

Education in Malaysia Before Independence and Its Implications for The Unification of Malaysian Society

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Abstract: Education in Malaysia went through multiple phases, pre-colonial, post-colonial, and then before and after independence to the present day. There is no doubt that knowing this historical sequence shows us the current reality and what the society has become, and the challenges facing the Malaysian society, and then finding an appropriate solution to the problems and challenges based on the correct diagnosis of the disease. The research objectives revealed the stages that education went through in Malaysia before independence. As well as disclosing the types of education that exist, and the curricula on which these schools depend. Then analyze it and mention its implications. The researcher used the descriptive method that relies on deducing history and analyzing it to reach the desired goal. The research found that education in Malaysia before independence relied on certain schools that had their own curriculum and their own system. The emergence of these schools in this way led to a differentiation in the levels of classes of the people according to the material and the distinction between culture, science, and knowledge among the people. It can be said that the ethnic problems that still occur today have their main roots in the education process in the colonial era.

Introduction:

Building a strong and cohesive society is one of the basics for the advancement of the state and the provision of security and stability in it. Education is the main pillar for building a united, cohesive, and cohesive society with high values and morals. This is because education inculcates knowledge and science through which behavior change takes place. And through the education process, a meeting also takes place through which one hopes acquaintance and bonding between the people. Especially school activities such as sports, parties and competitions that take place in one school and between multiple schools, which greatly help in instilling values and morals in society.

The first topic: The history of education in Malaysia before independence

We can divide the history of education in Malaysia before independence into three sections as follows:

- 1) Before colonization
- 2) After colonialism
- 3) **Before independence**

1. Before colonization

Before the advent of colonialism in the 15-17 century, education in the land of Malaya was focused only on teaching the Islamic religion, and there is no special curriculum for education, and the education process was held in the old schools called the *Pondok* and the prayer hall, and education was free of charge. It was one of the first educational entity to originate in Malay land; It is a school surrounded by students housing and teachers homes within it, and its inception was in the early eighteenth-century AD, at the teachers backgrounds mostly comes from Malay Scholars who studied in Makkah and Madinah on the system of *talaqqi*, so they established similar schools in terms of teaching methodology and reference books (Zulkifli Muhammad Yusuf 2009).

The first *Pondok* institute was established in Malaysia in the state of Terengganu by Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah who died in the year 1736, then it spread in the state of Kelantan, and it became a pioneer in the region and students from home and abroad flocked to it (Mustafa Abdullah (2009). And in the nineteenth century the religious education developed with the arrival of scholars from Patani (West Thailand) and the Middle East until there were civilized religious schools called (madrasah), and the educational system in them developed and introduced the Western educational philosophy in addition to religious education. There are several schools established due to the high demand to several civilized religious schools in the twentieth century in the state of Singapore, Penang, Kedah and Kelantan (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990).

The researcher considered that religious education was well established in the Malay people since the fifteenth century and Islam was prevalent in the whole region. And there was no external influence on the Malay, until colonialism flocked to it, and the Malays would not change their beliefs. This indicates the success of religious education in consolidating the correct belief and correct understanding of Islam in the hearts of the people of the region. And the

inheritance of this belief from generations to the fact that we can say that the Malay people of their origin are Muslims and do not separate from it.

2. After the British colonialism from 1786 to 1941:

First: Malay schools:

The secular education system began after the arrival of the British, in the middle of the nineteenth century, when two schools were established in 1856 in Singapore. The number of these schools increased in 1983 to 1169 schools all over Malaysia. The curriculum developed only so that Malay children could read, write, and count to fourth grade of primary school. Previous studies describe that the purpose of the British school opening is only for their own ambitions and not to educate the Malay community so that they know their level of knowledge and progress. And the subjects that are taught only to give the students a chance to continue his father's job, whether the secretary or a farmer (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990).

In the opinion of the researcher, colonialism brought back education for Malay back when these secular schools were established. It is meant by secularism here that he teaches modern science only, not religious, within narrow limits. And we can say the period during which colonialism came to the region is the worst educational period in the history of all of Malaysia.

This is because the Kingdom of Malacca was a great and large kingdom famous in the region, and when the kingdom fell at the hands of the colonialists, we did not find any progress, especially in terms of education in the region, until after the independence of Malaysia, the Malaysian people began striving to build their state again as if they were born again.

Second: Chinese schools:

There were no schools established by the Chinese since they came to the land of Malaya in the fifth century except in the early nineteenth century in the year 1815, and in Malaka established the first Chinese school and three other schools in Singapore in 1819.

The educational curriculum used in it are subjects such as history, natural sciences, science, ethics, language, arithmetic, drawing, songs, etc. The State of China encourages the establishment of Chinese schools in the land of Malaya and helps them with financial aid so that they can spread the Chinese Republic's thought among the Chinese in the land of Malaya. The British government has decided a special law to close Chinese schools that do not meet their conditions, to be wary of the Chinese thought that penetrates into Malay land. But these Chinese schools continued to be established in some states in Malaysia, such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Muar, and Penang in 1923 (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990).

The Chinese coming from its origin is not for the sake of stability, but rather the focus was on the search for work. The proof of this is that they have not focused on the education process since the beginning of their coming. Or we can say that the circumstances were difficult during that period that made them not focus on education.

In the opinion of the researcher, the Chinese did not want to immerse themselves in Malay society and accept Malay authority since the beginning of their coming. We see the effect of this in the education process, as they were accepting aid from the Chinese Republic itself, and studying the Chinese curriculum, but they continued to demand that they remain as they are to this day. There are Chinese private educational curriculum that are being taught in Chinese private schools to this day, evidence of what the researcher said.

Third: Tamil Schools:

Tamil schools began when the British brought Indians to Malaysia to help lift Britain's economy in the twentieth century. The work of the Indians was in the fields of coffee and rubber. Schools were set up in the fields by companies with help from the government at the time. This is to meet the needs of the children of Indian workers who work in the fields. There are also Indian workers in the cities that have set up schools for their children. The education process was in the elementary stage only. Books and teachers came directly from India, and the schools were modest, with inadequate facilities for students (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990).

It seems that the Indians were a weak group in terms of numbers and their work was modest, so the colonial government helped build special schools for them in the fields and farms so that their children could learn. It seems that the educational curricula that come from India were secular, influenced by the British colonialism also in India, and that is why these schools were not subjected to inspection and judgment, as was the case in Chinese schools.

Fourth: English schools:

The first English school was established in 1548 in the state of Malacca by the Christian missionaries. Likewise, in Singapore, the first school was established by the Missionaries Association at the hands of the Head of Missionaries of the Colonial Countries. The first school in Penang Island called Penang Free School was established in 1816. This

school is open to all people of all races. School fees are taken according to the family income. It teaches the Malay language for families who do not want their children to be taught in English. It also studies handcraft skills.

The financial condition of the English schools deteriorated which caused the colonial government to take over its administration after a period of its establishment. There is a special school for high-ranking Malaysian families established in Kuala Kangsar Province, with the purpose of employing them as assistants to the government and on the other hand, to differentiate between Malay in terms of caste.

It is worth mentioning that high-skill schools were also established in 1918 AD to teach subjects related to such as electronic engineering and others to Malay and English children (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990).

In the opinion of the researcher, the purpose of establishing these schools is not more education than evangelization. And the colonial government does not have its goal of developing the country. Rather, the primary goal is not colonialism, in which the spirit of positivity, construction, progress and exit from villages to civilization as it is called suggests, but rather the appropriation of the country's goods and the evangelization of the people. Otherwise, why would they bring armies, with force and equipment, and fight all their enemies?

The other matter, there is no doubt that the student who studied under a priest is affected by it. Because the young student does not have the tools to evaluate or distinguish between right and wrong, especially true, and deviant religion. And if the purpose of the colonialists were to colonize the country, why does the government itself not undertake the establishment of these schools, but rather it was established by these missionaries? Is it because they want to deny that they came to these countries for colonialism and Christianization, but rather for trade, as they disclosed in the form of giant commercial companies? The researcher is not accused of delving into the intentions of these colonialists more than necessary or the validity of their words, but to be fair, when we saw in reality that these schools were built by missionaries and not by those political rulers who imposed their rule on the Malay people and came to colonize the country as they claim .

The third requirement: Before independence: 1946-1957.

After the Japanese invasion of Malaysia, the British colonialists planned to establish the Malayan Union, which failed due to the objection of the Malaysians and Malay sultans to the covenant proposed by the colonists to settle rights for all without privileges or privacy for the indigenous people of the country and the arrivals from the Chinese and Indians. Which led to the establishment of another document called Persekutuan Tanah Melayu Land Union in 1948 and this document became the Malaysian constitution later and led it to Malaysia's independence after that in 1957. The government made some attempts to establish the education system as a tool for the union between the races and the search for the new identity of the state. For this reason, some committees were established to research this field and submit proposals on the form of reports to the government at the time.

First: Barnes's report:

Among the reports, Barnes' report in 1951, which considered that it is impossible for Malay to unite with the existence of four education systems in Malaysia according to ethnicities, they suggested to the government to unify schools by making English or Malay as the main language and as a tool for education, while the Chinese and Tamil language is taught as subjects. This proposal tends to close Chinese and Tamil schools, which led to the Chinese being the first to reject this proposal in the report. Among the text of the report also the completion of the development of the organized educational curriculum, the subject of sciences, manual skill and family science was introduced into the curriculum. As well as the establishment of a high school skill, and the establishment of the Institute of Teachers to raise the level of teachers (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990).

The researcher's opinion that the Berenice report is closer to building the unified Malaysian people, and it is worth noting that the Berenice report was presented by specialists in the field of education, and the committee tried seriously and sincerely to help build the Malaysian people. However, the tendencies to popular nervousness in the opinion of the researcher on the part of the Chinese made them inclined to reject this report and insisted on adhering to their people and their customs and traditions in an illogical manner because they are not in China, but in the land of Malaya. The researcher believes that this proposal came at the hands of specialists in the field, and in the interest of the state at that time also to build based on monotheism for the people and a new identity for all peoples.

Second: The Fenn-Wuu Report.

The government then resorted to the establishment of another committee and presented a report called Fenn-Wuu in 1951, which was a result of the Chinese disapproving of the Barnes report, which was described as not taking into account other races, especially the Chinese. For this, he summoned Dr. W. Where is Dr. W.B. Fenn from America and Dr. Wu Tie Yao. Wu Teh Yao from the United Nations. Among the report, it is necessary to consider all the races in the formation of the state and not to force the curricula to anyone. They also mentioned that the imposition of the

main language could hinder the identity-building project for the new homeland. Likewise, the government should consider if the Chinese choose to study subjects consisting of Malay, Chinese and English. They also suggested establishing a private teacher's college to solve the problem of educational weakness in Chinese schools (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990).

The claim that the unification of schools and language obstructs the project to build the good identity of the homeland does not build upon it in the opinion of the researcher, as the unification of schools, languages and curricula is not intended to eliminate the customs and traditions of the races. But it is a serious attempt to build the identity for the new homeland. And to unify the different races and peoples for the sake of building the new homeland, and there is no hidden intention behind it. The author of the Berenice report is not by specific ethnicities in Malaysia, but by specialists in the field of education.

Third: Ordinan Pelajaran Educational Law Report:

Then another committee was set up to review the previous two reports, Barnes and Finn Wu, called the Ordinan Pelajaran Educational Law Report in 1952. The proposals for this report were implemented that year directly. Among the proposals of this committee is to establish only two types of schools, the first schools that use the Malay language as the main language and the second one that uses English as the main language. Malay language must be studied in English schools as well as English language must be studied in Malay schools. The Chinese and Tamil languages are taught at the request of parents if the number of students in the class reached fifteen students (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990).

This report, in the opinion of the researcher, is a compromise solution so that everyone gets out of the impasse over the control of a specific race for educational issues. Because the problem of race became very thorny at that time in the days of independence. There must be a compromise solution that satisfies everyone, and this is the intelligence of the authors of this report. The Malay language was the original language found in the land of Malaya and most of the Malay people speak it.

Malay cannot dispense with it, as this language has become in their blood and veins not fanaticism for the sake of the Malay race and the Malay identity, but this language has become part of their religion, with this language they learned their religion and came out of darkness and inherited the light of Islam from their ancestors through this language. We do not exaggerate if we say that the Malay people have an Islamic identity with testimonies from reality, as we see most of the Malays from Indonesia, southern Thailand, Malaysia and Brunei even Malay, who now live on deserted islands in Australia, have remained on their Islamic religion. For Malay, changing the language is like changing the Islamic identity.

The second topic: the implications for the course of education in Malaysia after independence.

Introduction:

Malaysia won independence with a heavy burden on the freeing of all people, especially Malay, who had to give the right to live for the two great ethnicities, China, and India. By looking at the state of education before independence, the British colonialists divided education according to race to apply the principle of difference and rule. And when they achieved independence there was a great challenge around the issue of the new Malaysian identity. To make matters worse, the Chinese and Indian expatriates do not want to give up even an inch of their principles, customs, and traditions. We can say they lived in Malaysia at that time as they lived in their country of origin. Nor are they ready to integrate with the new state in which they are, which brings together different races, religions and languages. After the establishment of Malaysia, the government strived to lay the foundations for education to bring these three races together and to build in them the new identity of the Malaysian people, who pledged to live together side by side before independence by some leaders of all sects.

First Topic: Thorny issues about interracial education in Malaysia

There are basic problems in the field of education since the establishment of the Malaysian state. According to the researcher, they are nothing but clear effects of the education process that differentiate between the pre-independence Malaysians and have not yet been addressed as follows:

1. Consolidation of national schools.

A reader in the history of education in Malaysia finds a problem in the organization of interracial education. The problem is that the Malaysian majority wants to make the dominant culture in the country the Malay culture which is the origin and existed before the colonialism came and was not refuted by the coming of the colonialists, while the minority of Chinese and Indian expatriates wanted to keep their customs, traditions, and even their native language (Tan You Sua 1988). Thus, we find there are attempts to unify all national schools and delete national schools

according to the races that existed in the colonial days, such as Razak's report. This report also supported Abd al-Rahman Talib's report (Tan You Sua 1988).

The other goal, according to the researcher, is to unify the education of the different races in Malaysia to unify the whole Malaysian society and make it a cohesive and cohesive society, everyone tries to serve the country without a people of the people. However, these attempts still failed due to the history of education that we mentioned earlier, as well as pressures from experts in ethnic education in Malaysia.

Some experts point out that it is this issue of unifying national schools that has caused that unifying races and citizens in Malaysia cannot succeed one hundred percent, and there are still differences and conflicts between races in Malaysia that have no solution unless schools unite for all (Khairul Azran Husen 2017).

Standardize the official language.

Through Razzaq's report, we also find an attempt to standardize the official language in national schools using the Malay language (Muhammad Nor Che Nuh 1990). The researcher's opinion on this matter is necessary for the new young generation to be based on a unified culture and history. At least every citizen has a language that unites them, since they will live in a single state characterized by multiple ethnicities.

However, this matter also did not find acceptance from the Chinese education experts and felt that their primary language should be used in primary and secondary education (Tan You Sua 1988). That is why these Chinese and Indian primary schools have remained their primary language to this day.

Curriculum

The educational curricula are the main issues since the country was founded on multi-ethnicity. When Chinese education experts refused to implement Razak's decision of one school for all and the language is the same for all, he succeeded in persuading them to make their basic curricula for all but taught in the original languages. The student's success in elementary school is considered, and he can successfully enter high school in common subjects in the curriculum, including Malay language, natural sciences, and mathematics. This is, in fact, not a solution to the problem, but rather a satisfaction and fulfillment of their requirements until the crisis passes without a solution.

There is another educational curriculum for Chinese private secondary schools called the Unified Examination Certificate. It tries to obtain full accreditation from the Ministry of Education. This curriculum was adopted by the Chinese in private secondary schools after they rejected the government's decision to unify secondary schools. Founded by the Association of Teachers of Chinese Schools, which was founded in 1951 named Dongjiaozong (Tan You Sua 1988). The number of schools under the supervision of this association 61 schools throughout Malaysia (Tan You Sua 1988). Since this curriculum is not recognized, it is not suitable for those with a degree to work in the government or continue studying at university in public universities. However, this association is still working hard to pressure the government to recognize these schools so that they can enter public universities and government work. In the recent elections in Malaysia, one of the electoral promises of the current ruling party was an acknowledgment of this approach due to the interest and interest they found on the part of the Chinese (Nur Laila Zulkifli 2018).

The researcher believes that this issue is one of the thorniest issues in the Malaysian reality because there are claims that hinder the unification project of the new generation of school students. The government does not deny and does not prevent every race from preserving its language and literature. It gave every race freedom to choose primary schools, and these schools based on ethnicity were included in the government.

Second Topic: Implications for the formation of Malaysian society:

Through the researcher's monitoring of the history of education before independence in Malaysia, it became clear that there are bad effects in the education process that have remained to this day. And problems that prevent the unification of Malaysian society have occurred to this day, as the researcher referred to them in the first requirement of this study. As internal conflicts occurred within the field of education issues in Malaysia.

From what previous studies indicated, Nazri Muslim mentioned that between 1945 and 1969, Malaysia recorded 21 inter-ethnic conflicts during this period only (Nazri Muslim 2012), including some indicating bloody conflicts. As for the period from 1996 to 2002, conflicts between the ethnic race rose to 81 cases. As for the conflicts that arose because of the religious element, they numbered 65 times in this short period (Nazri Muslim 2012). Some researchers even describe Malaysia as safe, but its security is distorted by anxiety and unrest (Muhammad Azhar Abdul Hamid 2013). And all this happened for multiple reasons, including education, which was differentiated between ethnicities in Malaysia before independence. Likewise, the Chinese race was keen not to standardize the education process as stated in the reports.

Results:

1. Education in Malaysia before independence was dependent on certain schools that have their own curriculum and their own system.
2. The emergence of these schools in this way led to the differentiation in the levels of the classes of the people according to the material and the distinction between culture, science, and knowledge among the people of the people.
3. It can be said that the ethnic problems that still occur today have their main roots in the education process in the colonial era.
4. Education is one of the primary means of building a strong and cohesive people. The more the government and concerned parties focus on providing correct and valuable education to the people and unifying their culture, the more the state moves forward by avoiding problems among the people.
5. Everything that happens before us is caused by causes, and the disease is known to be cured through its correct diagnosis and knowledge of its causes and the roots of its problems. What the researcher presented in this research is a diagnosis of the disease if the people take appropriate doses from which they hope to be cured.
6. Any nation must have at least a certain identity that is united in language, culture, and religion. What does not realize the whole does not leave his glory. The promotion of the official language and culture can be instilled for the children of the people in public schools in the younger generation.

Conclusion:

Through this research, I invite those in the educational process to look for appropriate and serious solutions to this problem. In the researcher's opinion, these problems hinder the real progress that Malaysia can reach. Research in the field of education, in fact, will raise the level of education among the people of the country, so that we find a righteous society that carries out the duties of the nation. There are still certain aspects that I recommend researchers to look at, such as the development of a specific material such as morality since before independence and its effects on the formation of the identity of the Malaysian people.

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