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**EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA: THE ROLES OF
LIM LIAN GEOK AND AMINUDDIN BAKI**

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA: THE ROLES OF LIM LIAN GEOK AND AMINUDDIN BAKI*

Lim Lian Geok and Aminuddin Baki are two prominent educationists who had played a significant role to safeguard the educational interests of their respective communities in the 1950s and early 1960s. The 1950s and early 1960s were two crucial periods in the educational development of Malaysia, which involved the restructuring of the ethnic-based segregated school systems instituted by the British colonial government. This process of restructuring was to facilitate the transition from colonial rule to self government. It had a profound impact on the development of Chinese and Malay education as far as the roles of education as a tool for nation building and as a means of social mobility were concerned. It is against this backdrop that the roles of Lim Lian Geok and Aminuddin Baki had taken different trajectories underpinned by conflicting interests to safeguard the educational interests of their respective communities. This paper examines the contrasting roles played by Lim Lian Geok and Aminuddin Baki in the educational development of their respective communities in relation to two key issues. First, it looks at their stand on the establishment of national schools as the crucible of nation building. Second, it examines their stand on the elevation of Malay as the main medium of instruction, which was not only tied to the nation building process but also the educational mobility of the Malays.

KEYWORDS: Nation building, Chinese Education, Malay Education and Education Development.

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INTRODUCTION

The transition from colonial rule to self government often entails a re-examination of the role of education as a tool for nation building and as a means of social mobility for newly independent countries. This is particularly true in the case of the educational development of Malaysia in the 1950s and early 1960s. The re-examination of Malaysia's educational system during these two periods was made more urgent by the fact that the British colonial government had instituted a segregated system of education that was divided along ethnic lines. This segregated system of education not only impeded ethnic interaction, but also deprived the Malays, the indigenous community, the much needed social mobility. Efforts were first undertaken by the British colonial government and then by the Alliance government, the first elected post-colonial government, to restructure the educational system to address the two perennial issues of nation building and social mobility of the Malays. However, the British colonial government failed in its attempt to restructure the educational system. It was left to the Alliance government to complete this daunting task. The Alliance government did not push for a drastic restructuring of the educational system. Instead, it opted for a compromise solution in an attempt to accommodate the educational needs of all the ethnic groups in the Federation of Malaya.

Lim Lian Geok and Aminuddin Baki are two prominent educationists in the 1950s and early 1960s who had sought to safeguard the educational interests of their respective communities in the face of the educational restructuring process. Lim was particularly concerned with the state of Chinese education in the context of nation building. He was a staunch advocate of cultural pluralism and argued for the case of Chinese education. Aminuddin was also concerned with the role of education as the crucible of nation building. But in contrast to Lim, he had opted for a more assimilative approach by advocating a common system of schooling as the underlying basis of nation building. In addition, Aminuddin had played a significant role in advancing the educational mobility of the Malays. This was done through uplifting of Malay as the main medium of instruction in the educational system to give the Malays the added advantage over other races in mainstream education. Thus, Lim and Aminuddin had played contrasting roles in the two crucial periods of educational restructuring in Malaysia. This paper begins with a brief biodata of Lim and Aminuddin. It then provides the contextual background on the educational development of Malaysia in the 1950s and 1960s. It goes on to examine the positions adopted by Lim and Aminuddin on the issue of the establishment of the national schools. Finally, it examines issues raised by Lim and Aminuddin on the elevation of Malay as the main medium of instruction in the educational system.

A BRIEF BIODATA OF LIM LIAN GEOK AND AMINUDDIN BAKI

Lim Lian Geok (1901-1985)

Lim Lian Geok was born on 19 August 1901 in Xi Chang Village, Yongchuan prefecture, Fujian Province, China. Lim came from a family of scholars. His grandfather was a famous tutor who ran an old-style private school (*sishu*). It was from his grandfather that he received a traditional education in the Chinese classics. He moved beyond the classics to include the writings of famous reformists such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao when his father took over his education after his grandfather's death. Lim later worked as an apprentice in his uncle's Chinese traditional medicine shop in Xiamen (Amoy) (Tan, 1995:6; Yen, 2008:211). Although he did not have a formal modern education, he managed to pass the entrance examinations of the Jimei Normal College – a reputed modern educational institution founded by Tan Kah Kee, and was accepted as a trainee teacher. He went through a five-year teachers' training course specializing in the subjects of history and Chinese language. In 1924, he graduated with distinction from the college and because of his outstanding results, the college decided to retain him as a language teacher. But his teaching career at the college was interrupted in 1926 when it was temporary closed down due to students' strike against the principal who refused to undertake administrative reforms of the college (Yen, 2008:214-215).

The temporary closure of the Jimei Normal College was perhaps the turning point in Lim Lian Geok's life. He decided to leave China for British Malaya and Dutch East Indies to pursue his teaching career. Despite the reopening of the Jimei Normal College, he did not return to resume his teaching career with the college. During the period from 1927 to 1935, his teaching career was shrouded with uncertainty moving from one school to another. It was not until October 1935 when he took up a teaching job in the Confucian Middle School in Kuala Lumpur that he was finally able to pursue his teaching career on a more permanent basis. He served for a lengthy period of 22 years in the Confucian Middle School (ibid.: 216-217). It was in Kuala Lumpur that he was actively involved in the Chinese education movement. His involvement with the Chinese education movement began with the founding of the Kuala Lumpur Chinese School Teachers' Association (CSTA) in 1949 of which he was the elected secretary. He later became the president of the Kuala Lumpur CSTA from 1950 to 1960. The establishment of the Kuala Lumpur CSTA was initially geared towards the welfare of Chinese school teachers. But political changes in the Federation of Malaya after the Second World War had transformed the role of the Kuala Lumpur CSTA. The Kuala Lumpur CSTA was involved in the Chinese education movement to safeguard the interests of Chinese education as a response to the educational restructuring process undertaken by the British colonial government. This restructuring process was deemed necessary by the British colonial government in preparation for eventual self-government in the Federation of Malaya as a consequence of decolonization after the Second World War. The British colonial government was under mounting pressure from the Malay nationalists who had become more assertive in demanding that the British colonial government safeguard their interests after they had succeeded in repelling the Malayan Union proposal, inaugurated by the British colonial government on 1 April 1946. The Malayan Union proposal was seen by the Malays as a threat to their special position and privileges as the indigenous community. It had made them more aware of their rights as the indigenous community, including the areas of language and education. It was during this crucial time of educational restructuring that Lim Lian Geok had begun to play a leading role in the Chinese education movement, especially after he was elected the president of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association (UCSTA or Jiao Zong) in 1954. By then, he was already a citizen of the Federation of Malaya. His application for citizenship was approved on 25 September 1951. Thus, his

involvement in the Chinese education movement was to safeguard the interest of the Chinese as citizens of the Federation of Malaya and not because of his sentimental attachment to Mainland China.

The UCSTA, established in 1952, is an umbrella organization representing the CSTA at the district and state levels. It attempted to garner the support of the Chinese school teachers in particular and the Chinese community in general to safeguard the interests of Chinese education in the face of the educational restructuring first by the British colonial government and later by the Alliance government. The Alliance is a coalition of three communal-based political parties, namely the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) formed in the mid 1950s. Both the UMNO and the MIC were formed in 1946, while the MCA was formed in 1949. The Alliance was entrusted by the British colonial government to form the first post-colonial government. It opted for a compromise solution to resolve the contrasting demands of the Malays and the non-Malays over the issues of language and education, which had become a stumbling block in its effort to see through a smooth transition from colonial rule to self government. However, the compromise solution reached by the Alliance was not well received by the non-Malays, especially the Chinese educationists, as it favored the development of Malay education and restricted the development of Chinese education within the ambit of the national educational system. Together with the United Chinese School Committees' Association (UCSCA or Dong Zong) established in 1954, the UCSTA formed a strong partnership to advance the cause of Chinese education by playing the role of a pressure group. The leadership of the UCSCA comprises representatives of members of the state management committee or board of directors (*dongsi bu*). Collectively, the UCSTA and UCSCA are known by the acronym of Dong Jiao Zong. They have a circumscribed measure of influence in national education matters (Freedman, 2000:44).

Lim Lian Geok was recognized for his "unwavering stand and fearless struggle" (Yen, 2008:252) to safeguard the cause of Chinese education on the grounds of equality and justice for the Chinese in Malaysia. He led the UCSTA from 1954 to 1961. His first major task upon ascendancy to the post of the president of UCSTA was to officially launch the campaign to elevate the Chinese language as one of the official languages of the Federation. He was convinced that the only way to safeguard the status of Chinese education was to legitimize the status of the Chinese language, without which the status of Chinese education would never be secured. He was a strong advocate of cultural pluralism as the best concept of nation building in plural societies. But his stand on nation building was not well received by the British and the political elites of Alliance who had instead sought to establish a unitary system of education as the main thrust of nation building underpinned by the use of a common language. Lim could never accept such a concept of nation building and for his strong stand on Chinese education, he was seen by the Alliance government as a stumbling block to its educational restructuring efforts. His teaching permit and citizenship were revoked by the authorities in 1961. He then stepped down as the president of UCSTA. He passed away in 1985 after a brief illness. After his death, he was honored as *Zu Hun* (the Spirit of the Race) of the Chinese in Malaysia in recognition of his dedication and devotion to the cause of Chinese education. A foundation named after him was also established. The Lim Lian Geok Foundation carried out a host of activities, including public lectures, seminars and publication of Lim's written work, to highlight Lim's contributions to the cause of Chinese education. Since 1987, the anniversary of the death of Lim was proclaimed by the Chinese educationists as *Hua Jia Jie* or the Festivals of Chinese Education. It was an auspicious occasion where leading figures of the Chinese education movement met and pledged to uphold *Lin Lianyu Jinshen* or the Spirit of Lim Lian Geok as well as to reward and to honor individuals or institutions that had contributed towards the development of Chinese education (Yen, 2008:252).

Aminuddin Baki (1926-1965)

Aminuddin Baki was born on 26 January 1926 in Chemor, Perak. He attended a local Malay school for his primary education. He continued his secondary education at the Anderson School in Ipoh through the Special Malay Class. His secondary education was disrupted by the Japanese Occupation during the Second World War. He resumed his secondary education after the defeat of the Japanese and obtained his Cambridge School Certificate in 1946. He subsequently furthered his studies at the Raffles College in 1947. In 1949, he was accepted into the University of Malaya and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. In 1952, he was offered the Queens' Scholarship to pursue his post-graduate studies at the Institute of Education, University of London. He graduated with a Master of Methods from the University of London in 1953. Upon his return, he served as a lecturer in the Sultan Idris Training College (SITC) until 1956. SITC, established in 1922, was noted for its contribution to the rise of Malay nationalism (Roff, 1974). Although his stint with SITC was brief, his association with SITC had imbued him with nationalist sentiments to safeguard the interests of the Malays. He later held several key government posts, including the Chief Education Officer of Negeri Sembilan and Selangor. The pinnacle of his career was when he was appointed the National Educational Advisor to the Federated Malay States in 1961. He held the post until his untimely demise on 24 December 1965 (Hamdan, 1987:4-5; Mohd. Tajuddin, 1987; Sohaimi et al., 2007; Sulaiman, 1994). Undoubtedly, his position in the government had given him the opportunity to be involved in the educational planning of the country at a time when the country was undergoing a major educational restructuring process.

Aminuddin Baki was active in the Malay student movement. He felt the urgent need to galvanize the Malay students into a united front in order to pursue the cause of Malay education, which had not been given due emphasis by the British colonial government. His involvement in the Malay student movement could be traced to his student days at the Raffles College and reached new height when he helped to establish the *Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung* (GPMS) or the Federation of Peninsular Malay Students with other student leaders in 1948. Although Aminuddin played a vital role in the establishment of the GPMS in his capacity as the secretary of the pro-tem committee, he declined to become a member of the GPMS committee due to his other commitments (Mohd Tajuddin, 1987:15). Nevertheless, he later found time to lead the GPMS. But he could only lead GPMS for two brief periods, i.e. from 1949 to 1950 and from 1951 to 1952 (ibid.:6). This was again due to his busy schedule. He was by then a key education officer in the Federation. But his association with the GPMS continued in his capacity as the advisor to the GPMS until his untimely demise in 1965.

Aminuddin Baki was appointed one of the members of the Board of the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) or the National Institute of Language and Literature. DBP was established in 1956 to oversee language corpus planning as well as to promote the wider use of Malay and the development of Malay literature. His appointment was due to his strong commitment to the development of the Malay language and Malay education. His involvement with the DBP had further strengthened his commitment towards the development of the Malay language and Malay education.

Aminuddin Baki had contributed significantly to the development of educational policy through his involvement in several key education committees. He was appointed a member of the Barnes Committee to look into the problems of Malay Education in 1951 (Federation of Malaya, 1951a:iii). He was then the

president of the GPMS. His appointment as a member of the Barnes Committee was, perhaps, a recognition by the British colonial government of the role played by the GPMS in advancing the educational interest of the Malays in the Federation. The Barnes Committee was noted for its recommendation on the establishment of a national school system to replace the vernacular school system. Aminuddin was also involved in the promulgation of the Report of the Education Committee of 1956 or commonly known as the Razak Report, named after the chairman of the committee, Dato' Abdul Razak bin Hussain who was then the Minister of Education. Although Aminuddin was not involved as a member of the Razak Committee, his contribution came in the form of the Memorandum on the suggested System of National Education submitted by him to the Razak Committee (Federation of Malaya, 1956:42). The Razak Report was hailed by many as the cornerstone of the educational policy of independent Malaya (Chai, 1977:24) and the most consequential document in the development of Malayan education (Roff, 1967). In the main, the Razak Report opted for a compromise solution to resolve the different ethnic assertions over the issues of language and education. It did not attempt to radically revamp the educational system. But the overriding concern of this compromise solution was to allow a limited level of cultural diversity within the larger context of an educational system based on the Malay language, which was expected to gradually become the main medium of instruction. Apart from contributions to the above two committees, Aminuddin sat in the professional consultative committee of the Education Review Committee of 1960 in this capacity as the Chief Education Officer of Selangor (Federation of Malaya, 1960:61). The Education Review Committee of 1960 was also known as the Rahman Talib Committee, named after its chairman, Abdul Rahman bin Haji Talib, then the Minister of Education. The Rahman Talib Committee was established to review the implementation of the Razak Report. It had recommended the implementation of Malay as the main of education in the national educational system. This was done by converting the Chinese secondary schools to national medium secondary schools. Lastly, Aminuddin was appointed the chairman of the Committee to Investigate the Weaknesses of Malay Secondary Students. It is perhaps his concern for the advancement of the education of the Malays and his vast experience in educational planning that he was entrusted this task. The report of the committee, commonly known as the Aminuddin Baki Report, was released in 1962.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1950s AND EARLY 1960s

The 1950s and early 1960s were two crucial periods in the educational development of Malaysia. The transition from colonial rule to self government during these two periods had brought to the fore the adverse effect of the segregated school systems created by the British colonial government on the role of education as a tool for nation building. It had also heightened the sharp disparity in educational advancement between the Malays and the non-Malays, especially the Chinese. This was the result of the educational policy implemented by the British colonial government. The British colonial government implemented a *laissez faire* educational policy for the Chinese by allowing them to pursue their educational interests. On the other hand, a dualistic educational policy was imposed on the Malays in which only a small minority of Malays, largely the scions of the aristocracy, was provided with an elitist English education, while the Malay masses, largely rural-based, were purportedly encouraged by the colonial government to attend Malay schools, which had limited instrumental value. Both policies were implemented within the segregated system of education and served the "divide and rule" purpose of the British colonial government.

The 1950s was a period of decolonization after the Second World War. Realizing that eventual self government was inevitable, the British colonial government started to initiate educational policies to unify the

segregated school systems in the Federation of Malaya that had flourished along with the large-scale immigration of Chinese and Indians into the Malay Peninsula in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The segregated school systems that used different media of instruction were a direct consequence of the divide and rule policy implemented by the British colonial government to protect its colonial interest. But things changed with the impending process of decolonization and eventual self-government. The stand of the British colonial government on the segregated school systems took a turn as such a system of education no longer served its purpose. The British colonial government considered the segregated school systems as dysfunctional and malintegrative and efforts were thus undertaken to restructure the educational system. Apart from the role of education in the context of nation building, the British colonial government was also well aware of the urgent need to advance the education of the Malays which had lagged behind the Chinese. It was within this process of educational restructuring that the roles of Lim and Aminuddin had taken different trajectories.

Efforts by the British colonial government to restructure the educational system in the Federation of Malaya were aimed at the primary schools. The British colonial government, through the Barnes Committee formed in 1950, had recommended the establishment of a single-type primary school or national school open to pupils of all races. This recommendation was underpinned by the objective to build a common Malayan nationality by re-organizing the existing schools on a new inter-racial basis (Federation of Malaya, 1951a:20). In essence, the national schools were bilingual schools that used Malay and English concurrently as the main media of instruction (*ibid.*:22). In other words, the Barnes Committee intended to make English and Malay, the two official languages of the Federation, the main thrust of the nation building process. This was a clear departure from the earlier stand of the British colonial government, which had favored English as the sole language to foster inter-racial unity. The First Report of the Central Advisory Committee on Education (CACE) or commonly known as the Holgate Report, named after the chairman of the CACE, H. R. Holgate, released before the Barnes Report had categorically stated that “the one language all would accept is English, while Malay – the other official language – will continue to be necessary both for the Malays, as their ‘home tongue’, and for other races as a second language for citizenship purposes” (Federation of Malaya, 1950:para. 5). The British colonial government had finally come to terms with the fact that nation building process in the Federation of Malaya had to include the process of indigenization without which it could not be fully realized. As the language of the indigenous community, it was deemed necessary by the British colonial government that the Malay language be given a pivotal role in the nation building process.

The elevation of Malay as one of the media of instruction of the national schools was also aimed at addressing the problem of educational mobility of the Malays. More importantly, the demand of the Malays for more educational opportunities, driven by a strong feeling of nationalistic sentiments to safeguard their interests, had reached feverish point after the Malayan Union debacle. The British colonial government began to realize that it could no longer contain the development of Malay education. Since the intervention of the British in the Malay states, they had used the provision of Malay education as a form of social control aimed at confining the Malays in their social milieu (Haris, 1983:27). Through the effort of A. M. Skinner, Malay schools were established in large numbers to provide free education to the Malays. But Malay education could only provide limited educational mobility to the Malays. They were restricted to four years of primary education. The Malays who were largely rural-based could not attend the English schools, which were the main means of social mobility during the colonial period. This was because almost all English schools were located in urban areas. The only available option for them to further their education beyond the rudimentary level was by switching, at the fourth grade for boys and third grade for girls, to the Special Malay Classes in government English schools (Chai, 1977:18-19). After two years of intensive coaching in English, they were then allowed to

proceed to secondary education in English. However, such opportunities were limited to the very bright Malay students. Thus, education of the Malays was largely confined to four years of rudimentary education. Many Malays remained entrapped in rural areas without any possible means of upward social mobility. Only a small number of Malays had the opportunity to advance to secondary education through the Special Malay Classes attached to English schools since 1919. Even the establishment of the SITC, “the apex of Malay primary school system” (Loh, 1975:87) in 1922 to train Malay schoolteachers was directed towards this end. The policy of depriving Malays educational mobility was central to the policy of divide and rule of the British. The British were particularly worried about the possible backlash of “over-education” among the Malays that would lead to the emergence of political awareness. Such a development, as their experience in the Indian sub-continent had shown, was detrimental to their interests (Zawiah, 2003:62). On the other hand, the British had not intervened with the education of the Chinese. The Chinese not only had the opportunity to attend English schools, but also Chinese schools which had flourished during the colonial period. Graduates of the Chinese schools were popularly sought after by the Chinese commerce and industry sectors. These graduates could also pursue higher education in Taiwan and Mainland China.

Although Malay education had made significant breakthrough in the Barnes Report, the Malays were still not overly happy with the report as the British colonial government continued to give preference to English education at the secondary level (Ramanathan, 1985). As for the non-Malays, they were alarmed by the recommendation of the Barnes Report to establish a single-type school system to replace the vernacular school system. The Chinese educationists feared that such a move would bring about the demise of the Chinese schools. However, efforts to restructure the educational system were complicated by the release of the Fenn-Wu Report shortly after the Barnes Report. The Fenn-Wu Committee was appointed by Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner, to look into the state of Chinese education in the Federation of Malaya (Federation of Malaya, 1951b). This was perhaps a move by the British colonial government to appease the Chinese who had shown great concern over the uncertain status of Chinese education under the educational restructuring plan of the British colonial government. The Fenn-Wu Report was sympathetic towards Chinese education and tried to show how Chinese schools could contribute effectively towards building up a Malayan citizenry and fostering national consciousness in a way which would be acceptable to the Chinese community (Wong and Ee, 1971:54). In the main, the Fenn-Wu Report advocated multilingualism as a viable option of nation building in the Federation of Malaya.

The divergent views expressed by the Barnes and Fenn-Wu Committees had put the British colonial government in a predicament. In an attempt to resolve the deadlock, the CACE, chaired by L. D. Whitfield, the then Director of Education, was instructed to find an alternative solution. The result was the Second Report of the CACE. The Second Report of the CACE had accepted the recommendation of the Barnes Report on the establishment of national schools. But the type of national school recommended by the Second Report of the CACE differed from that recommended by the Barnes Report in the manner in which English and Malay were used as media of instruction. While the Barnes Report recommended the concurrent use of English and Malay as the media of instruction, the Second Report of the CACE recommended the separate use of English and Malay as the media of instruction (Tan, 1997:60). On the other hand, in contrast to the Barnes Report, the Second Report of the CACE did not recommend the phasing out of the vernacular schools, which was strongly contested by the Chinese educationists. Instead, it attempted to convert the vernacular schools into national schools by means of persuasion and inducement through the provision of government aid, though it maintained that government aid to vernacular schools should continue “as long as there are not enough national schools to take their places” (Tan, 1997:60).

On 20 September 1951, the Second Report of the CACE was submitted to the Special Committee on Education headed by the Attorney General. The Special Committee was to come out with a report of its own to recommend legislation to cover all aspects of educational policy for the Federation of Malaya. Much to the despair of the non-Malays, the Special Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Second Report of the CACE on the establishment of national schools. However, it also recommended that facilities for the teaching of Chinese and Tamil would be provided "to those children whose parents so desire where there are at least 15 pupils in any standard who wish to take advantage of such facilities" (Federation of Malaya, 1951c: para. 15).

The Education Ordinance of 1952 was the first attempt by the British colonial government to legislate for a national educational policy. It had incorporated many of the recommendations of the Special Committee, including the establishment of national schools and the provision to teach Chinese and Tamil as a subject in the national school curriculum. Despite this legislation, the national school project failed to take off as it faced many obstacles. First, it was strongly opposed by the non-Malays who were only prepared to accept English and Malay as a subject, but not their introduction as media of instruction. Second, it required huge capital outlay, which the British colonial government was unable to provide due to a serious budget deficit. Third, there were obviously not enough teachers who were competent in English and Malay to see through the project (Chang, 1973:45; Wong and Ee, 1971:55). Instead of shelving the project, the British colonial government had sought other means of implementation. A Special Committee on the Implementation of Educational Policy was appointed by the High Commissioner for this purpose. The report of the committee, commonly known as the White Paper, was released in October 1954. It recommended the introduction of national school features into existing vernacular schools (Federation of Malaya, 1954: para. 50). As expected, this recommendation was rejected outright by the non-Malays who refused to allow the establishment of national streams in the vernacular schools. The White Paper of 1954 was the last attempt by the British colonial government to bring about a national school system in the Federation of Malaya.

It was not until prior to independence that the political elites of the Alliance had finally come out with a compromise solution on a national educational system. The political elites of the Alliance faced mounting pressure from the Chinese educationists and the Malay nationalists who were determined to safeguard their educational interests. The Chinese educationists had by now adopted a firm stand to demand for the recognition of the Chinese language as one of the official languages of the Federation in order to legitimize their claim for a rightful place for Chinese education (Tan, 1997). Meanwhile, the Malay nationalists, disappointed by the lack of educational mobility among the Malays, had demanded that more attention be given to Malay education, especially at the secondary level. They also demanded Malay to be elevated as the sole medium of instruction in the educational system (Ramanathan, 1985).

The different demands of the Chinese educationists and Malay nationalists had put the Alliance in a tight spot prior to the first Federal Legislative election scheduled to be held on 27 July 1955. These demands had to be resolved amicably in order to enhance their chances of securing a resounding victory in the Federal Legislative election. In a way, this election was an acid test for the Alliance on its strength and legitimacy to eventually form the first post-colonial government. The task of the Alliance was made more difficult by the stiff competition from the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) and the Party Negara. While the Alliance was a tripartite coalition that served the interests of the three main ethnic groups, both the PMIP and the Party Negara were Malay-based political parties that championed the cause of Malay education, including the demand to make Malay the sole medium of instruction in the educational system. The Alliance was

particularly worried about the strength of Party Negara, led by Dato' Onn Jaafar, the founding president of UMNO who had earlier left the party due to irreconcilable differences with other leaders over his intention to broaden the base of UMNO to non-Malays so that UMNO could adopt a non-communal front (Ratnam, 1965). Mediated by the MCA through a roundtable meeting held in Malacca, the Alliance managed to convince the Chinese educationists to temporarily drop their demands and promised to amend the Education Ordinance of 1952 and to formulate a new educational policy that was fair to all the ethnic groups (Dong Zong Chuban Zu, 1987, Vol. III: 587). More specifically, the Alliance's Manifesto proclaimed that the Alliance would allow vernacular schools their normal expansion and would encourage rather than destroy the schools, languages or any culture of any race living in the country. The Alliance also made similar promises regarding the development of Malay education and language in the Manifesto (Heng, 1988:203-204). In the end, it was the Alliance that managed to secure the mandate of the people to form the first elected government. It had won a landslide victory, gaining 51 out of a total of 52 contested seats, and pulling in 80 per cent of the popular votes (ibid.: 201).

The Razak Committee formed shortly after the election was an attempt by the Alliance to fulfill their promises made during the election. However, the political elites of the Alliance soon realized that they could not deliver all their promises because they "had to balance a very complex set of factors in reformulating education policy" (Tan, 1997:166). They had to work out a compromise solution on a "give and take" basis. As a compromise to the Chinese, the Razak Committee recognized the Chinese primary schools as an integral part of the national educational system with the condition that they were subjected to a common content curriculum like all other primary schools to facilitate the process of enculturation (Federation of Malaya, 1956: paras. 11 and 54). The aim to have a single-type primary school espoused by the Education Ordinance of 1952 was therefore dropped by the Razak Committee. However, the status of the Chinese secondary schools was shrouded with ambiguity. It appeared that there was a long-term plan to convert the Chinese secondary schools to national medium secondary schools. This was clearly stipulated by paragraph 70 of the Razak Report which states that "the aim [of secondary education] should be to establish one type of National Secondary School where the pupils work towards a common final examination" (ibid.: para. 70). This aim was apparently linked to another main recommendation of the Razak Committee, which was in line with Malay interests, i.e. to gradually elevate Malay as the main medium of instruction in the educational system. This recommendation was declared by the Razak Committee as the ultimate objective of the educational policy (ibid.: para. 12). Despite the strong opposition from the Chinese educationists, the Razak Committee was only prepared to accept the Chinese primary schools as part of the national educational system, but not the Chinese secondary schools. The acceptance of both Chinese primary and secondary schools as part of the national educational system would not go down well with the Malay nationalists, who among other things were unhappy that the Razak Committee did not elevate Malay as the sole medium of instruction in the national educational system (Haris, 1983). This would also allow Chinese students to go through their entire education in Chinese and thus undermine the integrative purpose of making Malay the main medium of instruction. In this regard, the Razak Committee intended to use transitional bilingual education as a step to achieving national unity among the Chinese (Solomon, 1988:27). In other words, Chinese students were expected to transit to Malay medium of instruction to support the nation building process upon completion of six years of primary education in their mother tongue. Thus, it appears that the Razak Committee felt that the provision of six years of primary education in the mother tongue of the Chinese was sufficient for them to maintain their language and culture. Beyond that, they had to conform to national aspirations by attending national medium secondary schools. Although the Razak Committee did not push for an immediate implementation of Malay as the main medium of instruction due to teething problems such as shortage of teachers who were competent in Malay as well as problems related to language corpus planning, it had proposed several incentives and rewards for acquiring the adequate standard in Malay. First, Malay could be made a qualification at the various levels for entry into Government service. Second, Malay could be one of the factors taken into consideration in selection for

secondary education as well as compulsory in all Government examinations. Third, Malay could be made a requirement for anyone aspiring to a scholarship from public funds. Fourth, bonuses could be provided at various levels in Government service to encourage a more rapid acquisition of the language. Fifth, grants-in-aid to schools could depend in part on the successful learning of Malay as and when adequate facilities could be provided. Sixth, Malay could be a compulsory part of teacher training courses and examinations (Federation of Malaya, 1956:para. 23). The Razak Committee's emphasis on the development of Malay education and the Malay language had led to the establishment of more secondary classes teaching in Malay to cater to the educational needs of the Malays (Federation of Malaya, 1960:para. 24).

It was not until the early 1960s that the ultimate objective to elevate Malay as the main medium of instruction was finally realized. The Rahman Talib Committee had recommended the conversion of all Chinese secondary schools to national medium secondary schools, failing which state funding would be withdrawn from them (ibid.: para. 67). This conversion was deemed necessary by the Rahman Talib Committee as the committee felt that "it is impossible, within the framework of a policy which is truly national, to satisfy completely all the individual demands of each cultural and language group in the country" (ibid.: para. 20). Furthermore, the committee was also of the view that it would be incompatible with an educational policy designed to create national consciousness and having the intention of making the Malay language the national language of the country to extend and to perpetuate a language and racial differential throughout the publicly-funded educational system (ibid.: para. 18). Nonetheless, the Rahman Talib Committee had maintained the multilingual school system at the primary level espoused by the Razak Committee. This was apparently a move to guarantee the basic rights of the non-Malays to maintain their languages and cultures.

The recommendation of the Rahman Talib Committee to make Malay the main medium of instruction at the secondary level was subsequently incorporated into the Educational Act of 1961, which only allowed two types of fully-assisted secondary schools: the national secondary schools that used Malay as a medium of instruction with English being taught as a compulsory subject and the national-type secondary schools that used English as a medium of instruction with Malay being taught as a compulsory subject. Both types of schools allowed for the teaching of Chinese and Tamil as a subject (Federation of Malaya, 1961:222-223). Due to the dire need for state funding, most Chinese secondary schools complied with the educational policy and became national-type Chinese secondary schools. For those schools that did not conform to the new educational policy, they remained as independent Chinese secondary schools. They were not funded by the government neither were qualifications obtained from these schools recognized by the government. Although the national-type Chinese secondary schools initially used English as the medium of instruction, they eventually switch to Malay medium of instruction when a new educational policy was promulgated in 1970 to enforce the implementation of Malay as the main medium of instruction.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL SCHOOLS

The recommendation by the British colonial government to establish national schools as the crucible of nation building was a key educational issue throughout the educational restructuring process of the 1950s. It had evoked deeply felt positions among proponents and opponents of the national schools. Lim Lian Geok and Aminuddin Baki held differing views on this issue. Lim stood his ground against the establishment of national schools as the crucible of nation building, as he construed such an endeavor as assimilative in all intents and purposes. He insisted that the Chinese should not be compelled to forsake their language and culture. He argued that in plural societies, diverse cultural traditions must have the right to exist and the freedom to flourish (Tan, 1995:21). When the idea of national schools was first mooted by the Barnes Committee, he accused the committee of attempting to abolish the Chinese schools through the establishment of national schools. On 23 August 1951, the Kuala Lumpur CSTA under the leadership of Lim had come out openly to dispute the Barnes Report on several grounds. It cited the case of several Western countries, including France, Canada and Switzerland, where several languages had co-existed and contributed to the unity and loyalty of the peoples in these countries. Another contention raised by the Kuala Lumpur CSTA was that the national schools, through its use of English and Malay as media of instruction, had negated the importance of the mother tongue of the Chinese in facilitating the learning processes of Chinese children (Jiao Zong 33nian Bianji Shi, 1987:296). The strong commitment to mother tongue education has been one of the main thrusts of the Chinese education movement. Apart from facilitating the learning process, the quest for identity and cultural maintenance through the provision of mother tongue education has also been the main concern of the Chinese educationists. As Kuhn (2008:306) puts it, "the Chinese saw their individual and community identities as dependent on language continuity. This continuity could be assured only through Chinese-medium education".

In a speech delivered in 1952 in conjunction with the Teachers' Day celebration, Lim voiced his discontent over the acceptance of the Special Committee established to recommend legislation to cover all aspects of educational policy of the idea to establish national schools as the crucible of nation building. He was disappointed with the fact that the Chinese were unduly forced to accept the national schools and the Chinese language was not given any significant position in the national schools. He feared that this would eventually lead to the demise of Chinese education. This, to him, was unthinkable, as the Chinese language had been widely used in the country and had a value of its own that was comparable to the English language (Lim, 1988:4-5).

Lim Lian Geok's opposition to the establishment of national schools intensified when he was elected the president of the UCSTA. Together with his deputy, Sha Yuan Roo, they took the opportunity of the visit of the president of the United Nations General Assembly to Malaya in August 1954 to submit a memorandum. Among other things, the memorandum called for the abolishment of the Education Ordinance of 1952, the adoption of Chinese, Malay and Tamil as the media of instruction of the national educational system and the provision of education to all races in the Federation on the basis of equality (*ibid.*: 22-25). Apparently, Lim was trying to lobby for external support to force the British colonial government to abandon the national school project.

Lim Lian Geok followed up his action by releasing a declaration on 18 October 1954 to oppose the establishment of national schools. By then, the establishment of national schools had taken a different form with the release of the White Paper of 1954 in September. The British colonial government attempted to gradually convert the vernacular schools into national schools through the introduction of national streams in the vernacular schools. The White Paper of 1954 was alleged by Lim as more threatening to the future development of Chinese schools than the Education Ordinance of 1952. This was because the successful implementation of the Education Ordinance of 1952 relied on the establishment of national schools, and as previously mentioned, the huge capital outlay involved in such an endeavor was one of the main reasons that forced the British colonial government to back out and instead opted for the introduction of national streams in vernacular schools. The introduction of national streams in vernacular schools was deemed less costly and within the financial means of the British colonial government. Sensing the danger posed by the White Paper of 1954, Lim responded by releasing a declaration to oppose the impending move by the British colonial government. One of the contentions raised by the declaration was the use of a common language to foster ethnic integration. Although the declaration concurred with the efforts by the British colonial government to establish a national educational system to serve as the crucible of nation building, it, however, differed markedly in the manner in which this should be accomplished. It reiterated that the national educational system should, by all means, fulfill the linguistic and cultural needs of all races, and the only way to achieve this was through a multilingual approach. In other words, the declaration was of the view that language was only a means rather than an end to nation building and a common language did not necessarily bring about national unity. Another contention was that the establishment of national schools had jeopardized the efforts by the Chinese to develop Chinese education in order to maintain their language and culture, despite the fact that the government had, in the past, recognized the contribution of Chinese education to the country. The declaration also maintained that the Chinese had, out of a sense of responsibility, become loyal citizens of the country and thus the Chinese language should be recognized as one of the official languages of the country in return for their loyalty to the country (ibid.:26-28).

Given the strong opposition from the Chinese educationists, the British colonial government finally dropped the idea of establishing a national school system to replace the vernacular school system. It has to be pointed out here that without the support of the MCA, the Chinese educationists would have not been able to block the implementation of national schools on their own strength. The MCA, under the leadership of Tan Cheng Lock, was in full support of the stand of the Chinese educationists over the establishment of national schools. Tan Cheng Lock was commended by the Chinese educationists for his commitment towards the development of Chinese education. Since the enactment of the Education Ordinance of 1952, the MCA had forged a good working relationship with the UCSTA and the UCSCA in the defense of Chinese education through the platform of the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee, though at times the MCA preferred discreet negotiations behind closed doors over the confrontational stand adopted by the Chinese educationists. The three bodies, collectively known as *San Da Jigou* or the Three Main Organizations, were instrumental in defending the position of Chinese education in the face of the educational restructuring process initiated by the British colonial government (Dong Zong Chuban Zu, 1987, Vol. III::572-585; Tan, 1997:122-123, 146-147).

In contrast to Lim Lian Geok, Aminuddin Baki is a proponent of national schools. He is responsible for the recommendation of the establishment of the national school system espoused by the Barnes Committee in his capacity as one of the members of the committee. He had taken a personal interest in the role of education as a crucible of nation building. In a private paper written in 1953 entitled "The National School of Malaya: Its Problems, Proposed Curriculum and Activities", he pursued the concept of national schools in great length. He

was particularly concerned with the segregated nature of education in Malaya. He noted that “the fault of the existing educational structure with its multi-vernacular system has been and is that it encourages segregation” (Aminuddin, 1953:1). As a result of this structural flaw, he maintained that “the boys and girls of the different races tend to be antagonistic to one another and are not provided with the opportunity of meeting one another on equal and friendly terms” (ibid.). He strongly believed that the establishment of national schools could help to break down the wall of segregation, which to him, was an artificial barrier of communalism. He was of the opinion that “it is better that the children kick each other’s shins and box each other’s noses in the corridors and playground of a primary school than to grow up in isolation knowing little of each other and so tending, naturally enough, to distrust each other” (ibid.).

Aminuddin Baki had other ideas about the national schools. Having rationalized the establishment of national schools, he went on to suggest ways and means to foster greater ethnic integration. He placed great emphasis on curriculum and extra-curricular activities. His emphasis on curriculum and extra-curricular activities to foster greater ethnic integration was guided by the conviction that:

... schooling in and of itself makes little contribution towards solving inter-racial conflict without the aid of courses and activities consciously planned in such a way that the pupils involved will actually take to work and play together, to think about their common problems and to work actively together to solve them and to realise their interdependence. In other words one must look for qualitative factors as embodied in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities (ibid.: 9).

Aminuddin Baki has given a detailed account on how the national school curriculum should be designed to foster greater ethnic integration. He laid down four guiding principles. The first guiding principle was that the national school curriculum should be Malayan-centred and should serve the objective of Malayanising the pupils. But he argued that the national school curriculum should not be exclusively Malayan in character, but Malaya placed in an international or regional setting. This is because he recognized the need for Malayan students to engage in international understanding and co-operation. This formed his second guiding principle. The third guiding principle was that the national school curriculum should put emphasis on the contribution of each Malayan race. The curriculum should, therefore, emphasize the cultures of all the races in so far as they are not contrary to the Malayan well-being. The last guiding principle is that each school subject should contribute towards developing the character as well as the intellect of the pupils and should thus directly or indirectly promote good citizenship (ibid.:10-11).

Aminuddin Baki was particularly attracted to two subjects, i.e. History and Geography. To him, the curricula of these two subjects were well positioned to play a pivotal role to foster greater ethnic integration. He believed that History as a subject in the modern curriculum is unexcelled as a method of inculcating patriotic devotion. As to the subject of Geography, he was convinced of its contribution to develop good, useful and well-informed citizens. In sum, he was committed to the cause of education for citizenship as the main thrust of the national school curriculum. But he was also well aware of the fact that too much emphasis on citizenship training might lead to a neglect of academic and intellectual activities thus jeopardizing the standard of academic achievements. To him, the main challenge of the national school curriculum was to strike a delicate balance between moulding of good citizens and maintaining the standard of education (ibid.:11-18).

The curriculum of the national schools outlined by Aminuddin Baki could only help school children to learn the desirable inter-racial attitudes, but not to experience the actual dynamics of ethnic interactions. This was where extra-curricular activities come into play in the grand design of national schools envisaged by him. He listed four types of extra-curricular activities: class, school, community and world-related activities that could help school children to engage in inter-ethnic relations. Only activities that could lead to this end were recommended by him. Class-centred activities such as the setting up of class library and the putting up of bulletin and picture boards were some of the activities highlighted by him. In the case of school-centred activities, they included games, clubs and societies. Other school-centred activities mentioned by him were flag-raising ceremony and the Federation Day celebration. Some of these school-centred activities could also be organized under class-centred activities. However, he adopts a cautious stand with regard to school games that are played along communal lines. These games, according to him, should be prohibited. Instead, games that require inter-racial co-operation should be encouraged. He realized the need for extra-curricular activities to go beyond the confines of the classroom and the school compound. He saw the need to extend extra-curricular activities to cover activities such as visits to mosques, churches and temples, as these activities could help to foster understanding of the local community. He even went one step further to include activities that are world-related involving uniformed bodies such as the Junior Red Cross to develop a strong sense of international understanding among school children (ibid.:20-24).

The implementation of the above extra-curricular activities was only possible if multi-racial national schools were established. Aminuddin Baki acknowledged the great difficulty in establishing these multi-racial schools primarily because the demographic structure of the Malayan population coincided with territorial concentration of population by races. The Special Committee had, in fact, recognized this problem and thus suggested the establishment of combined or central national or conforming schools in preference to the establishment of a number of smaller national schools (Federation of Malaya, 1951c: para. 29). But Aminuddin was against the idea of establishing these combined schools, especially in the Malay dominated east coast states of Terengganu and Kelantan where the non-Malay population in these schools would be negligible to have any significant impact on inter-ethnic relations. Although he conceded that it would be difficult to do away with uni-racial schools, he saw the urgent need to bring them together in activities which needed co-operation – and which taught group living and avoided anything which would aggravate differences and unhealthy rivalries (Aminuddin, 1953: 21-22).

MALAY AS THE MAIN MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Aminuddin Baki has certainly played a key role in the elevation of Malay as the main medium of instruction in the national educational system. His Memorandum on the suggested System of National Education submitted to the Razak Committee and his position as a professional consultant to the Rahman Talib Committee would have allowed him much influence over the eventual outcomes of the Razak and Rahman Talib Reports. Given his strong support for the establishment of national schools while serving as a member of the Barnes Committee, it is safe to assume that he was a proponent of a common school system to foster national unity. A common school system was the bedrock of the Razak and Rahman Talib Reports. However, this common school system could only be implemented at the secondary level. At the primary level, the Razak and Rahman Talib Committees accepted a multilingual school system. This was obviously against Aminuddin's conviction for a common school system. But this multilingual school system was subjected to a common content curriculum

as an overriding factor to foster national integration through the process of enculturation. A common content curriculum was seen by Aminuddin as a crucial factor in fostering national integration as his private paper written in 1953 has clearly attested to. In this regard, Aminuddin was instrumental in influencing the recommendation of the Razak Committee to impose a common content curriculum on all the primary schools irrespective of medium of instruction.

The elevation of Malay as the main medium of instruction in the national educational system by the Razak and Rahman Talib Committees was clearly underpinned by two objectives, i.e. to make Malay the language of national integration befitting its supreme status as the national language and to enhance the educational mobility of the Malay, especially at the secondary level. These two objectives are in line with Aminuddin Baki's long-term struggle to safeguard the supreme status of Malay and to demand its usage as a medium of instruction (Hamdan, 1987:27). It was his commitment to the cause of the Malay language and Malay education that he was appointed a member of the Board of the DBP. He worked closely with Syed Nasir Ismail, the first director of the DBP who was a champion of the Malay language. During his tenure as the director of the DBP, Syed Nasir launched the *Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan* or the National Language Month to promote the wider use of the national language. He was also the leader of the *Barisan Bertindak Bahasa Kebangsaan* (BBBK) or the National Language Action Front. BBBK was the main driving force of Malay linguistic nationalism throughout the 1960s (von Vorys, 1976).

Undoubtedly, the elevation of Malay as the main medium of instruction in the national educational system not only endowed the language with integrative value, but also gave it its instrumental value. National building via the provision of education has always been an idea that Aminuddin Baki was strongly devoted to. But he was equally concerned with the educational mobility of the Malays, which had lagged behind other races. By making Malay the main medium of instruction, he believed that this would help to advance the educational mobility of the Malays in the mainstream. He attributed the lack of educational mobility among the Malays to the educational policy of the British colonial government, which had purportedly deprived the Malays of higher educational opportunities (Sulaiman, 1994:8).

Aminuddin's concern for the educational mobility of the Malays could be traced to his student days. It was at the Raffles College that he was alarmed by the small number of Malay students pursuing higher education. He gave his support to Abdul Wahab Ariff who was pursuing this problem with great intensity. Abdul Wahab was a student leader who eventually became the founding president of the GPMS (Mohd. Tajuddin, 1987:12). Aminuddin's involvement in the establishment of the GPMS in 1948 was, in the main, driven by his concern for the educational interests of the Malays (ibid.:18-19). The pro-tem committee meeting leading to the establishment of the GPMS was regarded by R. P. S. Walker, then Deputy Director of Education, as one which would lead to the progress of the Malay race and which clearly demonstrated the indispensability of education among the Malays (Hamdan, 1987:20). The *Sunday Tribune* also commented that the formation of a powerful non-political Malay student organization effectively could make representations to the government of Malaya, the UMNO and other Malay organizations with regard to their educational need, particularly scholarships, financial aid and better facilities in Malay, English and Arabic schools and universities in Malaya and abroad (Mohd. Tajuddin, 1987:5).

Given Aminuddin's concern for the educational mobility of the Malays, it is then not surprising that he was asked to look into the weaknesses of Malay secondary school students. He released a report, the

Aminuddin Baki Report, in 1962. The report highlighted problems created by the sharing of premises – supervised by one Headmaster, with all its attendant shortcomings: lack of supervision, facilities and the feeling of inferiority complex. The report also highlighted other problems such as the lack of Malay textbooks and well trained bilingual teachers (Omar, 1991:41-42).

Despite significant breakthrough in uplifting Malay education through the promulgation of the Razak and Rahman Talib Reports and the Education Act of 1961, Aminuddin was never contented with this achievement. In the inaugural speech he delivered through the Radio Malaysia on 21 January 1964 under the *Gerakan Obor* or the Torch Movement – a social uplifting movement, he reminded the Malays to intensify their efforts in the area of education as well as to acquire knowledge. He urged the Malays to change their attitudes and their mindsets in accordance with current and future needs (Hamdan, 1987:33).

On the other hand, Lim Lian Geok was strongly against the ultimate objective of the Razak Report to elevate Malay as the main medium of instruction in the national educational system albeit in a gradual manner. He was more concerned with the impact of such a move on nation building than the educational mobility of the Malays. His main contention was that nation building in plural societies should be pursued along the concept of cultural pluralism whereby all languages and cultures were allowed to flourish on equal terms. This was consistent with his early stand against the establishment of national schools. But his effort to repel the ultimate objective of the Razak Report was made more difficult by the fact that the leaders of the MCA, who had previously supported the Chinese educationists to oppose the establishment of national schools, had begun to adopt a compromise stand over the issue of language and education with other partners of the Alliance. Given that several key MCA members sat in the Razak Committee, it was, therefore, clear that the MCA had endorsed the Razak Report. But even without the support of the MCA, the Chinese educationists continued to oppose the recommendation of the Razak Report. In a move to voice his disapproval of the ultimate objective of the Razak Report, Lim, together with other Chinese educationists, sought an audience with Dato' Abdul Razak. Razak. It was reported in his memoir that Dato' Abdul Razak agreed to drop the ultimate objective of the Razak Report when the Razak Report was legislated as an ordinance. Dato' Abdul Razak tried to convince Lim that the Razak Report was just a policy statement and its recommendations would not necessarily be incorporated into the new education ordinance (Lim, 1990:146-147). Lim was happy that the Education Ordinance of 1957 did not include the ultimate objective of the Razak Report. Paragraph 3 of the Ordinance states that:

The educational policy of the Federation is to establish a national system of education acceptable to the people as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation, with the intention of making the Malay language the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of peoples other than Malays living in the country (Federation of Malaya, 1957).

The Education Ordinance of 1957 had since become the *sine quo non* for the Chinese educationists in the defense of Chinese education. To Lim Lian Geok, paragraph 3 of the Education Ordinance of 1957 had upheld the basic tenet of article 152 of the Federal Constitution, which among other things stipulates that no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (other than for official purposes), or teaching or learning, any other language. But much to his despair, the Rahman Talib Report and later the Education Act of 1961 had chosen to enforce Malay as the main medium of instruction at the secondary level through the conversion of Chinese secondary schools to national medium secondary schools, in spite of the accusations of Lim that such a move had in fact contravened paragraph 3 of the Education Ordinance of 1957 as well as article 152 of the Federal Constitution.

The promulgation of the Rahman Talib Report caused a rift between the MCA and the Chinese educationists. Just like the Razak Report, the MCA was also a party to the Rahman Talib Report through its

representation in the Rahman Talib Committee. Lim Lian Geok was apparently upset by the fact that the MCA had endorsed the Rahman Talib Report to the detriment of the development of Chinese secondary education. He was involved in an exchange of words with Leong Yew Koh, a member of the Rahman Talib Committee through the print media. Leong was then the Minister of Justice. The exchange of words became bitterly personal and was marked by insults and name-calling (Lim, 1989; Tan, 1997:271). The rift between the Chinese educationists and the MCA was least expected by the Chinese educationists as they had worked closely with the MCA during the tenure of Dr Lim Chong Eu as the president of MCA. Dr Lim managed to wrest control of the MCA leadership from Tan Cheng Lock in 1958 through the support of the young turks in the MCA. He was determined to win over the Chinese educationists to bolster his stature as a political leader who represented the interests of the Chinese community in the Alliance. To achieve this aim, he openly supported the Chinese educationists' demand to elevate the Chinese language as one of the official languages of the Federation. However, his collusion with the Chinese educationists earned him the wrath of the UMNO leaders who accused his action as an act of betrayal to the Alliance. His relationship with the UMNO strained further when he made aggressive demand over the allocation of seats to the MCA in the coming 1959 general elections. The UMNO leaders were so agitated that they were willing to do it alone in the general elections. With the crisis turning into a stalemate, Dr Lim and his supporters had no choice but to resign en bloc. The leadership of the MCA was subsequently taken over by leaders who were willing to work with the UMNO (Cheah, 1984, 1988; Heng, 1988; Sidmanjuntak, 1969).

The main contention of the Chinese educationists over the promulgation of the Rahman Talib Report was the conversion of Chinese secondary schools to national medium secondary schools in fulfillment of the ultimate objection of the Razak Report to elevate Malay as the main medium of instruction in the national educational system. Lim Lian Geok was against the move to make the national language the crucible of nation building. On 12 August 1960, while addressing the Working Committee of the UCSTA, he voiced his reservation on the recommendation of the Rahman Talib Committee to use the national language to inculcate a national consciousness among the students. He regarded the national language merely as a tool for inter-ethnic communication and maintained that the development of other languages should not be curtailed by the national language. He apparently did not see the role of the national language beyond its communicative function. In an attempt to defend the role of Chinese schools in the context of nation building, he argued that by teaching the national language as a subject and by using a common content curriculum, the Chinese schools had, in fact, fulfilled their obligation to the nation. He urged the management committees of the Chinese secondary schools not to conform to the Rahman Talib Report and appealed to them to draw on their self-reliance to overcome their predicaments (Jiao Zong 33nian Bianji Shi, 1987:439). Lim again repeated his stand on the use of the national language to inculcate national consciousness among the students in a statement released on 20 August 1960. He cited the case of multilingual countries such as Canada and Switzerland to substantiate his claim that national consciousness could be inculcated through any language (Lim, 1988:91). But Lim was obviously fighting a losing battle. Many Chinese secondary schools did not heed his advice and decided to convert to national medium schools for the dire need of state funding.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The transition from British colonial rule to self government in the 1950s and early 1960s has certainly changed the educational landscape of Malaysia. Lim Lian Geok and Aminuddin Baki have played contrasting roles in these two crucial periods. Lim is instrumental in fighting against the attempts by the British colonial government to establish a single-type national school system as the crucible of nation building. He is an advocate of cultural pluralism and argued for a multilingual school system as the crucible of nation building. He believed in the co-existence and co-prosperity of all ethnic groups in plural societies as the underlying concept of nation building. On the other hand, Aminuddin is an advocate of structural assimilation. Structural assimilation involves “an increasing degree of social interaction among different ethnic groups” (Marger, 2003:107). Aminuddin hoped to achieve this process of assimilation through the establishment of a national school system where children go through a common process of schooling in order to promote ethnic interaction that could lead to better ethnic relations.

In retrospect, some of the views of Aminuddin Baki on the national schools have proven to be relevant in the current context. For example, the kind of national school education envisaged by him bears a strong resemblance to multi-cultural or multi-ethnic education currently practised in the West (see for example Banks, 1999; Lynch, 1986). Also, he gives due emphasis to the role of hidden curriculum, for example flag-raising ceremony, to inculcate good citizenship among school children. Hidden curriculum has now become a major theme in the sociology of education, especially from the perspective of the Marxists who are re-examining the concept of hidden curriculum propagated by the functionalists (see for example, Feinberg and Soltis, 2004). In addition, his view on the need to bring uni-racial school together through extra-curricular activities that could promote better mutual understanding is perhaps another version of the *Rancangan Integrasi Murid untuk Perpaduan* (RIMUP) or the Integration Plan for Unity Among Students currently adopted by the Ministry of Education and supported by the Chinese educationists as a viable plan to foster greater ethnic integration. But for all his forward looking ideas on the national schools, he failed to address the core issue leading to the rejection of the Chinese educationists on the establishment of national schools as the crucible of nation building, i.e. the use of a common language. He also failed to take into consideration the well established notion that mother tongue is the best medium to begin primary education. The strength of mother tongue as a medium of instruction is best exemplified in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) statement that “it is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue” (Cummins, 1979:223) and thus “every effort should be made to provide education in the mother tongue” (Eastman, 1983:83). This statement is drawn from a report on *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Schools* published by the UNESCO in 1953, at about the same time Aminuddin wrote his private paper on the national schools of Malaya.

While Lim Lian Geok has succeeded in blocking the attempt by the British colonial government to establish a single-type of national school system to replace the multilingual vernacular school system, he failed to safeguard the status of the Chinese secondary schools in the early 1960s. The Chinese secondary schools are under immense pressure to convert to national medium secondary schools in fulfillment of the stand of the Alliance government to elevate Malay as the main medium of instruction. Meanwhile, Aminuddin Baki has played a significant role in the move by the Alliance government to elevate Malay as the main medium of instruction in his capacity as one of the key educational planners in the 1960s. The elevation of Malay as the main medium of instruction not only allows the national language to become the language of national

integration, but also provides the added advantage to the Malays in terms of educational advancement in the mainstream. These two issues form the underlying concern of Aminuddin throughout his involvement in the educational restructuring process of Malaysia. It is then not surprising that Hamdan (1987:12), another prominent Malay educationist, regards Aminuddin as the architect of the implementation of the educational system during his tenure as the National Educational Advisor. He also hails Aminuddin as the person who laid the foundation of the national educational system.

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