov.my/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=86437b94-f425-40fb-8d85-d99f97bb0a90&groupId=283545 (accessed 21 July 2014).
- 6 <http://jpt.moe.gov.my/IPt%20MALAYSIA/Statistik%20IPTS%20sehingga%2031%20Disember%202014.pdf> (accessed 4 August 2015).
 - 7 http://www.mohe.gov.my/web_statistik/Indikator_Pengajian_Tinggi_Malaysia_2013.pdf (accessed 4 August 2015).
 - 8 <http://www.mstar.com.my/berita/berita-semasa/2009/12/12/jangan-pertikai-kenapa-ramai-bumiputera-di-ipta-dr-mahathir/> (accessed 4 August 2015).
 - 9 <http://www.epu.gov.my/documents/10124/c9352eab-28fe-4b0f-9fc1-8a70c18b0cd9> (accessed 4 August 2015).
 - 10 From 1990 until 2010, undergraduate enrolment multiplied by six and ten times greater than enrolment for Masters and doctoral candidates respectively. This increase ranks Malaysia as third behind Singapore and Thailand among ASEAN countries in terms of postgraduate degree enrolment. See Malaysia (2015: 1-3), available at <http://hes.moe.gov.my/event/docs/4.%20Executive%20Summary%20PPPM%202015-2025.pdf> (accessed 5 August 2015).
 - 11 This uncertainty in terminology is observable even in official Ministry of Education documents; see for example section 38 of the *Dasar Pendidikan Kebangsaan* (National Education Policy), outlining the policy 'Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia Memperkukuh Bahasa Inggeris' (MBMMBI: Upholding *Bahasa Malaysia*, Strengthening English Language), available at the Ministry's official website at <http://www.moe.gov.my/userfiles/file/BUKU%20DASAR.pdf> (accessed 19 July 2014).
 - 12 For the most recent call by the DBP, albeit with more ethnocentric implications, see L. Suganya, 'DBP wants national language to be called Bahasa Melayu again', <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/06/25/DBP-Bahasa-Melayu/> (accessed 24 July 2015).
 - 13 Joseph Kurup, the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department who comes from Sabah, is reported to have said in March 2014 that Malaysia was looking to emulate Singapore's model of national unity and religious harmony; see 'Kurup: Malaysia looking at Singapore's model of national unity', *The Star Online*, <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/03/05/Kurup-msia-looking-at-spore-unity/> (accessed 1 April 2014).
 - 14 In Malay: '1) Kebudayaan Rakyat Asal Rantau ini yang merangkumi kawasan Malaysia, Indonesia, Filipina, Singapura, Brunei, Thailand dan Kampuchea serta Kepulauan Selatan Pasifik (Polynesia, Melanesia dan Oceania sehingga Malagasi adalah merupakan bahagian utama dari kawasan tamadun atau budaya Melayu. 2) Unsur-unsur Kebudayaan Lain Yang Sesuai dan Wajar boleh diterima Kebudayaan sebagai sesuatu yang dinamik, sentiasa berubah-ubah melalui proses penyerapan dan penyesuaian secara berterusan. 3) Islam Menjadi Unsur Yang Penting Dalam Pembentukan Kebudayaan Kebangsaan Agama atau kepercayaan kepada Tuhan merupakan unsur penting dalam

- proses pembangunan negara serta pembentukan rakyat yang berakhlak dan berperibadi mulia.' For the official elaboration of the NCP, see *Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan*, http://www.pmo.gov.my/dokumenattached/Dasar/04Dasar_Kebudayaan_Kebangsaan.pdf (accessed 20 July 2014).
- ¹⁵ In Malay: 'Suatu program pendidikan yang termasuk kurikulum dan kegiatan kokurikulum yang merangkumi semua pengetahuan, kemahiran, norma, nilai, unsur kebudayaan dan kepercayaan untuk membantu perkembangan seseorang murid dengan sepenuhnya dari segi jasmani, rohani, mental dan emosi serta untuk menanam dan mempertingkatkan nilai moral yang diinginkan dan untuk menyampaikan pengetahuan.' See *Kurikulum Kebangsaan* (National Curriculum) at the Ministry of Education's official website at <http://www.moe.gov.my/v/kurikulum-kebangsaan> (accessed 19 July 2014).
- ¹⁶ See his parliamentary replies to queries from DAP MPs Kerk Kim Hock and Dr. Tan Seng Giaw in the report 'Tuntutan Suqiu melampau' [Suqiu's demands are overboard], *Utusan Online*, 12 December 2000, http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2000&dt=1212&pub=utusan_malaysia&sec=Rencana&pg=ot_01.htm (accessed 20 July 2014).
- ¹⁷ See *Utusan Malaysia's* interview with former Vice Chancellor of Universiti Malaya, Royal Professor Ungku Aziz, carrying the unnecessarily racially provocative title, 'Jangan rampas hak Melayu' [Do not usurp Malay rights], *Utusan Online*, 9 June 2002, http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2002&dt=0609&pub=Utusan_Malaysia&sec=Rencana&pg=re_03.htm (accessed 20 July 2014).

References

- Abdul Rahman Embong. 1995. Malaysian Middle Classes: Some Preliminary Observations. *Jurnal Antropologi dan Sosiologi* 22: 31-54.
- Abdul Rahman Embong. 1996. Social Transformation, the State and the Middle Classes in Post-Independence Malaysia. *Southeast Asian Studies* 34 (3): 56-72.
- Abdul Rahman Embong. 1999. Malaysian Middle Class Studies: A Critical Review. In Jomo K.S. (ed.) *Rethinking Malaysia: Malaysian Studies 1*, pp. 107-125. Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur: Asia 2000 Ltd. and Malaysian Social Science Association.
- Abdul Rahman Embong. 2000. Pembangunan dan Ketidaksetaraan Pendapatan: Pencapaian dan Cabaran Masa Depan [Development and Income Inequality: Achievements and Future Challenges]. In Abdul Rahman Embong (ed.). *Negara, Pasaran dan Pemodelan Malaysia* [The Malaysian State, Markets and Modernisation], pp. 134-158. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Abdul Rahman Embong. 2001. Beyond the Crisis: The Paradox of the Malaysian Middle Class. In Abdul Rahman Embong (ed.). *Southeast Asian Middle Classes: Prospects for Social Change and Democratisation*, pp. 80-102. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

- Abdul Rahman Embong. 2002. *State-led Modernization and the New Middle Class in Malaysia*. International Political Economy Series. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Abdullah Hassan. 1991. Pendemokrasian Institusi Pengajian Tinggi: Menuju Ideal Demokrasi [Democratisation of Higher Learning Institutions: Towards the Democratic Ideal]. In Wan Manan Wan Muda and Haris Md. Jadi (eds.). *Akademia Menjelang Tahun 2000* [Academia In the Face of the Year 2000], pp. 54-77. Penang: Persatuan Kakitangan Akademik dan Pentadbiran USM.
- Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. 2000. Political Dimensions of Religious Conflict in Malaysia: State Response to an Islamic Movement. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 28 (80): 32-65.
- Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. 2003. The Taqwa Versus Quwwah Dichotomy: An Islamic Critique of Development via the Malaysian *Bumiputera* Policy. *Kajian Malaysia: Journal of Malaysian Studies* XXI (1 & 2) special issue.
- Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. 2013. From Darul Arqam to the Rufaqa' Corporation: Change and Continuity in a Sufi Movement in Malaysia. In Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad and Patrick Jory (eds.). *Islamic Thought in Southeast Asia: New Interpretations and Movements*, pp. 45-65. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.
- Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and Mohd Haris Zuan Jaharudin. 2018. Islamic education in Malaysia: Between neoliberalism and political priorities in light of the *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015*. In Cynthia Joseph (ed.), *Policies and Politics in Malaysian Education: Education Reforms, Nationalism and Neoliberalism*, pp. 31-53. London and New York: Routledge.
- Aziz Deraman. 1983. *Perancangan dan Pentadbiran Kebudayaan di Malaysia* [Cultural Planning and Administration in Malaysia]. Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.
- Black, C.E. 1967. *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. C. 1977. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.
- Cheah Boon Kheng. 2001. From the End of Slavery to the ISA: Human Rights History in Malaysia. In Jomo K.S. (ed.). *Reinventing Malaysia: Reflections on its Past and Future*, pp. 57-83. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Crouch, H. 1996. *Government and Society in Malaysia*. St. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Geertz, C. 1963. The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States. In Geertz, C. (ed.). *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, pp. 105-119. New York: Free Press.
- Giroux, H. A. 1980. Critical Theory and Rationality in Citizenship Education. *Curriculum Inquiry* 10 (4): 329-366.
- Gomez, E. T. and Jomo K.S. 1999. *Malaysia's Political Economy: Politics, Patronage and Profits*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Ibrahim Saad. 1981. *Pendidikan dan Politik di Malaysia* [Education and Politics in Malaysia]. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Joseph, C. 2008. Ethnicities and Education in Malaysia: Difference, Inclusions and Exclusions. In Guofang Wan (ed.). *The Education of Diverse Student Populations: A Global Perspective*, pp. 183-208. USA: Springer Science + Business Media B.V.
- Kahn, Joel S. 1996a. Growth, Economic Transformation, Culture and the Middle Classes in Malaysia. In Richard Robison and Davis S.G. Goodman (eds.). *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phone, McDonalds and Middle Class Revolution*, pp. 49-78. London and New York: Routledge,.
- Kahn, Joel S. 1996b. The Middle Class as a Field of Ethnological Study. In Muhammad Ikmal Said and Zahid Emby (eds.). *Malaysia: Critical Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Syed Husin Ali*, pp. 12-33. Petaling Jaya: Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia.
- Kartini Aboo Talib@Khalid. 2012. Lanskap Masyarakat Sipil: Evolusi, Politik, dan Pendekatan. [Civil Society Landscape: Evolution, Politics, and Approaches]. In Haris Zuan and Rizal Hamdan (eds). *Wacana Baru Politik Malaysia: Perspektif Ruang Awam, Budaya dan Institusi* [New Discourse of Malaysian Politics: Public Space, Cultural and Institutional Perspectives], pp. 1-24. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre,.
- Kua Kia Soong. 2005. *The Malaysian Civil Rights Movement*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development.
- Lee Hock Guan. 2008. *Education and Ethnic Relations in Malaysia*, ISEAS Working Paper: Social and Cultural Issues No. 1, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Lee Hock Guan. 2009. Language, Education and Ethnic Relations', in Gomes, Alberto G.; Azly Rahman and Lim Teck Ghee (eds.). *Multi-ethnic Malaysia: Past, Present and Future*, pp. 207-229. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development and MiDAS@UCSI University,.
- Lee Hock Guan. 2013. Racial Citizenship and Higher Education in Malaysia. In Gomez, E. T. and Johan Saravanamuttu (eds.). *The New Economic Policy in Malaysia*, pp. 235-264. Singapore. NUS Press and ISEAS Publishing,.
- Lijphart, A. 1977. *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. London and New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Loh, F. K. W. 2003. Towards a New Politics of Fragmentation and Contestation. In Loh F. L. W. and Johan Saravanamuttu (eds.). *New Politics in Malaysia*, pp. 253-282. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies,.
- Loh, F. K. W. 2005. *Politik Baru di Malaysia?* [New Politics in Malaysia?], Siri Syarahan Umum Perlantikan Profesor. Penang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Loh, F. K. W. 2009. *Old vs New Politics in Malaysia: State and Society in Transition*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development and Aliran Kesedaran Negara.

- Mandal, S. K. 2008. The National Culture Policy and Contestation over Malaysian Identity. In Nelson, J. M., Meerman, J. and Abdul Rahman Embong (eds.). *Globalization and National Autonomy: The Experience of Malaysia*, pp. 273-300. Singapore and Bangi: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Institute of Malaysian and International Studies.
- Ming O. K., Abdullah S., Tee M.Y., & Samuel M. 2017. Education and Politics in Malaysia. In Samuel M., Tee M., & Symaco L. (eds). *Education in Malaysia: Development and Challenges*, pp. 33-51. Singapore: Springer,.
- Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani. 2010. *Freedom of Political Speech and Social Responsibility in Malaysia*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Mohd. Faizal Musa. 2013a. The Malaysian Shi'a: A Preliminary Study of Their History, Oppression, and Denied Rights. *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 6(4): 411-463.
- Mohd. Faizal Musa. 2013b. Malaysian Shi'ites Lonely Struggle. *Pensee* 75 (12): 336-357.
- Muhammed Abdul Khalid. 2014. *The Colour of Inequality: Ethnicity, Class, Income and Wealth in Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: MPH Group Publishing.
- Norani Othman. 1997. The Formation of the "New Middle Classes" and the Creation of "a Culture of Modernity" in Contemporary Malaysia'. Working paper presented at the International Workshop on the Southeast Asian Middle Classes in Comparative Perspective, organized by the Program for Southeast Asian Area Studies (PROSEA), Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan, 6-8 June.
- Norani Othman. 2008. Religion, Citizenship Rights and Gender Justice: Women, Islamization & the Shari'a in Malaysia Since the 1980s. In Norani Othman, Puthuchery, M. C. and Kessler, C. *Sharing The Nation: Faith, Difference, Power and the State 50 Years After Merdeka*, pp. 29-58. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre,.
- Ooi Kee Beng. 2006. Bangsa Malaysia: Vision or Spin? In Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (eds.). *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, pp. 47-72. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Osman Rani, H. 2000. Perancangan Pendidikan dan Keperluan Sumber Manusia' in Abdul Rahman Embong (ed.). *Negara, Pasaran dan Pemodenan Malaysia* [The Malaysian State, Markets and Modernisation], pp. 247-267. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,.
- Rahimah Abdul Aziz. 2000. Perancangan Pembangunan Sosio-ekonomi: Dasar, Strategi Dan Pelaksanaan. In Abdul Rahman Embong (ed.). *Negara, Pasaran dan Pemodenan Malaysia* [The Malaysian State, Markets and Modernisation], pp. 45-69. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,.
- Roff, M. 1967. The Politics of Language in Malaya. *Asian Survey* 7 (5): 316-328.
- Roff, W. R. 2004. *Pondoks, Madrasahs and the Production of 'Ulama' in Malaysia. Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 11(1): 1-21.
- Johan Saravanamuttu. 2001. Is There a Politics of the Malaysian Middle Class? In Abdul Rahman Embong (ed.). *Southeast Asian Middle Classes: Prospects for*

- Social Change and Democratisation*, pp. 103-118. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Santhiram, R. 1997. Curriculum Materials for National Integration in Malaysia - Match or Mismatch. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 17(2): 7-18.
- Shahanaaz Habib. 2012. An Islamic revolution, 1 January, *The Sunday Star*.
- Shaharir Mohamad Zain. 1994. *Falsafah Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Tafsiran dan Penghayatan* [The Philosophy of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia: Interpretation and Internalisation]. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Shamsul A.B. 2003. The Malay World: The Concept of Malay Studies and National Identity Formation. In Hooker, V. and Norani Othman (eds.). *Malaysia: Islam, Society and Politics*, pp. 101-25. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Tan Yao Sua. 2005. *Politik Dongjiaozong dalam Pendidikan Vernakular Cina di Semenanjung Malaysia (1960-1982)* [Dongjiaozong Politics in Chinese Vernacular Education in Peninsular Malaysia (1960-1982)]. Penang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Torii Takashi. 2003. The Mechanism for State-led Creation of Malaysian's Middle Classes. *The Developing Economies* 41(2): 221-242.
- Wong Chia May and Tareef Hayat Khan. 2014. Rehabilitating Pekeliling Flats: A Mechanism to build Habitat for Unity for the Urban Middle Class in Malaysia. *International Journal of Science Commerce and Humanities* 2 (2): 39-48.

Documents, Reports and Official Publications

- Department of Statistics. 2012. *Time Series Production of Selected Products 1963 - 2010*, http://www.statistics.gov.my/portal/download_Economics/files/DATA_SERIES/NEGERI/Time_Series_Data_Production_Selected_Products.pdf (accessed 23 July 2014).
- Malaysia. 1998. *Federal Constitution With Index*. Kuala Lumpur: MDC Publishers Printers.
- Malaysia. 2006. *Rancangan Malaysia Ke-9: Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan 2006-2010* [Ninth Malaysia Plan: Educational Development Core Plan 2006-2010]. Putrajaya: Ministry of Education.
- Malaysia. 2012. *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 Preliminary Report*. Putrajaya: Ministry of Education.
- Malaysia. 2013. *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education)*. Putrajaya: Ministry of Education.
- Malaysia. 2015. *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education)*. Putrajaya: Ministry of Education.
- NEAC. 1991. *National Economic Advisory Council Report 1991*. Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Percetakan Negara.

Newspapers and magazines

Berita Harian, Kuala Lumpur.

Buletin Mutiara, Penang.

The Star, Petaling Jaya.

The Sunday Star, Petaling Jaya.

Utusan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

Websites:

<http://emisportal.moe.gov.my>

<http://hes.moe.gov.my>

<http://jpt.moe.gov.my>

<http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org>

<http://www.bpi.edu.my>

<http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my>

<http://www.epu.gov.my>

<http://www.islam.gov.my>

<http://www.moe.gov.my>

<http://www.mohe.gov.my>

<http://www.mstar.com.my>

<http://www.pmo.gov.my>

<http://www.statistics.gov.my>

<http://www.utusan.com.my>

<http://thestar.com.my>