UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

ETHNIC POLITICS IN CHINESE EDUCATION AND ROLE OF MALAYSIAN NGOs IN MALAYSIA-CHINA EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE, 1974-2015

XIA NAN

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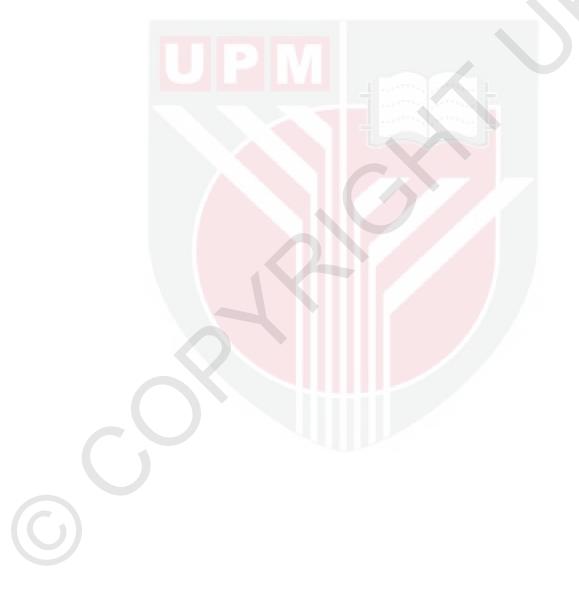
By

XIA NAN

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2018

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**ETHNIC POLITICS IN CHINESE EDUCATION AND ROLE OF
MALAYSIAN NGOs IN MALAYSIA-CHINA EDUCATIONAL
EXCHANGE, 1974-2015**

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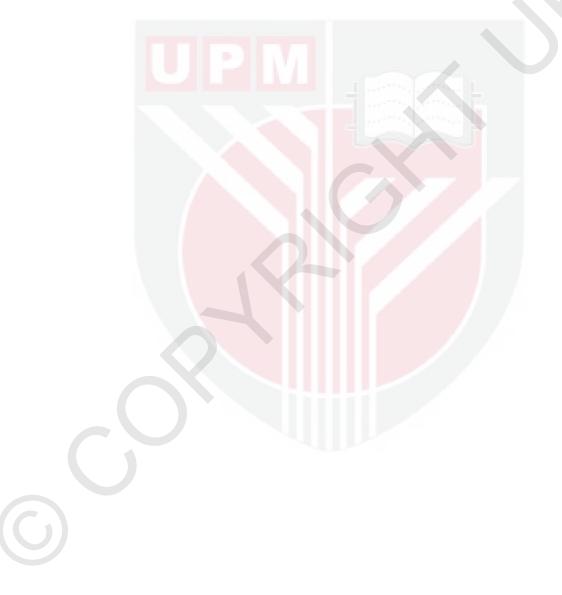**Chairman : Associate Professor Lee Yok Fee, PhD**
Faculty : Human Ecology

Malaysia and China have established diplomatic relations for more than 40 years.
The bilateral relations between China and Malaysia are mainly based on the
economic and trade fields, followed by tourism, and then is the field of education.
As one of the most important aspects of Malaysia-China relations, the development
in educational area is lagging behind. Educational exchange between Malaysia and
China has an important interaction with Chinese education in Malaysia and political
relations between Malaysia and China. Chinese education in Malaysia is twisted
with Malaysian ethnic politics and its development is undoubtedly a hotly contested
area. Malaysian NGOs play an important role in the process of promoting
educational exchange. Nowadays, "the Belt and Road" brings the chance for the
cooperation of educational exchange between Malaysia and China. Based on the
above problem, the objectives of this thesis are to elaborate the background and
achievement of educational exchange between Malaysia and China since they
established formally diplomatic relations in 1974, to examine the relations between
ethnic politics and Chinese education in Malaysia and to determine the roles of
Malaysian NGOs towards educational exchange between Malaysia and China. The
research is an exploratory qualitative research. The primary data were collected
through semi-structured interviews and secondary data included official reports,
Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs), journal articles, newspapers, website
pages and online resources. The informants are 24 persons who were selected based
on the purposive sampling method and snowball strategy, which were divided into
three categories: politicians, social activists and scholars. For data analysis, the study
applied qualitative content analysis. In addition, structuration theory was used in this
study. The results show, educational exchange between Malaysia and China has a
positive correlation with Malaysia-China relations, i.e. good bilateral relations of
Malaysia and China can promote educational exchange, and vice versa. Meantime,

Chinese education in Malaysia was greatly influenced by Malaysian ethnic politics. Therefore, it can be seen that Malaysian ethnic politics indirectly affect educational exchange between the two countries. In this process, there are three main important NGOs that play a significant role in promoting educational exchange between Malaysia and China, which are Dong Jiao Zong, the Association of Graduates from Universities and Colleges in China, Malaysia (AGUCCM) and Malaysia-China Friendship Association (MCFA). Nowadays, with the rise of China and the promotion of "the Belt and Road", Malaysia-China relations enter the most splendid period in history, Meanwhile, under such background, educational exchange between Malaysia and China will become progressive. It can be expected that educational exchanges and Malaysia-China relations will enter a more perfect and better stage which benefits people of the two countries.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

POLITIK ETNIK DALAM PENDIDIKAN CINA DAN PERANAN NGO MALAYSIA DALAM PERTUKARAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA-CHINA, 1974-2015

Oleh

XIA NAN

April 2018

Pengerusi : **Profesor Madya Lee Yok Fee, PhD**
Fakulti : **Ekologi Manusia**

Malaysia dan China telah menubuhkan hubungan diplomatik selama lebih daripada 40 tahun. Hubungan dua hala antara China dan Malaysia adalah berdasarkan kepada bidang ekonomi dan perdagangan, diikuti oleh pelancongan, dan kemudian bidang pendidikan. Sebagai salah satu aspek yang paling penting dalam hubungan Malaysia-China, pembangunan dalam bidang pendidikan adalah ketinggalan. Pertukaran pendidikan antara Malaysia dan China mempunyai interaksi penting dengan pendidikan Cina di Malaysia dan hubungan politik antara Malaysia dan China. Pendidikan Cina di Malaysia berhubungan rapat dengan politik etnik Malaysia. Pembangunan pendidikan Cina di Malaysia tidak diragui lagi sebagai topik yang hangat dibincangkan. NGO Malaysia memainkan peranan penting dalam proses menggalakkan pertukaran pendidikan. Pada masa kini, polisi antarabangsa "*Belt and Road*" China telah menambah peluang kerjasama pendidikan antara Malaysia dan China. Berdasarkan permasalahan di atas, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menghuraikan latar belakang dan pencapaian pertukaran pendidikan antara Malaysia dan China sejak mereka menjalin hubungan diplomatik secara formal pada tahun 1974, untuk mengkaji hubungan antara politik etnik dan pendidikan Cina di Malaysia dan untuk menentukan peranan NGO Malaysia ke arah pertukaran pendidikan antara Malaysia dan China. Penyelidikan ini merupakan penyelidikan kualitatif. Data primer dikumpulkan melalui temu bual separa struktur dan data sekunder pula diperoleh melalui laporan rasmi, Memorandum Persefahaman (MOU), artikel jurnal, surat khabar, laman web dan sumber dalam talian. Seramai 24 orang informan telah dipilih berdasarkan kaedah pensampelan bertujuan dan strategi bola salji. Merekadibahagikan kepada tiga kategori, iaitu ahli politik, aktivis sosial dan sarjana. Untuk menganalisis data, kajian ini menggunakan analisis kandungan kualitatif. Tambahan pula, teori *structuration* digunakan dalam kajian ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan, pertukaran pendidikan antara Malaysia dan China mempunyai

hubungan yang positif dengan hubungan Malaysia-China, iaitu hubungan dua hala Malaysia dan China yang baik boleh menggalakkan pertukaran pendidikan, dan juga sebaliknya. Sementara itu, pendidikan Cina di Malaysia sangat dipengaruhi oleh politik etnik Malaysia. Oleh itu, dapat dilihat bahawa politik etnik Malaysia secara tidak langsung turut mempengaruhi pertukaran pendidikan antara kedua negara. Dalam proses ini, terdapat tiga NGO penting yang memainkan peranan penting dalam mempromosikan pertukaran pendidikan antara Malaysia dan China, iaitu Dong Jiao Zong, Persatuan Bekas Siswazah Universiti dan Kolej Di China, Malaysia (AGUCCM) dan Persatuan Persahabatan Malaysia-China (MCFA). Pada masa kini, dengan pembangkitan negara China dan promosi "*Belt dan Road*", hubungan Malaysia-China mencapai tahap yang cemerlang dalam sejarah. Sementara itu, dalam keadaan ini, pertukaran pendidikan antara Malaysia dan China akan menjadi semakin baik. Dijangka pertukaran pendidikan dan hubungan Malaysia-China akan memasuki tahap yang lebih sempurna dan lebih baik seterusnya memberi faedah kepada rakyat kedua-dua negara.

iv

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May the love be with you!

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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viii

Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:
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Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:

- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) were adhered to.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

xiii

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCCIM	the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia
AGUCCM	the Association of Graduates from Universities and Colleges in China, Malaysia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BFSU	Beijing Foreign Studies Univesity
BN	Barisan Nasional Party
CAC	Central Advisory Committee
CAFTA	China-ASEAN Free Trade Area
CPC	the Communist Party of China
CPM	the Communist Party of Malaya
ICSS	Independent Chinese Secondary Schools
JPA	Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia
KLSCAH	the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall
KZIUM	Kong Zi Institute University of Malaya
MCA	the Malaysian Chinese Association
MCBC	Malaysia-China Business Council
MCCC	Malaysia-China Chamber of Commerce
MCFA	Malaysia-China Friendship Association
MIC	the Malayan Indian Congress
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement

NEP	New Economic Policy
NF	National Front
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NOC	National Operation Council
PRC	the People's Republic of China
B&R	the Belt and Road
UCSCAM	United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia
UCSTAM	United Chinese School Teachers Association of Malaysia
UEC	Unified Examination Certificate
UMNO	the United Malays National Organization
WTO	the World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

The friendly relations between Malaysia and China have a long history. Malaysia was the first major Southeast Asian country to exchange diplomatic recognition with China. Politically speaking, Malaysia did not change its posture toward China until late 1980s (Liow, 2005). Since 1980, China began to change its relations with the world, including Malaysia and Southeast Asia (Samuel, 2008). On 27 May 1974, Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak and a Malaysia entourage led by him left for the People's Republic of China (PRC), where the two governments made the first-level official contact since Malaysia's independence in 1957.

Malaysia and China established a formal diplomatic relation on May 31, 1974, which made it as the first Southeast Asian countries to formally recognize and announce the normalization of relations with the PRC. Malaysia's opening up to diplomatic relations with China was part of an overall transition on its foreign policy from a pro-Western to a non-Communist state and Communists states in the global system (Saravanamuttu, 2010). Since Malaysia and China moved along with the global trend to establish diplomatic relations, it has been for more than 40 years.

With the rapid development of economy, the rise of China is clearly one of the most important trends of recent times (Pumphrey, 2002). In Asia, China is a top trader with key neighbors such as South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, and a number of Southeast Asian countries (Sutter, 2005). As a rising power, the PRC has attracted serious attention from Malaysia, other Southeast Asia countries, and other major countries in the world (Samuel, 2008). The bilateral relations between Malaysia and China are mainly based on the economic and trade domains, followed by tourism, and then is the field of education. Due to the ethnic problems and the Chinese education issue in Malaysia, the development in the field of education is lagging behind (Liao, 2012).

Education exchange is the most important area among the exchanges among countries. Education and cultural exchanges between Malaysia and China is an important and sensitive area (Huang, 2000). In the early 1990s, Malaysian government made the rule that Chinese teachers were not allowed to be employed by Chinese schools in Malaysia. Malaysian government did not allow Malaysian Chinese students to study in China, and they certainly didn't acknowledge degrees at the universities of China due to the different ideologies (Huang, 2000).

1

After the Cold War, this situation began to change. Especially since the year of 1997, the government between Malaysia and China signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Education Cooperation. The two countries reached an agreement to cooperate on the field of student exchanges between the two countries, exchange of academic staff, research collaboration between universities, as well as providing scholarships and allow students to each other's country studies. This opened a prelude to educational cooperation between the two countries.

After the signing of MOU on Education Cooperation, Malaysian Minister of Education Datuk Seri Najib Razak said that the expansion of exchanges and cooperation between Malaysia and China did not affect the allegiance of ethnic Malaysian Chinese; it promoted ethnic Malaysian Chinese's love of Malaysia (Sin Chew Daily, 1997). After the MOU, some exchanges began to implement. Universiti Teknologi Mara (UITM) of Malaysia and Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) of China began to exchange teachers, at the same time, INTI International University and Tsinghua University exchanged students to carry on the educational cooperation (Huang, 2000).

In February 2013, a Memorandum of Arrangement was signed between Xiamen University and Sunsuria Development Sdn Bhd to establish a Campus in Malaysia (Najib, 2014). This represents another meaningful cooperation between Malaysia and China in the field of education besides economic, trade, science and technology, and cultural cooperation to boost bilateral relations (Star, 2013). Besides boosting Malaysia's aspirations of becoming an educational hub, Xiamen's move is likely to be welcomed by local Chinese educationists, who have bemoaned the lack of a Chinese tertiary institution here (Teo, 2011).

At the same time, the establishment of branch of Xiamen University promotes the numbers of students from China, Malaysia and other Southeast Asia countries. According to Malaysia statistics the international students in Malaysia are from more than 160 countries and regions. The number of Chinese students in Malaysia has exceeded the number of 25% of all the international students in Malaysia. In other words, China becomes the most important educational output markets of Malaysia. At the same time, from 2003 to 2011, the Malaysia students who studied in China have increased from 800 to 2700, Chinese students studying in Malaysia also increased from 3000 to 12,000 (Liao, 2012). According to the statistics of the Embassy of the PRC in Malaysia, a total of 4,338 Malaysian students were studying in China in 2011. The number surged 40% which reaches to 6,045 in 2012. And in 2013, there were 6,126 Malaysian students in China universities. It's because the pace of China's education internationalization, industrialization and is legalization increasing. As China's higher education system is gradually integrated with the international standards, coupled with lower tuition fees and similar cultural backgrounds, thus this attracts more and more Malaysia students in China.

Meanwhile, the number of Chinese students studying in Malaysia is also rising, according to the Chinese statistics, from the year 2001 to 2003 the number of Chinese students in Malaysia was only 2,313, but to the year of 2003, the number of Chinese students in Malaysia were up to 11,058, so currently there has more than one million people. This is the third highest ranking among foreign students. Malaysia is looking forward to opening up national financial resources and increasing revenue of institutions through absorbing lots of Chinese full-fee paying students. The Malaysian government is committed to be the education center in Southeast Asia, it views education, especial the higher education as an important industry and attract students of the neighboring countries to study in his country by using various preferential policies. As in recent years, the Malaysian government has done a lot adjustment on education policy and used various ways to encourage foreign students to study in the country. Therefore, the healthy development of Malaysia and China relations promotes educational exchanges.

The Chairman of the PRC Xi Jinping visited Malaysia from October 3rd to 5th, 2013. The two sides' spoke highly of the development of bilateral relations, Malaysia agreed to enhance strategic partnership for the comprehensive strategic partnership. This marks a new stage of bilateral cooperation in various fields of trade, investment, tourism, education, financial services, infrastructure and defense and so on. This new partnership requires both sides to strengthen contacts, enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields. The two sides reaffirmed their intention to maintain close high-level contacts, deepen friendly exchanges and cooperation in various fields and promote new progress of bilateral relations..

Malaysia and China celebrated the 40th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries hold cultural exchanges and a series of celebrations organizations to further promote bilateral exchanges and cooperation in the field of education, culture and tourism. At the same time, China government draft *National Education Reform and Development of Long-term Planning Programs (2010-2020)* and proposed to expand the opening-up of education and strengthen international cooperation and exchange in education, which provides a chance to research educational exchanges between Malaysia and China.

1.2   Problem Statement

Malaysia and China have established diplomatic relations for more than 40 years. The bilateral relations between China and Malaysia are mainly based on the economic and trade fields, followed by tourism, and then is the field of education. Educational exchange between Malaysia and China is one important part of Malaysia and China relations. Good bilateral relations of Malaysia and China can promote educational exchanges, and vice versa. There are four reasons why this research "Ethnic Politics in Chinese Education and the role of Malaysian NGOs in Malaysia-China Educational exchange, 1974-2015" is selected.

First and foremost, educational exchange is significant to Malaysia and China relationship, which has an important interaction with the Chinese education in Malaysia and the political relations between Malaysia and China (Liao, 2010). Due to the ethnic problems and the Chinese education in Malaysia, the development in the field of education is lagging behind (Liao, 2012). Chinese education in Malaysia has declined after World War II. At the period of the year from l945 to 1957, Malaysia strived for independent nation-state; Chinese culture's subsided at that time. After the Cold War, Chinese culture rise due to two reasons: first was the improvement of China's international status, second was the reduction of ideological factors in Malaysia. Malaysia and China did not establish formal long-term bilateral educational exchanges and cooperation due to the impact of the Chinese Malaysian problem; some Chinese children who went to China for further study had to go through an informal way (Liao, 1998). In the 1990s, with the improvement of bilateral political and economic relations, and substantial adjustments of Malaysia overseas Chinese policy, Malaysian youth who went to China for further study increased. Malaysia government and China government signed MOU on Education Cooperation in 1997, which opened a prelude to educational cooperation between the two countries. At the same time, from 2003 to 2011, the Malaysia students who studied in China have increased from 800 to 2700, Chinese students studied in Malaysia also increased from 3000 to 12,000 (Liao, 2012). It can be seen from figure 1.1 that the educational exchange between Malaysia and China become more and more intensive. Hence, Malaysia and China relationship affect the educational exchange, and vice versa.
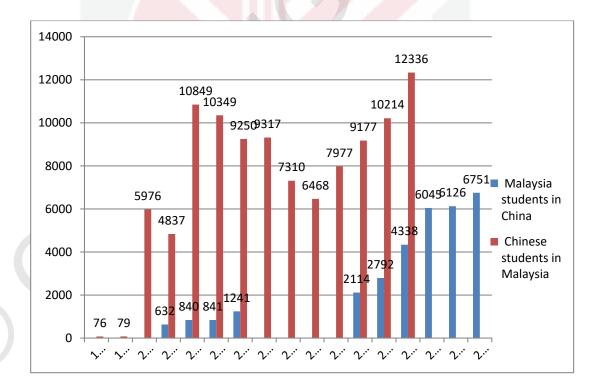

Figure 1.1 : Numbers of Students Educational Exchanges between Malaysia and China
(Source : Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, Embassy of the People's Republic China in Malaysia, Sin Chew Daily News of Malaysia)

4

Secondly, the "Belt and Road" brings the chance for the cooperation of educational exchange between Malaysia and China. When the Chairman of the PRC Xi Jinping visited Central Asia and Southeast Asia in September and October 2013, he raised the initiative of jointly building "the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road", which are known as "the Belt and Road". The "Belt" refers to the economic belt along China's traditional Silk Road connecting China with Europe (Donaldson, 2016). The "Road" is the new 'Maritime Silk Road' between China, Southeast Asia and Africa. The aim for China is to invest in the infrastructure and linkages associated with these "Roads" to help bolster its overseas trade. This in turn will stimulate production and consumption demand at home. Malaysia is located at the center of Southeast Asia and holds the Straits of Malacca as an incomparable advantage in the cooperation of the construction of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Malaysia views the unity and cohesiveness of ASEAN and a Southeast Asia that's free from major-power dominance and rivalry as matters of major strategic importance (Brant, 2015). Both China and ASEAN agreed that the year 2016 will be the China-ASEAN Year of Education Exchange which is under the strategy of "the Belt and Road" may provide the opportunity and space for Malaysia and China educational exchange, which needs studying in depth.

Thirdly, Malaysian NGOs play an important role in the process of promoting educational exchange. NGOs that are to be distinguished from the government organizations, use interpersonal methods of communication, and study the right entry points whereby they gain the trust of the community they seek to benefit. They put pressure to the government and influence on the policy making to some extent. NGOs constitute a viable alternative to government as channels of development assistance, particularly in developing countries (Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010). There are many NGOs in Malaysia, such as United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM), United Chinese School Teachers Association of Malaysia (UCSTAM), which made effort to promote Malaysia-China educational exchange in the history. For example, in the early 1990s, Malaysia government did not allow Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (ICSS) to hire Chinese teachers from China and did not allow Chinese students to study in China; meantime, they did not recognize diplomas of Chinese universities (Huang, 2000). According to Guo Quanjiang who was the general Chairman of UCSCAM, Dong Jiao Zong got in touch with Chinese educational institutions privately from 1991 to 1995 and had sent more than 500 students to China to study, the first batch of nearly 100 students returned home in 1996 (Sin Chew Daily, 1995). Besides UCSCAM and UCSTAM, there are many other NGOs like Malaysia-China Friendship Association (MCFA) and so on who help to promote educational exchange between the two countries. Hence, this research is going to analyze and explore the roles of some main NGOs in the process of promoting educational exchange in Malaysia-China relationship.

Lastly, there are less scholars focused on the issue through identify the previous literatures related to the research. On the one hand, there are lacking of study on the educational exchange between Malaysia and China. Most scholars (Leong (1987), Ku (2006), Li (2006), etc.) mainly focused on the politics and economic fields, less of them pay attention on the educational exchange between Malaysia and China, therefore it is important to do the research on educational exchange.

On the other hand, there are fewer studies on the impact of ethnic politic on educational exchange between Malaysia and China. Malaysian ethnic issue has been more sensitive, in the early 20th century Chinese Malaysian invested in China which has caused the "Allegiance" problem; the reason why educational cooperation between Malaysia and China started later than the other aspects was because it involved some sensitive topics like Chinese education in Malaysia (Liao, 2012). Education issue in Malaysia has been given an ethnic-based political dimension due to the political structure of Malaysia. Malaysia has a political structure which is based on ethnic politics (Segawa, 2013). Malaysian government has been governed by the coalition party named the National Front (Malay: Barisan Nasional; abbrev: BN), which is consisted of three major ethnic-based parties, i.e. the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). Each party represents their own ethnic identities and interests. In this sense, the ethnic-based political parties seek privileges and advantages for their ethnically oriented members (Saad, 1979). The different ethnic identities in Malaysian society affected the formation of the state and its policy agendas, especially in the education system (Jamil, 2010). In order to ensure their interests in the education fields, the non-Malay has to find various ways. There are some organizations and individuals devote themselves to the educational field.

Some scholars have studied the significant of ethnic politics on Chinese education in Malaysia, and there are also some scholars (Tan & Santhiram (2010), Tan (1997), etc.) discussed the influence of ethnic politics on the establishment and implementation of educational policy, yet, less discussed on the relations between ethnic politics and Chinese education in Malaysia and the impact of ethnic politic on educational exchange between Malaysia and China, which is one aspect that the research have done.

Therefore, as mentioned above, there are less scholars focus on the area of education between Malaysia and China. The development of educational exchange was influenced by bilateral relations of Malaysia and China, and vice versa. Educational exchanges between Malaysia and China have a significant interaction with the Chinese education in Malaysia which is under the ethnic politics structure, there are lacking of study on the ethnic politics impact on educational exchange between Malaysia and China. Hence, this study has done to fill this gap. Besides that, this research also analyzed the role of NGOs who contribute to the educational exchange between Malaysia and China.

1.3 Research Questions

Regarding the problem statement, this study is going to answer the three questions:

1. What is the background and achievement of educational exchange between Malaysia and China from 1974 to 2015?
2. How did Malaysian ethnic politics affect Chinese education in Malaysia?
3. How did Malaysian NGOs promote educational exchange between Malaysia and China under Malay preferential educational policy?

1.4 Research Objectives

In order to attain the role of ethnic politics in Chinese education and Malaysian NGOs in Malaysia-China educational exchange, this study has three objectives.

1. To elaborate the background and achievement of educational exchange between Malaysia and China since they established formally diplomatic relations in 1974.
2. To examine the relations between ethnic politics and Chinese education in Malaysia.
3. To investigate the role of Malaysian NGOs towards educational exchange between Malaysia and China.

1.5 Significance of Study

The outcomes of this research can help the intellectuals and politicians in Malaysia and China, who are seeking to promote educational exchange between the two countries because it investigated the ethnic politics factors in educational exchange. The research is essential due to the following reasons:

Firstly, the study could provide fundamental theoretical basis and policy reference for policy makers, which may help to make more effective and beneficial policies to promote educational exchange because it seeks to analyze the ethnic politics factors and tries to answer how the ethnic politics factors affect educational exchange between Malaysia and China.

Secondly, this study has very high academic value and it will contribute to extend studies on educational exchange between Malaysia and China. As mentioned in problem statement, most scholars focus on political and economic fields between Malaysia and China relationship and there is lack of studies on educational exchange, the outcomes of this study will attract the interest of researching educational factor in Malaysia and China relationship. The educational exchange between China and

Malaysia which is one of the most important parts of China and Malaysia exchanges is a significant branch of China and Malaysia relations. Thus it inevitably plays an important role in strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Malaysia and provides a way and window to further contact in political, economic, cultural and other aspects between the two countries.

Thirdly, this study is significant to the study of Malaysia and China foreign relations. The educational exchange between Malaysia and China which is one of the most important parts of Malaysia and China exchanges is a significant branch of China and Malaysia relations. It's helpful to understand the importance and the role of educational exchange in Malaysia and China relations, thereby strengthening bilateral educational exchanges. Education is subject to political, economic and other factors, but it also has certain independence. Like education, educational exchanges are subject to the changes of political and economic relations between the two countries, but to some extent it also separates from those relations. When the bilateral relations were in the state of doldrums, it is apparent that cultural and educational exchanges are particularly important. Educational exchanges is the basic way to understand and communicate with each other between the two country people, which has a special effect of eliminating misunderstandings, resolving conflicts and increasing the emotional and psychological closeness of people between the two countries. In addition, it can help young people who take on the task of the future development of bilateral to understand the history correctly through educational exchanges.

It also has great significance of cultivating the international awareness and the concept of peace and friendship between the young people of the two countries. Therefore, the research will provide reference to promoting the vigorous development of the current educational exchanges between the two countries. And it has a certain practical significance to the improvement of Sino-Malaysian relations (China and Malaysia) and the development of strategic partnership and mutually beneficial relations. In other words, the research of educational exchanges will have an international reference to promote the development of friendly relations between the two countries. The outcomes of this study will promote educational exchange in Malaysia and China relationship.

1.6   Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research focuses on the educational exchange between Malaysia and China since they established formally diplomatic relations on May 31, 1974 till 2015. It focuses this period because there is less research on this issue and it makes further explanation about educational exchange especially since the year of 1997 in detail, when the government between Malaysia and China signed the MOU on Education Cooperation.

8

The year of 1997 is the line of demarcation, this research analyzed educational exchange between Malaysia and China into two parts: the first part is from 1974 to 1997, when there was no official cooperation, most educational exchange was conducted by individuals and NGOs, such as Dong Jiao Zong who are not only the associations but also the most authoritative social force with an organized and dedicated institution; the second part is from 1997 to 2015, when educational exchange began to come to the level of government cooperation.

This study explores the educational exchange between Malaysia and China, so it focuses on the government level and in the field of Malaysia and China relations. As the study explored the major roles in promoting educational exchange, hence the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) level was also referred. The research selected 2015 as the closing date was because the proposal of the research was conducted and completed in 2015 from the start.

This study explores educational exchange between Malaysia and China, especially the educational exchange in the area of Chinese education in Malaysia. Hence, the study mainly focuses on the Chinese education in Malaysia. Moreover, the research focuses on Malaysia aspect, the Chinese aspect is neglected. In addition, the educational exchange in the area of the Bahasa Melayu is excluded in this study.

The study has limitations due to the nature of the study. Firstly, it focuses on the Chinese and English materials when collecting the data. When select the informants, the study focused on the Malays and Chinese Malaysian, Malaysian Indian and other ethnic minorities are excluded in this study. Moreover, as the research focused on the period from 1974 to 2015, the findings of the research had some limitations due to the duration of the research, therefore, some new findings after 2015 may be excluded in this research.

In addition, results of this study are not generalizable to other countries, as Blaikie (2009) said qualitative data do not lend themselves to the kind of generalization commonly used in quantitative research, such as using statistical techniques that are based on probability theory.

1.7   Definition of Terms

Regarding of the research, there are two key terms:

Ethnic Politics: Ethnicity and Ethnic Politics are important phenomenon in plural societies, especially in developing world; ethnic politics is one of the main reasons of internal instability (Hashmi & Majeed, 2015). It is difficult for us to define "ethnic politics" based on a single factor. When defining ethnic politics from an ethnic perspective, it is important to note that ethnicity is totally different from what can be defined as tribal and clan. Several factors, perspectives and point of views are needed to be taken into account when we define "ethnic politics" (Sakhong, 2012). Realists perception believe that internal structure of the state and the government is important in the development of ethnic politics; the domestic political environment of divided states characterizes the development of ethnic politics (Hashmi & Majeed, 2015). In plural society competitive politics is characterized by ethnic politics, that is to say, ethnicity is the major basis for the "authoritative allocation of value" (Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972). Regarding this research, for the purpose of the thesis, Malaysian ethnic politics referred in this research is defined as Malay dominance, i.e. the Malay preferential policies in the domains of social, political, economic and educational areas.

Educational Exchange: Educational exchanges are the interaction of the main body in the field of education and mutual influence each other, which has a large range of this issue. It includes concepts of education, educational system, educational content, teaching methods, educational research, and education-related human and material resources; the main body can be the ethnics of the same or different cultural regions; the interaction includes dispatching foreign students, hiring specialists, personnel exchanges as well as other activities like disseminating, learning and absorbing the concepts of education, educational system, educational content and educational methods; the influence is the effect that these interaction acts on educational theory and educational practice of each other countries, it may be the change of specific educational system and educational methods, and also the change of the concepts of education and education ideology, the latter one has wide implications. Hence, regarding this research, dispatching foreign students and personnel exchanges are mainly discussed.

1.8   Summary

This chapter contains the introductory issues of the study, which includes the background, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study and definition of terms. It gives the outline of this study.

10

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