



THE EDUCATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

The Case of the Malaysian Chinese

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This is a case study of the dilemmas of minority education in plural societies, focusing on the complex phenomenon of the education of the Malaysian Chinese. The Malaysian education system accommodates minority interests by allowing for Tamil and Chinese-medium primary schools. But since Malay is the main medium of instruction, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, most minority students undergo a transitional bilingual education.

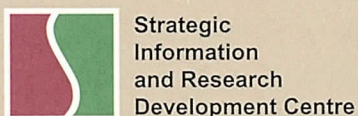
The authors review the background to this segmented system as well as relevant literature on minority education. Both colonial era and post-independence language and education policies have been contested and divisive. While nation-building remains a key concern, education and language policies often reflect majority–minority relations, rather than being focused purely on pedagogic goals—or interethnic socialization and integration.

The Chinese educationists have been a driving force in these developments. But their vision of a complete system of Chinese-medium education, as this book shows, is not fully supported by Chinese parents. Furthermore, the flawed implementation of transitional bilingual education has resulted in, among other problems, linguistic dysfunctionality. A substantial number of Chinese students have such a poor grasp of Malay that they drop out of secondary school, while overall Chinese-language competency also deteriorates after primary school.

This objective, scholarly analysis should be read by educationists, scholars, journalists, policy-makers, and parents who seek to learn more about the history, context, and longer-term implications of the education of the Chinese in multiethnic Malaysia.

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