

## Dilemmas of Chinese Education in Overseas Chinese Community :

### The Case of Chinese Education Movement

#### In Malaysia, 1995-2008

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Overseas Chinese communities in various parts of the world exhibit distinct and different features in their societies as they have undergone dissimilar adaptation processes due to differing environment in the country of their settlement. Chinese education as an important vehicle for the maintenance of Chinese language in overseas Chinese community has exhibited different course of development and fate which is very much dependence on the policy of the state. In the case of the Chinese education in Malaysia albeit the implementation of mono-lingualism in the educational policy by the state, Malaysian Chinese has developed and maintained a rather complete system of Chinese education which profess a high degree of cultural resilience and propagation. Although the community faces various predicament in its educational development, but the perseverance and the struggle of Malaysian Chinese to maintain and sustain the Chinese schools has transformed into a social movement that has impacted upon the polity of Malaysia and its educational policy.

Since its genesis in 1951, the Chinese education movement has gained the tremendous supports of Chinese community and these undivided supports have ensured its sustainability through the long and contentious process of nation-building in Malaysia. After racial riot of 1969, the coalition government which is dominated by UMNO has embarked on national educational policy which is based on Malay-bumiputera ( sons of the soil ) defined identity. This policy has privileged many aspects of Malay culture as the core of Malaysian identity which is to be attained through a national school system by using the Malay language. However Malaysian Chinese community through the leaders and activists of Chinese education movement have challenged the legitimacy of state policies on language, education and cultures. Consequently, their concerted endeavors in this respect have encountered various restrictions and oppressions by the state. The struggles of Malaysian Chinese to maintain and protect their mother tongue schools have been spectacular. The main impetus for this concerted effort of the Chinese community is due to the apprehension of erosion of their identity and cultural roots. The cultural resilience manifested in this education movement is extraordinary in features and hence is a topic for research.

This paper aims at studying the recent developments ( 1995-2008 ) of the Chinese education movement and will focus on the various predicament and its activism in preserving the Chinese schools. This author will elucidate the problem of acute shortage of Chinese schools, the controversial Vision School programme and the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English and its impacts on Chinese schools. These 3 issues which are part of the state educational policies are of utmost importance to the Chinese educationists as they could engendered the erosion of the characteristics and identity of the Chinese schools. Their apprehensions stem from the fully-fledged implementation of mono-lingualism in the national educational policy which is based on Malay language by the UMNO-dominated government since independence. Consequently, Chinese educationists in Malaysia have launched a series of struggles to safeguard the characteristic of Chinese schools in the country. The discussion in this paper will focus on the endeavors and strategies employed by the leaders and activists of the Chinese education movement.