

DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES: THE MALAYSIAN POST- INDEPENDENCE EXPERIENCE

Ab. Halim Tamuri

I Introduction

Since its independence on 31st August 1957, there have been significant changes in the Malaysian education system, especially in its schooling system. The aim of this article is to discuss the development of curricula in the Malaysian primary and secondary schools. It is divided into two major sections, i.e. the first section will present a brief history of the development of primary and secondary schools curricula in Malaysia, especially after the country gained independence. The second section deals with the discussion of curriculum development in Malaysia.

II The Development of the School Curriculum

It may be useful to divide the discussion into two parts as follows:

(a) Curricula before 1980s

After the 1955 election, the Malayan Government commissioned an education committee led by Abdul Razak Hussien to study the Federal education policy. Based on the Razak Reports, several educational reforms were made, for example the establishment of Malay secondary classes; the use and teaching of Malay as the National Language; the classification of primary schools as "standard" and "standard-type" according to the teaching medium; the start of a "national-type" of secondary school, the beginning of Malayan Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (MSSEE); and also the introduction of new school management. Furthermore, the reports led to the legislation of the 1957 Educational Ordinance.

The disintegration of the Malayan community was one of the major challenges faced by the Malaysian government after independence. This critical problem was caused by several factors such as language and religious differences, immigration policy as well as economic development.¹ Thus, the main objective of the education policy during that period was to unite the children of the three main races, i.e. Malays, Chinese and Indians under a common national education system without neglecting the interest of other minorities. Three major educational approaches were introduced by the government, i.e. a common syllabus, a common language and a

common public examination.² In 1958, the secondary education in Malay was introduced and was followed in 1960 by the use of Malay in the Lower Certificate Education Examination.

After the 1959 general election, the Alliance government formed another committee in 1960 to review the implementation of the existing education policy led by Abdul Rahman Talib. The committee proposed to extend primary education to three years of secondary education, to establish rural secondary schools and post-primary schools, to use Malay and English in all public examinations. In order to reconstruct the education system, the government fully assisted primary and secondary schools as "national schools" and "national-type schools".³ The national schools use Malay as their medium of instruction while the national type schools use other languages, such as English, Chinese and Tamil as their main media of instruction, while Malay is taught only as a second language. The recommendations of the Razak Reports and the Rahman Talib Reports had been taken into consideration in formulating the Educational Act (1961), which subsequently directed the later development of education in Malaysia.

In 1964, the Malayan Secondary Schools Entrance Examination was abolished and in the following year, 'comprehensive' lower secondary education replaced the "further education classes", adding three years of lower secondary education to the existing six years of primary education. Several groups of subjects were offered to the students at this lower secondary level, for example, mother tongue languages, languages of the medium of instruction, social studies, general sciences, mathematics, civics, physical education, religious education and various elective subjects. In the third year, students would take the Lower Education Certificate, the results of which would determine whether the students could continue their education or leave the school. In the early stage of implementation, there were several difficulties; for example, the insufficiency of places for students, lack of facilities and the inadequacy of teachers. Until 1967, Malay and English remained the main media of instruction in the government national schools and national-type schools respectively.

In the states of Sabah and Sarawak, however, the Federal Government permitted a different educational policy since vernacular schools had been established by the government, missionaries and the local community. Nevertheless, there were some common characteristics in the education systems of these two states and the West Malaysian one, for example, their examinations and schooling period. According to Gullick, English was permitted as a main medium of instruction in Sabah and Sarawak since "...they were conscious of the relative backwardness of their education systems and eager to retain English as the main medium of instruction, since Malay is not an indigenous language to the same extent as in Malaya."⁴ In these cases, the exception in the use of Malay might also have been a result of the establishment of a local education system, as Wong writes:

...there is great emphasis on National Schools in Peninsular Malaysia while there is more residual importance of English education in Sabah and Sarawak. Again there is a more strongly entrenched Chinese population in the Borneo territories, especially in private secondary schools in Sarawak, than in Peninsular Malaysia.⁵

Regarding the same issue, Warsaw argues that:

Both regions were allowed to continue to use English for the indefinite future. The tribal people constituted another exception to the national education system, for they were barely taught.⁶

In achieving national integration, during the 1963 negotiation for entering Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak agreed to adopt Malay as the National Language within ten years. Therefore, Malay was gradually introduced and taught. In the early 1970s, the Malay language was taught in all schools and teacher training colleges in both states.

In the 1970s, there was significant reformation of the Malaysian education system. Undoubtedly, the 13th May 1969 racial clash urged the government to quicken the integration of the Malaysian community. The efforts included the New Economic Policy, which aimed to promote national unity through the eradication of poverty and the restructuring of society. The education system was aimed "...towards rectifying existing imbalances in the name of greater equity and national integration". It was hoped that better educational opportunities would act as "...a major vehicle leading to greater social equality and consequently better race relations". To this aim the government established the MARA Sciences Junior College and MARA Institute of Technology, and introduced a quota system for *Bumiputera* (indigenous Malays) to enter the local universities and matriculations, and to win educational scholarships.⁷ Another example is the *Rukunegara* (National Ideology) which was based on the five principles of Belief in God, Loyalty to King and Country, Upholding the Constitution, Rule of Law and Good Behavior and Morality.⁸ The first aim of the Second Malaysia Plan was consolidation of the education system to promote national integration and unity.⁹ The education programmes in the Malaysian Plans between 1970-1985 were also designed to meet the objectives of the National Economic Policy as well as the National Education Policy.¹⁰

In 1970, the Ministry of Education also began to gradually use Malay as the medium of instruction in the National-type English schools.¹¹ The introduction of Malay gradually changed the medium of all public examinations in Malaysia and in 1978, Malay started to be used in the examination of the *Lower Certificate of Education*, followed by the *Malaysian Certificate of Education* in 1980, and finally the *Higher School Certificate* in 1982.

(b) Curriculums after 1980s

In September 1974, a Cabinet Committee was constituted to review the implementation of the national educational policy led by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.¹² The committee took five years to prepare the reports and submitted them on 7th November 1979. The main recommendations of the 1979 Cabinet Committee Reports were: emphasis on the 3Rs; the extension of nine years of compulsory education to eleven years; an emphasis on spiritual development; the Malaysian outlook curriculum; the expansion of vocational and academic streams in secondary education; the streamlining of education management; and the comprehensive improvement of educational achievement. To fulfil the committee's recommendations, the New Primary School Curriculum was piloted in Year I classes in 302 schools. Subsequently, in 1983, the curriculum was introduced to all Year I classes, and by 1988 the curriculum was fully established in all grades of primary school. The aims of the New Primary School Curriculum were:

...to help each pupil attain an overall and balanced development in the physical, spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional and moral domains. In addition, the New Primary School Curriculum stressed the development of physical, affective and personality characteristics, such as, loyalty, patriotism, understanding, and tolerance which are nurtured through curricular and co-curricular programs.¹³

The emphasis of the New Primary School Curriculum, within 1,350 minutes (Phase I) and 1,440 minutes (Phase II) per week, was largely on the acquisition of the 3Rs. In both phases, Islamic Education or Moral Education was allocated only 13.0% of the available time as shown below.

Table 1: Time Allocation in the New Primary School Curriculum (Phase I)

Reading, Writing and Arithmetic	Music, PE, Art Education, Co-Curricula	Islamic/Moral Education
70%	17%	13%

Table 2: Time Allocation in the New Primary School Curriculum (Phase II)

Reading, Writing and Arithmetic	Music, Art Education, Co-Curricula	Man and his Environment	Islamic/Moral Education
52%	18%	17%	13%

In 1993, the review of New Primary School Curriculum in the light of the National Philosophy of Education resulted in an integrated approach to primary education with the formation of the Integrated Primary School Curriculum.¹⁴ Several changes were made to the New Primary School Curriculum, for example the topic, "Man and His Environment" has been replaced by Science and Local Studies (from 1994/95); Islamic Education now includes Fundamentals of Islamic Ethics; Health Education has been introduced as part of Physical Education and a greater time devoted to Sacred Values from the ages of 12 to 16 in the Moral Education syllabus. Generally, the time allocation for the 3Rs in both levels has been slightly reduced. For example in Phase I the weekly time for this has been reduced from 70% to 66.7% and in Phase II it has been reduced from 52% to 50%. From year 2001, all students at the Phase I will start to learn the subject of Science. However, the emphasis was still on the acquiring of the 3Rs despite several revisions. The subjects of the Integrated Primary School Curriculum are listed in the following table.

Table 3: Subjects in the Integrated Primary School Curriculum

Area of Study	Component	Subjects Phase I (Year I-III)	Subjects Phase II (Year IV-VI)
Communication	Basic Skills	Malay Language English Language Chinese Language Tamil Language Mathematics	Malay Language English Language Chinese Language Tamil Language Mathematics
Science and Local Studies	Spiritual Values and Attitudes Humanities and Environment	Islamic Religious Education Moral education Sciences	Islamic Religious Education Moral education Sciences Local Studies
Self Development	Living skills Arts and Recreation Co-Curriculum	Music Education Art Education Health and Physical Education	Living skills Music Education Art Education Health and Physical Education

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia and this phenomenon led to the rise of Islamic consciousness, particularly among the Malay Muslim community. As a result, many local *da'wah* movements and Muslim student organisations came into being. For

example, the *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM), *Dār al-Arqām*, *Jamā'ah al-Tablīgh*, *Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Universiti Malaya* (PMIUM), *Persatuan Mahasiswa Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (PMUKM), *Persatuan Bahasa Melayu Universiti Malaya* (PBMUM) and the *Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar-Pelajar Islam Malaysia* (PKPIM). Similar feelings also existed among Malay Muslim students studying abroad where several Islamic students organisations became active such as the Malaysian Islamic Study Group (MISG), *Suara Islam* (Voice of Islam) and the Islamic Representative Council (IRC). These movements significantly contributed to the development of Islamic revivalism in Malaysia as well as pressurising the government to adopt more Islamic elements in its policies. In the opinion of Kamal Hassan, education was one of the areas which significantly contributed to this awareness. He states:

As more and more Muslims became aware of the defects of an educational system based on a secular western prototype, the demand in the light of Islamic Educational philosophy and value increased.¹⁵

During this time (before 1987), there had been no written statement of a national philosophy of education as a clear basis for educational plans and practices, nor was the theological dimension clearly mentioned in the educational system.¹⁶ Robiah Sidin has observed that the Malaysian people were facing several problems, e.g., the spiritual vacuum and discord between material and spiritual development.¹⁷ In order to address this, from 1982 various groups within and outside the Ministry of Education started to work out a National Philosophy of Education through careful educational planning.¹⁸ As a result, in 1987 a statement of National Philosophy of Education was formulated as follows:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potentials of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and a devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian Citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well being, as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of society and the nation at large.¹⁹

From the above statement of the National Philosophy of Education, we can see that religious and moral values have been seriously considered in the present educational system since it has clearly pronounced some of the important criteria for the Malaysian citizens such as belief and devotion to God, possession of knowledge, high moral standard, competence and responsibility. Basically, the National Philosophy of Education emphasizes

the ethical, intellectual, balanced and harmonious development of individuals. The proclamation of the National Philosophy of Education, which became the foundation and guideline of the national education system, is generally seen as a significant stage in the reformation of the education system in Malaysia.

The philosophy of education becomes the kernel and the root of our national education system so that all educational programmes and activities are the reflections from the principles and values of the philosophy.²⁰

Wan Zahid states that the National Philosophy of Education should therefore address every aspect and level of educational implementation in Malaysia.²¹ As Ahmad claims, the educational reform has involved two essential aspects of education namely, first, educational theories and practices; second, educational aims and objectives.²²

The National Philosophy of Education clearly puts an emphasis on an integrated approach in order to produce individuals who are virtuous, knowledgeable, balanced and harmonious as well as to achieve national integration. The introduction of sixteen universal sacred values in the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (ICSS) is an important element of building a “morally-biased” education system and to eliminate the notion of value-free knowledge.²³ These values are compassion/empathy, self reliance, humility, respect, love, justice, freedom, courage, cleanliness of body and mind, honesty, diligence, co-operation, moderation, gratitude, rationality and public spiritedness. The need for inculcation of these sacred values was decided by the *Jawatankuasa Pendidikan Akhlak* (Ethics Education Committee), the members of which were derived from various religious groups in Malaysia,²⁴ the main faiths in the country being Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Christianity. These values should be incorporated or integrated into the process of teaching and learning across all subjects of the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools. Therefore, we may assume that all students have been educated and nurtured with these universal sacred values.

It seems that the development of moral and ethical behavior is strongly emphasized in the present education system. Muslims are expected to observe the Islamic *akhlâq* or ethics and exemplify the righteous characteristics, both of which are based on the teaching of Islam. In achieving this objective, Islamic Education plays an important role in nurturing the teachings of Islam in Muslim children especially during their primary and secondary education. The non-Muslim students are taught moral or ethical values through the lessons of Moral Education.

The Malaysian government attempted to implement the National Philosophy of Education at the secondary school level by introducing the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools. The design of the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School was based on the following principles:

1. continuity of the New Primary School Curriculum in terms of the educational philosophy framework, principles, concepts, curricular content, and teaching strategies;
2. providing general education to all students;
3. utilization of knowledge acquired through the various disciplines;
4. emphasis on aesthetic and moral values;
5. upgrading proficiency in and usage of Malay; and
6. developing a strong foundation for life-long education.²⁵

The Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School consists of two levels—lower secondary and upper secondary. At the lower secondary level, subjects are divided into core and additional subjects. The additional subjects are Tamil and Chinese, and the core subjects are as follows:²⁶

Table 4: The Core Subjects of the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School

Core Subjects	Number of Period Per Week (40 Minutes Per Period)
Malay	6 (5+1 Literature)
English	5 (4+1 Literature)
Islamic Education	4 (3+1 Practical)
Moral Education (non-Muslim only)	3
Mathematics	5
Science	5
History	3
Geography	3
Physical and Health Education	2
Art Education	2
Integrated Living Skills	4

Pupils from the Chinese and Tamil primary schools are expected to study for a year of 'transition class' to enable them to acquire proficiency in the Malay language. During this 'transition class', students are taught Malay Language, English Language, Chinese/Tamil Languages, Practices of Malay Language, Physical Education and Art Education. At the end of this level, students sit the Lower Secondary Assessment (LSA). Nowadays, as a result of the government's decision to extend the universal education from nine to eleven years, the examination has become a diagnostic evaluation rather than a terminal examination. Generally, the Lower Secondary Assessment results determine the student's specialization at the upper secondary level. There are academic, religious, technical schools which offer upper secondary education. Generally, the religious secondary schools offer similar subjects to those in the academic secondary schools,

but also have several other compulsory subjects for example; Arabic Language (communication), Arabic Language (advanced), *Ta'awwuz Islâm*, *al-Qur'ân* and *al-Sunnah* Education and Islamic *Shari'ah* Education. At this level, students are taught several core subjects as shown in Table 5.

In principle, the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School seems more flexible in terms of selecting subjects based on the students' abilities, although it is still subject to certain conditions. For example, in the academic schools, the elective subjects at this level are divided into Humanities, Vocational and Technology, Science and Islamic Studies. In the Technical schools, students of the technical stream may choose subjects from the Technical, Agriculture or Commerce streams, while the students of vocational stream can select subjects from the Engineering Trades, Home Economics, Commerce or Agriculture groups. The students sit for the Malaysian Certificate of Education or the Malaysian Vocational Certificate of Education examinations at the end of this level.

Table 5: The upper secondary core subjects

Academic Schools	Technical Schools
Malay	Malay
English	English
Moral Education	Moral Education
Islamic Education	Islamic Education
Mathematics	Mathematics
Science	Science
History	
Physical and Health Education	

Students may enter higher education through two different routes, either by directly enrolling in certain universities or colleges or by entering post-secondary education as a preparation for entering higher education institutions. The post-secondary education offers two programs—Sixth Form and Matriculation. The former is a preparation for the Malaysian Higher School Certificate (MHSC/STPM) and the latter is designed as an entrance examination for certain universities coordinated by the Ministry of Education.

III Curriculum Development: A Discussion

The foregoing discussion has attempted to show the brief development of the curricula of primary and secondary education since the independence. The main aim of these was to integrate the diverse Malayan community. As mentioned earlier, the use of Malay as the common language, standard syllabuses and common public examinations in the education system were part of government strategies to achieve national integration. However, the

government faced many obstacles in carrying out its education policy. One of the problems was the lack of preparation for the educational reforms proposed by the Rahman Talib Committee. Rudner states that:

...since the Alliance had not yet formulated any coherent social doctrine of its own, the policy review fell back on ethno-linguistic differentiation, as between Malays and non-Malays, as the basis of post-primary educational reform.²⁷

This was compounded by the disorganized introduction of three years of comprehensive education in 1965, which was a replacement for the “further education class”. Gullick claims that:

...the sudden influx of a greatly increased number of pupils of very mixed ability and attainment placed a great strain on the system. A crash programme to train additional teachers led to a fall in standards. The admirable concept of comprehensive education proved difficult to realize, since it required all sorts of new courses and equipment which could not easily be provided.²⁸

The introduction of “comprehensive education” also created the problems of overloaded classes and ineffective teaching and learning. These problems might be the grounds why many Malay parents preferred an English education to a Malay one. Therefore, it seems that the Malay community did not feel confident about education unless the medium was English, and English education was still valued as a guarantee of their children’s future, even though Malaya had gained its independence.²⁹ Thus, the major challenge to the Malaysian education policy was “...the strength of English as an established element in the system and its obvious economic advantages”.³⁰

Moreover, the existence of private schools and primary national-type schools, which were permitted to use their own languages, was also seen an obstacle to making Malay the common language of the education system. For example, Chinese private schools were allowed to use the Chinese language as the medium of instruction while government national-type schools were given exemption to use their own language such as English, Chinese and Tamil. In such schools, Malay was only taught as a subject. The proposals in the Razak Reports and in Rahman Talib’s Reports to maintain the language-based primary schools were against the earlier committee’s recommendation to have only a single type of primary school—National Schools, which were open to all races.³¹ The presence of language-based schools, for example, Chinese and Tamil primary schools, after the independence was criticized as preserving the colonial education system while calling it a “National Education System”.³²

Language becomes a major issue in any new multi-ethnic nation, such as Malaysia. The use of Malay as the main medium of instruction and

as the national language, for example, became a controversial issue in political campaigns of the 1959, 1964 and 1969 general elections.³³ During this time, all political parties in Malaysia such as the UMNO, PAS, MCA, Labour Party, United Democratic Party, Democratic Action Party and People's Party exploited matters of education and language as major issues in their election campaigns. Moreover, the language argument might have been the reasons for the delayed implementation of the education system proposed in 1969.³⁴ Ibrahim argues that the dissatisfaction with the position of the Malay language and education policy might have been the cause of the 13th May 1969 racial riots.³⁵ The government decision in 1970 to use the Malay language in English schools was an effort to strengthen the position of Malay as the national language and as a medium of instruction in order to achieve national integration.

The proclamation of the *Rukunegara* and the New Economic Policy, immediately after the riots, were seen as feverish government economic and social strategies to promote national integration. The riots also demonstrated the insufficiency of the government's efforts to unite the disparate Malaysian community through its education policy by using a common language and syllabus following twelve years of independence.

With regard to New Economic Policy generally, several educational aims of the policy were achieved, for example the common content and public examinations, the use of Malay at all educational levels, the increase of *Bumiputera* enrolment in the local tertiary institutions,³⁶ and the increase of the *Bumiputera* share in higher-paying professional occupations.³⁷

However, strong ethnic pride was still felt despite the government's efforts to unite the whole Malaysian community after independence. For example, the attitude among ethnic groups eighteen years after the introduction of the New Economic Policy was described as follows:

Needless to say, ethnic consciousness is still strong and shows no sign of declining in its intensity.³⁸

Blame was also placed on the weaknesses of the education system, which resulted in racial friction. The weakness of the education system, according to Jasbir and Mukherjee, was a consequence of the fact that contradictions and compromises permitted within it preserved ethnic tensions and unrealistic expectations, neglecting the importance of social structure.³⁹ Without participation and support from all concerned, the aim of making education the main means of national integration would not be achieved. Moreover, religion has to play an important role in the process of national integration, since in the context of Malaysia, religion is almost always based on race. Thus, the introduction of the subject of comparative religion and the establishment of inter-religious organisations or institutions are essential for true understanding and harmonious relations between religious groups. It becomes one of the significant means towards national integration.

The above outcome also demonstrated the ineffectiveness of some of the New Economic Policy's programmes, especially in education, in

achieving the notion of national unity based on the attainment of a fair economic distribution in Malaysian society. However, this does not mean that national unity totally failed, since a study showed that there were some indications of greater integration among the younger generation.⁴⁰ Today, the open confrontation on controversial educational issues such as the language of instruction, the single stream school, the project of Vision Schools and the national structure of education as well as the demands from *Suqiu* Committee suggests that there is some disagreement in the Malaysian community. Therefore, negotiation and compromise are the key ingredients needed to solve any difficulties successfully.⁴¹

The main aim of the New Primary School Curriculum introduced in 1982 was to fulfil Recommendation 2(a) of the 1979 Cabinet Reports which had emphasized the need for 3Rs education in the primary sector. Table 1 and Table 2 showed the large percentage of time allocated by the New Primary School Curriculum for students to gain mastery in these three basic skills. The New Primary School Curriculum also emphasised student participation in the teaching-learning process, for example, by replacing the "chalk and talk" method of the earlier curriculum with group activities and discussions. In the early stages of implementation, most teachers faced several difficulties, for example, understanding and implementing the new teaching approach, preparing teaching materials and aids, and organising various types of activities within a limited time.⁴²

In the New Primary School Curriculum, the plan to reduce the number of academic subjects in primary education could not be achieved and students had to study widely in each area.⁴³ For example, between Standard I and III of the Old Primary School Curriculum (OPSC), students learned 10 subjects, the same number as in Phase I of New Primary School Curriculum. At Phase II of the New Primary School Curriculum, the students had to learn 12 subjects. The topic, "Man and his Environment" covered a very wide area of knowledge, including sciences, geography, civics and health. The focus on overall and balanced development of the individual did not materialize since only 13% of time was allocated for Religious or Moral Education.

Generally, the proclamation of the National Philosophy of Education was seen as a significant stage in the reformation of the education system in Malaysia since the National Philosophy of Education became the foundation of the national education system. Anwar insists that the National Philosophy of Education is not a new educational policy, but a continuation of the earlier reports and an attempt to strengthen the present policy.⁴⁴ In fact, there is a significant relationship between the National Philosophy of Education and the previous educational policy. As Langgulong writes:

...the philosophy of education which was unwritten has now been written and has become the national philosophy of education.⁴⁵

Idris Jauzi also maintains that the formulation of the National Philosophy of Education was an attempt to bring the separate, ad hoc and implicit aims

into a clear statement of the national philosophy of education.⁴⁶ In addition, from the statement of the National Philosophy of Education, we may understand that the development of ethical, knowledgeable, balanced and harmonious individuals, in other words, good individuals, is regarded as its main aim. In principle, it is consistent with the main aim of Islamic education, i.e. to produce a good individual. According to al-Attas, "We maintain that it is more fundamental to produce a good man than to produce a good citizen, for a good man will no doubt be a good citizen, but the good citizen will not necessarily also be a good man".⁴⁷ In the same vein, Ashraf also writes:

The purpose of seeking knowledge is not just to become a good citizen of a state but to become a complete human being who reflects God's Attributes in his character and conduct and fulfils God's will through the exercise of his will and through action (*'amal*) in this world.⁴⁸

The statement of belief in and devotion to God in the National Philosophy of Education was criticized by Wan Mohd Nor as a "blurred basis" for Muslims in particular, as they should have an understanding that "God" is only Allah. He argues that the Islamic concept of *Taw-hid* has been compromised for the sake of the diverse Malaysian community.⁴⁹ In fact, the National Philosophy of Education was not solely formulated for Muslims; therefore, it is argued that "... the phrase 'belief in Allah' is not meaningful to non-Muslims and Islam does not compel others to itself".⁵⁰ It may also be noted that the statement of *Rukunegara* (National Ideology) also sets "Belief in God" as its first pillar. Concerning this issue, Wan Zahid claims that "The National Philosophy of Education was carefully and cautiously formulated and took into account the needs of the nation and the multi-ethnic community".⁵¹

According to Wan Zahid, the introduction of sixteen universal sacred values in the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School was an important element of building a "morally-biased education system" and to eliminate the notion of value-free knowledge.⁵² Indeed, the concept of the humanization of education is an important feature in the educational reformation.⁵³ It is stated that "Whilst educational programs up to the 1970s emphasized academic development, education in the 1980s moved towards the holistic development of individual...".⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the attempts to achieve the aspirations of the National Philosophy of Education seems to come to an end at the upper-secondary level, since integrated education at the primary and secondary levels does not extend to higher education. Even today, there have been no comprehensive educational reforms to implement an "integrated approach" in the higher educational institutions as a whole. In other words, the real form of an integrated education system is yet to exist.

IV Concluding Remarks

The establishment of language-based schools during the British colonial period only prolonged the diversification of the Malayan community and ethnic identity although the system, in the short term, might have satisfied ethnic interests. Generally, the aims and policies of education immediately after the independence emphasized achieving national integration through a common language, syllabus and examination. The problems of the language and education system became controversial political issues in the general elections after independence.

The 13th May 1969 event demonstrated the failure of the government's attempts after independence to unite the disparate Malaysian community. It seems that the educational policy at that time was not strong enough to accomplish national integration. Although several educational aims of the National Philosophy of Education were achieved, the problem of disintegration still existed. Dissatisfaction with government policies, weaknesses of the educational system and the differing claims of ethnic interests became the main factors which contributed to the problem of disintegration.

Finally, the formulation of the National Philosophy of Education as the foundation and essential guideline of the present Malaysian education system in 1987 was an important stage in the educational reform in Malaysia. This reform involved two essential aspects of education: firstly, educational theories and practices and secondly, educational aims and objectives. Generally, the National Philosophy of Education clearly puts an emphasis on an integrated approach in order to produce good individuals and also to achieve national integration. Thus, the introduction of the Integrated Primary School Curriculum, including the sixteen universal values, show the attempts to achieve the notion of the National Philosophy of Education at primary and secondary education levels. This includes the concept of nation-building with an emphasis on the development of good individuals in order to produce good citizen as discussed by Ashraf and al-Attas. In integrating the Malaysian multi-religious and multiracial community, all members of the community should have a good understanding of their differences and respect their diversities rather than being merely satisfied with being members of a wider society.

Notes

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