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**ETHNIC ARITHMETIC AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATION  
BUILDING: A STUDY OF MALAYSIAN EDUCATION POLICY  
FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION, 1970 TO PRESENT**

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates education policy since 1970 in Malaysia aimed at achieving national integration across ethnic groups. The approach adopted is critical policy sociology; the study thus utilised historical analysis and semi-structured interviews with ‘policy players’ across the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia. The analyses are framed by theoretical considerations of ethnicity, nation, nation-building and plural society and the role of education policy in relation to them. The historical analyses demonstrated the ongoing effects of colonial residues in contemporary education policy and the ongoing ethnic-based contestation around the policy and accommodative state strategies utilised. The interview analyses demonstrated the contested nature of the concept of integration, tensions in the application of a *bumiputera/non-bumiputera* binary in policy, Malay concerns over their rights and economic opportunities, and Chinese and Indian concerns for language and cultural maintenance. The articulated Malay position was one tending towards assimilation and demanding recognition of their status as ‘sons of the soil’, while the Chinese and Indian stances tended towards multiculturalism. Language of instruction in schooling was shown to be central to these contested ideologies. These ethnic groups also worked with different constructions of the nation. The analyses demonstrated how in Appadurai’s (1996) terms the nation (ethnic cultures and languages) and the state (politics and policy) have remained the project of each other in Malaysian education policy aimed at national integration. The analyses also showed how changing global contexts have challenged ethnic politics through the demand for better education for all, irrespective of ethnicity, socio-economic background and urban-rural location. English and Mandarin have taken on different policy salience in education in this global context. Human rights discourses have also to some extent reframed ethnic politics, as has recognition that socio-economic status might be a better focus for education policy for national integration. The research showed that concern for national integration has retained meta-policy status within Malaysian education.



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CDA</b>	Critical Discourse Analysis
<b>DAP</b>	Democratic Action Party
<b>ETeMS</b>	English for Teaching Mathematics and Science
<b>GERAKAN</b>	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Movement Party)
<b>ICPS</b>	Integrated Curriculum for Primary School
<b>ISP</b>	Integration School Programme
<b>MARA</b>	Majlis Amanah Rakyat (People Trust for Indigenous People)
<b>MCA</b>	Malaysian Chinese Association
<b>MIC</b>	Malaysian Indian Congress
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Policy
<b>NEP</b>	National Economic Policy
<b>NVP</b>	National Vision Policy
<b>UCSCAM</b>	United Chinese Schools' Committee Association of Malaysia
<b>UCSTAM</b>	United Chinese Schools' Teacher Association of Malaysia
<b>UMNO</b>	United Malays National Organisation
<b>PAS</b>	Pan-Malayan Islamic Party
<b>POL</b>	Pupils' Own Language
<b>SK</b>	Sekolah Kebangsaan (National Primary School)
<b>SJKC</b>	Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) (National-Type Chinese Primary School)
<b>SJKT</b>	(Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil) (National-Type Tamil Primary School)
<b>VS</b>	Vision School



## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCHING MALAYSIAN EDUCATION POLICY

Our nation, Malaysia, being dedicated to achieving a greater unity of all her people; to maintaining a democratic way of life; to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared; to ensuring a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions; to building a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology.

(Malaysia, 1970, p.1)

#### 1.1 Introduction

Given that Malaysia is an ethnically pluralist society, one of the major ongoing tasks of the Malaysian government has been to develop a nation which is harmonious, integrated, and democratic and which shares a national identity and values as a Malaysian nation. This aim has been a concern of the government from independence until the present, and is reflected in the need to develop a united Malaysian nation. This important aspect of nation building is a central part of state policy as the country faces a complex social pattern with a population which is multi-ethnic in nature and divided, in which the different ethnic groups carry their own cultures, languages, identities and values. In many ways, this situation can be viewed as an inheritance from British colonialism.

Government concern about national integration has also resulted in education being regarded as an important policy domain to pursue national integration. Accordingly, amongst the aims of national education policy, national integration is a major intention. It has been accepted that education is expected to play a significant role in nurturing national consciousness, moulding national identity, and forging national unity amongst the various ethnic groups in Malaysia. This is in line with the common reality of education contributing in all societies to the creation of the 'imagined community' which is the nation (Anderson, 1991). In the Malaysian context, education has also been regarded as an important means for social mobility and of diffusing national identity in the process of nation building. The Razak Report (1956), that is the report from the committee appointed at the establishment of the national education policy in independent Malaya (now known as Malaysia), stated that 'the ultimate objective of education policy must be to bring together the children of all

racess under a national education system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction, though we recognise that process towards this goal cannot be rushed and must be gradual' (Federation of Malaya, 1956, p. 3). Since that time of independence, Malaysian education policy has been formulated and reformulated and produced and reproduced to engage with this aim.

The serious tragedy of the ethnic riots of 1969 provoked the government to further strengthen their commitment to utilising education for national integration. This intention of utilising education for unifying the multiethnic society has been reflected in policy production for the early stages of the socialisation process, which occurs at the school level. Accordingly, various policy initiatives have been produced and implemented through the education system to promote national integration amongst the younger generation. Since 1970, there have been a series of major plans, programmes or projects that have been produced by the state for the school for achieving national integration. We might say that ensuring national cohesion is a meta-policy goal for Malaysian education policy, and has been since independence.

Nevertheless, Malaysian education policy initiatives aimed at achieving national integration are not without problems in both development and implementation. In order to manage, mediate, and integrate the multi-ethnic groups as a means of nation building through the education system, ethnicity issues continue to appear as amongst the main challenges in education policy aims, processes and in the ethnic divisions of the structure of school provision. In other words, the government continues to face many challenges and there is much disagreement around issues of ethnicity relating to education policy aimed at achieving national integration.

This research investigated these issues of ethnicity and how they have been involved in the production of Malaysian education policy since 1970. The research also considered issues of policy implementation. The focus was on education policy, the politics of ethnicity in education, and the issue of language in education in relation to national integration. The study aims to investigate the challenges surrounding education policies post 1970 aimed at achieving national integration among the young generation of different ethnic groups, specifically around the ethnicity issue or other



interrelated challenges connected to ethnicity. More specifically, four key elements regarding the issues of ethnicity in Malaysian education policy since 1970 will be analysed:

1. The features of Malaysian education policy intended at enhancing national integration.
2. The challenges and influence of ethnicity on the production of such policy.
3. Other interrelated challenges connected to ethnicity concerning Malaysian education policy aimed at achieving national integration.
4. Competing perspectives and discourses amongst different ethnic groups on Malaysian education policy aimed at achieving national integration and as manifested in different policies.

As an introduction to policy research, this Chapter is structured around four broad areas. First, the Chapter describes the research focus which drives the aims of the study, while articulating the specific research questions for the study. Secondly, it locates and frames the research and the researcher contexts, in personal, theoretical, and empirical/methodological terms. The Chapter then outlines the significance of this study and briefly explain how the research will contribute to understanding issues of ethnicity in Malaysian education policy. Finally, the Chapter explains the structure of the thesis and briefly discusses the framing of the thesis.

## **1.2 Focusing the Research**

As indicated in the introduction to this Chapter, the research focus is the issue of ethnicity surrounding Malaysian education policy development in relation to the aim of achieving national integration in and through the education system. A caveat needs to be added here. The research is about issues of ethnicity rather than religion. This is not to deny the close interrelationships between ethnicity and religion in Malaysia. Rather, it is to accept that contentious political issues in Malaysia are to do with matters of culture, language and identities linked to ethnicity rather than to religion and which are also connected with matters of economic status and opportunities. Religion arises in the research incidentally in relation to ethnicity rather than as a specific focus. This research focus of this study involves the processes of policy production and implementation in both primary and secondary school levels in the



Malaysian education system. The research aims to investigate what and how ethnicity and other interrelated aspects challenge and influence the education policy processes and structures aimed at achieving national integration. The time frame is from 1970 to the present.

The following sections show how the research topic derived from previous research on the issue of education and national integration. However, they also demonstrate how the topic developed from the researcher's own concerns about and interest in this issue. Further, the focus of the research remains an important policy matter in contemporary Malaysia. In other words, issues for research are not arbitrarily chosen but are connected to and embedded in the personal and professional interests of researchers, and from the relevance of the issue of ethnicity in the Malaysian educational context. Introduced in the following sections are the elements that contour the research focus in investigating Malaysia education policy in relation to ethnicity.

### **1.2.1 The Policy Issue**

The promotion of national integration in a multiethnic society has been a foremost concern of education policy in Malaysia. The state has produced programmes and projects aimed at achieving this aim. Although after 1970 many policy initiatives have been implemented through the education system dealing with the aim of national integration, there is still much debate about appropriate means to achieve this aim.

There are many arguments that suggest the objective of a united nation has not been achieved yet, and that policy production, approaches and implementation are not appropriate and perhaps are even inequitable in relation to building the integrated Malaysian nation. Amongst others, Wan Hashim (1983) stated that there is a low level of integration between the Malays and the Chinese based on cultural and social understanding. Sufean (1993) has questioned whether the integration spirit is enough to show the effectiveness of the national education policy because there are continuing issues about ethnicity in public and political discourses.

The studies of Woon (1984), Mukerjee and Singh (1985) and Lim (1985) reflect a common concern about the impact of education policies after 1970. While these

studies commonly view that the state policy is in favour of affirmative action programmes to assist the economic position of the Malays, this research also demonstrated that the policies also contributed to constructing inter-ethnic differences in education resources. Others opine that Malaysia's numerous ethnic communities remain distinct, in part due to the continuation of communal political parties and in part due to the fact that constitutional and policy practice emphasise a Malay and non-Malay dichotomy on all economic, social, and political dimensions (de Micheaux, 1997, Lin-Sheng, 2003, Kheng, 2003a, Kheng, 2003b, Haque, 2003, Singh and Mukherjee, 1993).

The main issues surrounding policy production and implementation in the education system in Malaysia concern the interests and challenges of ethnicity. Challenges in education policies related to national integration remain the dominant issue in the emerging agenda on education. It is a rather complex and complicated issue and can be interpreted in a variety of ways from different interests and perspectives of ethnic groups in Malaysian plural society. According to Haris (1990), these issues in education could easily attract elements of national and ethnic chauvinism.

In Malaysia, it is usually considered that the community and population are dominated by three major ethnic groups, namely Malay, Chinese, and Indian. This scenario, according to Boulanger, (1996), is due to the 'tri-ethnic schema' of Malay-Chinese-Indian, which underscores the polarity of ethnic groups and continues to have a decisive influence on macro-level policy and micro-level practice. This context of Malaysian plural society is discussed at some length in Chapter Two. Any formation and implementation of the education policies will have to consider the political aspects of these issues of ethnicity.

Within the social and political schema of 'tri-ethnic'- Malaysia, Malay, Chinese, and Indian, ethnic challenges and bargaining have moulded the formulation and production of education policies in Malaysia since independence. For example, one way to achieve the aim of national integration through education is to develop a Malaysian outlook through the education system. Thus, the imposition of common content syllabus and the National language as the main medium of instruction in all



schools were seen as crucial towards achieving the aim of national integration. Nevertheless, the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups, having set up vernacular schools along ethnic lines, were unwilling to give up their schools in favour of the national language in the national schools. For instance, the implementation of the Malay language as the medium of instruction in the 1970s faced challenges in the stages of implementation, which had to consider multiple political aspects of ethnicity in Malaysia.

The same scenario of ethnic resistance also occurred in relation to curriculum development in the 1980s. A new curriculum was implemented in 1980, namely the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (ICPS) which emphasised Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (3Rs). This curriculum faced negative reaction from some ethnic groups in the country. For example, the issue of 'textbooks in mother tongue for pupils' (*The Star*, 1982) represented the dissatisfaction and incredulity amongst the Chinese community towards this new curriculum. Even though this curriculum development was not explicitly about ethnic issues, the requirement that some textbooks for use by all groups had to be in Malay language implicitly raised ethnic concerns, especially amongst the Chinese. Hence, language issues remain a very controversial issue in Malaysian education policy.

The latest education initiative is the 'Vision School', which is aimed at integrating multiethnic students by increasing the opportunity for students from different ethnic backgrounds to mix with each other in one school compound. This education programme is based on the argument that students from various ethnic groups (especially the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia from different types of primary school) must be given an opportunity to interact with each other. This will presumably lead to better understanding of other ethnic groups and thus promote greater social tolerance and interaction. However, certain ethnic communities reacted negatively to this policy initiative. New policy related to the language issues in the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English had a similar confrontational effect, especially from the Chinese community who are very strongly opposed to the policy. Since the Malaysian Ministry of Education imposed this policy in 2003, it has faced incessant



criticism from various interest groups in relation to what and how the policy affected their ethnic community interests.

The situation of ethnic challenges in relation to education policy production in the Malaysian education system raises a number of significant questions, such as: What is the character of Malaysian education policy for achieving national integration? What are the forms of opposition or challenges towards education policies for national integration? How are such education policies that have been produced been influenced by ethnicity? Related to these issues, the overarching purpose of this study was to explore the processes and challenges of education policies in promoting national integration in the Malaysian plural society, which is divided by language, culture, and other ethnic markers.

### **1.2.2 Research Aim**

As suggested to this point, this research focuses on education policy in Malaysia since 1970 geared towards the promotion of national integration. As noted, this study sets out to look at ethnicity and its social and political dimensions in the production and implementation of Malaysian education policy aimed at achieving national integration. In a more specific sense, this study is an investigation of the challenges and influences of ethnicity on the production and implementation of Malaysian education policy aimed at enhancing national integration amongst the younger generation in the education system, at both primary and secondary school levels.

The major focus of attention in this policy study is to analyse and understand the challenges of the existing policies with regard to the dimension of ethnic contestation, negotiations, contradictions, and tensions in policy production and implementation. The analysis is focused on the production and implementation of several state policies and language issues and their influences in the production of education policy for national integration. The principal aim of the study is:

To analyse and provide an understanding of issues relating to ethnicity and other related challenges, and their influence on national education policies in Malaysia, including language policies, and national and global issues, aimed at enhancing national integration through the education of the multi-ethnic younger generation, 1970 to the present.

In line with this principal aim, the specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore policy development and its features in relation to ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy established for national integration from 1970 to the present.
2. To investigate the challenges and the influence of ethnicity in the production and implementation of education policies.
3. To analyse other interrelated challenges *vis-à-vis* language, national and global issues in the production of Malaysian education policy.
4. To produce useful knowledge and understanding in relation to Malaysian education policy about integrating multiethnic perspectives and national integration.

### **1.2.3 The Research Questions**

The main aim of the study as has been stated is to provide an understanding of the challenges and influences of ethnicity, and other related challenges in the production and implementation of Malaysian education policy aimed at national integration. The specific research questions below were elaborated to structure the research processes, including data collection and analyses:

1. What are the scenarios of Malaysian education policy, specifically in the primary and secondary schools, for national integration in the context of a multi-ethnic society, from 1970 to the present?
  - a) What are the policies that have been produced in the Malaysian education system since 1970 for enhancing national integration?
  - b) What are the policy features of Malaysian education policy established for achieving national integration?



2. What kinds of challenges occur around ethnicity issues in the production and implementation of Malaysian education policy for national integration?
  - a) To what extent do the challenges influence policy production?
  - b) How does the state manage and mediate those challenges in policy processes?
3. What other challenges exist concerning languages, national and global issues in Malaysian education policy?
4. How does the multiethnic society of Malaysia regard the education policy initiatives for achieving national integration as currently constituted in Malaysia?
5. What are the responses and discourses of the various ethnic communities concerning ethnic challenges, national and globalisation issues surrounding education policy production aimed at achieving national integration through the Malaysian education system?

### **1.3 Contexts of the Study**

It is important to explain that this research is not simply chosen or uninfluenced by contexts in relation to my personal and professional interests. There are different contexts that contribute and influence the research framework and focus on Malaysian education policy, investigating the issues of ethnicity and its influence on education policy production in Malaysia. Introduced here are elements that influenced and located this research interest and focus. The explanation is about the personal and professional contexts that developed my interest in doing this research, and the theoretical and methodological contexts that informed the research framework. What I am dealing with here is my positionality as researcher.

#### **1.3.1 Personal Context: Researcher Background and Academic Positionality**

Two contexts that influenced my interest and ideas in relation to this research are related to ethnic and professional considerations. First, is my position as a member of the majority and dominant ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Malay. Secondly, my interest in this research topic has stemmed from my engagement with the issues being investigated, both professionally and academically.



### **1.3.1.1 Ethnic Background**

In discussing the positionality dimension of this research, it should be noted that this is interrelated with my background, context, ideas, and values. Thus, the starting point for me in contributing to the dilemma of positionality is a consideration of the extent to which my ethnic background possibly will be viewed as a restriction in the chosen area of study. Being Malay, that is my ethnic affiliation in the context of Malaysian plural society context, there is much complexity in locating my position for engaging and dealing with ethnicity issues in this research. However, my endeavour is to see this issue in a broader perspective across ethnic lines. In other words, my aspiration is to see this issue beyond ethnic differences and ethnic essentialisms. Thus, I attempt to produce analytical, critically and rationally a perspective towards the issues of ethnicity in Malaysian education policies. To this end, I was reflexive about this issue throughout the research process and sensitive to the potential impact on data collection and analysis of my own ethnic positioning.

Apart from my ethnic background and interest in issues of ethnicity, my initial concern to do a policy study which related to ethnicity derived from my involvement in teaching and as an education administrator for more than ten years. These experiences contributed to developing a sense and interest in ethnicity issues and national integration in relation to policy implementation processes. This began when I was involved in implementing such programmes at the school level. My experience of policy implementation indicated that the issue of ethnicity needed to be addressed. This developed a sense for me, in both personal and professional contexts, that ethnic aspects were important and significant in influencing policy processes and structures in the Malaysian education system.

Observations on contemporary Malaysian political and public discourses in an ethnic-based political system also provided some hunches for me that the state has to consider ethnicity issues in order to produce and implement such policies in education. In other words, in Malaysia, the government always needs to take into account the interests of each ethnic group, particularly the groups which have significant power in politics, the economy and socially. This has been particularly obvious in education policy development since the British colonial time. In this case, I



agree with Apple (1979) that 'education is political, so those people who wish to make education non-political are failing to understand that the purpose and procedures of education reflect what people want' (p.15). Therefore, I decided to look into the ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy, while at the same time recognising the inherently political character of such a research enterprise. In recognising both the potential significance of my ethnicity and the political nature of the research topic, I was moving beyond what Bourdieu (1999) has called a state of epistemological innocence (this will be discussed further in my reflections on research methodology in Chapter Five).

### **1.3.1.2 The Academic Context**

The process of conducting this research did not exist in isolation within the culture of academe. My interest in undertaking this research might be explained in terms of 'interest' about policy research as an academic practice. The topic was drawn from my experience and perspective as an academic and researcher with direct and indirect dealings with the topic of the research.

As an academician who is interested in the area of education policy and from the literature review concerning education policy in Malaysia, I considered that insufficient attention was being paid to the 'deep structures' of education policy in Malaysia as the centrally important means to foster national integration.

My previous study with my colleagues (Jamil et al. 2004), funded under the Intensified Research Priority Areas (IRPA), researched the level of ethnic interaction among students from different ethnic groups in secondary schools. However, based on the research findings, we argued that there were some glaring defects in the process of implementation of policies aimed at fostering ethnic integration amongst the Malaysian younger generation. This research demonstrated that Malaysian education policies for national integration needed to be readdressed. It raised a number of questions that provided a sense and consciousness that influenced me to look at the macro level in the education arena, which located the focus of this doctoral research on education policies in relation to aspect of national integration. For example, do such policy initiatives, programmes or projects of education that have been produced



and practised really assist in encouraging ethnic cohesion and acceptance by all ethnic groups in Malaysia? Further, to what extent have the policies been adequate to fulfilling the needs and the interest of each ethnic group in Malaysian society in an equitable way?

Most of the studies about Malaysian education policy and ethnicity consider this issue from their own ethnic perspective (Marimuthu, 1975; Haris, 1990; Santhiram, 1999; Aminah et al., 2004). That is, the positionality in respect of ethnicity of the researcher seems to be a central element in the choice and construction of the research topic (particular ethnic focus), and to some extent, appears to have helped frame the findings and conclusions drawn. In contrast, an aspiration underpinning this research was to adopt a macro, inclusive viewpoint, working across the three major ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese and Indian). Hence, in this research, I take a meta-position across the ethnic divisions and ethnic politics in Malaysia as a means to produce an analytical, critical, and fair perspective towards the issues of ethnicity in Malaysian education policies aimed at achieving national integration.

### **1.3.2 Theoretical Context: Critical Policy Sociology**

The establishing of the theoretical position for this research was underpinned by sociological and critical concerns of policy research. This position and concerns were shaped by my selection of research topic and methodology that help form my interpretation of evidence and data.

The theoretical position for this policy research is derived from the discipline of sociology which is related to policy analysis, usually referred as 'policy sociology' in education (Ball, 1990; Ozga, 1987). This policy research perspective is 'rooted in social science tradition, historically informed and drawing on qualitative and illuminative technique' (Ozga, 1987, p.144). Such a policy sociology perspective is then used to highlight the ideologies and processes of policy production in relation to ethnic challenges in Malaysian education policy. The approach can be contrasted with traditions other than sociology which are largely 'technocratic and managerialist in orientation and concerned mainly with implementation questions' (Lingard et al., 1993). What is important in the policy sociology research perspectives is the sense of



'policy as processes as well as 'policy as text' (Raab, 1994), which recognises competing interests.

This policy research is also concerned with critical analysis of particular policy practices. It positions the investigation of policy as cutting through 'surface appearances' (Harvey, 1990) to provide an understanding of the focus issues in this study. It is an endeavour to contribute for improving the policy situation and 'to identify those elements which have the potential to change things' (Troyna, 1994a) by conceptually producing knowledge and understanding on the issues being studied. However, it is not to provide a set of procedures or standards 'that enables one to determine the technically best course of action' (Fay 1975 in Ball, 1995, p.258) to adopt in achieving the policy aims. That is policy research that ought to be providing objective facts, and consequently derived from the technicist paradigm in policy research, providing 'facts' but no more, according to Finch (1986, p. 196). Rather, this research is aimed at achieving knowledge and insights which will contribute to informing and informed debate in Malaysia about ethnicity, education policy, and issues of national integration. In this way, the research reported here is research *of* policy rather than research *for* policy. Nonetheless, the knowledge developed will contribute to informed debate about policy. In a broader way, this will be useful to educational policy makers in Malaysia concerned with the matter of the integration of the differing ethnic groups. In this sense, the research *of* and *for* policy distinction can be seen to be a false binary (Lingard and Ozga, 2007). This is not to deny the greater criticality of research *of* policy, the stance adopted in this research.

### **1.3.3 Methodological Context: Approach to Policy Research**

Education policy research in Malaysia has gained prominence since the 60s and early 70s. The series of policy developments and innovation in the education system have been geared to the progression of policy research in various institutions, including universities and the Ministry of Education. However, a common practice in policy research in Malaysia is the appreciation of a managerial perspective inclined to demands of policy makers. This policy research witnessed the research problems constructed by policy makers. This was research *for* policy, not research *of* policy, with topic and intellectual resources for the researcher 'determined' by the state.

Although there is no extensive review of the research orientation in the area of education policy in Malaysia, it is commonly considered that most of the research which is related to policy in education has adopted the technocratic and managerialist perspective in researching policy. This involves an emphasis on quantitative methods, because of their attractiveness to bureaucrats and policy makers. For instance, Murad (1973), Marimuthu (1975), Hussein (1984), Isahak (1977) and Nor Azmi (1988) have had their sources of inspiration in the managerial and evaluation needs of policy makers.

The discussion of the personal and professional contexts of the researcher complements the methodological frame for education policy research in this thesis. In these terms, the overall intent is to research policy in relation to ethnicity issues, a focus for 'the investigation of policy' (Ball, 1990, p.1). The research focus in these terms then is research *of* policy. This means that this policy research is related to academic interests in understanding the issues surrounding the policy process, particularly the purpose of understanding 'values, ideologies' and 'content' of policy (Codd, 1988).

My position here was also grounded in the belief that policy research should not be limited to a single methodological framework. In contrast with the pragmatic, positivistic, managerialistic and bureaucratic perspectives of policy research, I locate the research represented in this thesis in a methodological context that will enable illumination and development of meaning and understanding on the issues being investigated. In this way, I have attempted to ensure that the methodology is suitable to answer the research questions, complementary to the theoretical concepts which underpinned the research, and in line with the desire to produce in depth knowledge about the research topic.

#### **1.4 The Significance of the Study**

This research is undertaken fundamentally as a critical research *of* policy, specifically researching education policy in Malaysia in relation to national integration. As this research is *of* policy, which attempts to analyse the production and implementation of a key aspect of Malaysian education policy, it is anticipated that the research would



be very significant in providing key insights and underpinning elements regarding the issues of ethnicity in Malaysian education policy. Potentially, it would enable the creation of knowledge and information that could meaningfully contribute to informing the policy debate and also provide useful insights for improving education policy at achieving national integration.

The critical perspective which has been employed in this education policy analysis, which draws on previous and current national education policy development, would be significant in providing a critical perspective on knowledge utilised in the production and implementation of education policies for national integration. It would also enable an evaluation of the extent to which the aims of nation building have been helped or hampered by policy. The findings of the related issues from various perspectives of the policy community across ethnic groups divisions and personal background on the education policy processes will help towards lessening the problems of ethnocentrism in the research.

More generally, beyond specific Malaysian educational policy considerations, this study can provide new insights regarding the policy provision of education systems in multi-ethnic societies. The analysis and the interpretation of education policies and the challenges faced regarding ethnicity will contribute to knowledge and understanding of the role and the development of education in assisting national integration and building the nation. All mass systems of schooling have been involved in some way or other in constructing what Benedict Anderson (1991) called the 'imagined community' of the nation. The creation of such an imagined community takes on more salience in a multi-ethnic society in a situation of competing imaginaries.

Further, this study will also provide understanding of existing mentalities of certain ethnic groups behind the challenges and the opposition to the education policies related to national integration. As such, this study is an effort to provide a critical interpretation regarding the challenges of ethnicity in the production of education policies, particularly in respect of language and other related issues. This analysis

should generate a clearer picture of state affairs in policy dealing with and engaging the ethnicity dimension in Malaysian pluralist society.

Although a numbers of research studies have been conducted dealing with particular ethnic groups in relation to education policy in Malaysia, the originality of this study is its underpinning by the meta-position of the researcher working across the three major ethnic groups to analyse the issues behind the challenges of ethnicity in Malaysian education policies. Hence, it will be significant for providing new knowledge and understanding of Malaysian education policy from a macro policy analysis perspective. This study will also examine perceptions, arguments, and opinions amongst actors who are involved directly and indirectly in the complex and multi-layered processes of policy production and implementation. The findings from this study potentially will be useful for providing knowledge and understanding that can contribute to the planning and the developing of the education policies in order to achieve future national integration of the Malaysian nation.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

This research does not confuse an 'ought' with an 'is' in respect of policy production. In other words, it cannot tell the policy makers and readers what they should do, or what policy can do. This must be a democratic decision. After all, policy can be seen to be the 'authoritative allocation of values' and research can only contribute to policy production rather than be translated straightforwardly into policy. The intention in this research is to investigate and understand the issues of ethnic challenges in relation to education policy in Malaysia aimed at achieving national integration. The research seeks to contribute to the construction and reconstruction of understanding and knowledge on such issues related to education policy for national integration.

The intention is to contribute to knowledge, understanding and informed debate rather than to suggest in a more instrumental way knowledge for policy production in relation to national integration. The assumption here is that in many ways, it is the 'taken-for-granted' about such policy in Malaysia which need to be deconstructed as a first step towards improved policy. This is the critical element of the research



reported here. The contribution of the thesis is aimed at both developing the academic literature about the research topic and opening up democratic debate about the issues.

This research has no intention of ‘converting’ the findings of the research to concrete solutions to the policy process in dealing and engaging with the issues being studied. In other words, there is complex interplay of policy and ethnicity and other related issues in education that are involved in the policy process that need to be explored and understood. Therefore, this research as a whole sets out a range of meaningful understandings and perspectives towards a united Malaysian nation which can be built through the education system.

## **1.6 Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis has been structured into nine Chapters which form a theoretical and empirical unity. Figure 1.1 provides a graphical representation to show the organisation of the thesis. The first Chapter has introduced the study, set out the research focus, outlined the purposes of the study and the research questions, and documented the significance of the study. This Chapter has also identified and explained the contexts of the study including personal, theoretical, and methodological concerns in researching Malaysian education policy aimed at achieving national integration. Finally, it also outlined the limitations of the study and explained how the thesis is organised.

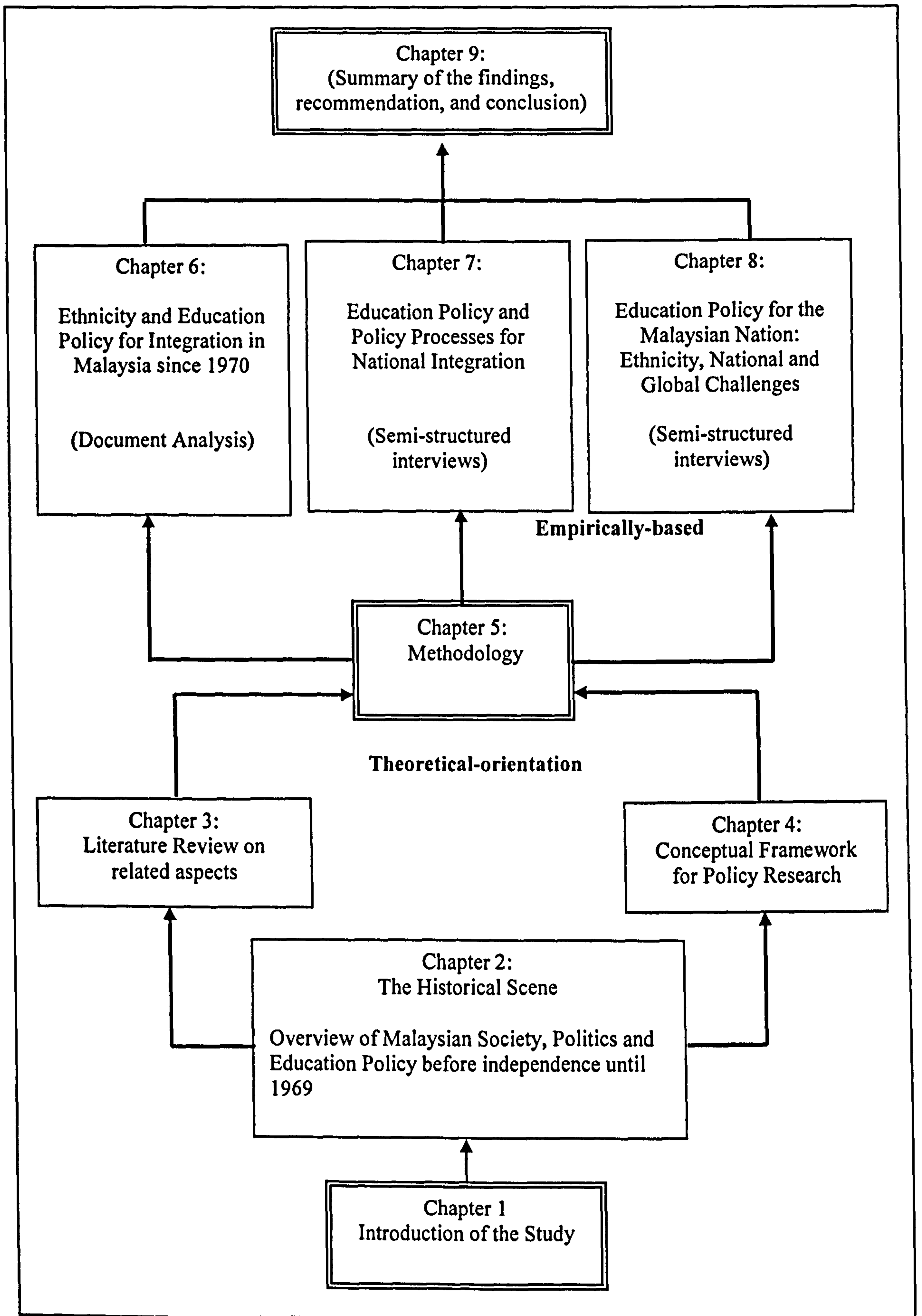


Figure 1.1: Graphical Representation of Thesis Structure



The second Chapter presents an overview of the historical background of Malaysian plural society and politics and education policy as the basis for understand Malaysian education policy. As an historical overview, this Chapter discusses and reviews policy development in Malaysia as a means to achieving ethnic integration, particularly during the time of British colonial administration. Here, a chronology is provided of educational policy developments in Malaysia from the terms of British colonial administration through to independence in 1957, and then from independence to policies developed in the 1960s. This is to set the scene for this research by beginning with some general description and discussion to provide a clear understanding of the education system and multi-ethnic nature in Malaysian plural society. This is an acknowledgement of the necessity of historical analysis for understanding contemporary policy.

Chapter Three provides the literature review for the study. The literature review is focused on the main concepts which are related to the issues in this research. This Chapter outlines the broad theoretical perspectives and related concepts utilised in the research. This includes exploration and discussion of theories of ethnicity, ethnic politics and education in multi-ethnic societies. There is also discussion about nation building and education. The review also considers related studies in this area, and in addition, discusses the issue from cognate academic literature. It critically addresses the perspective on those concepts across discipline and tries to re-conceptualise those concepts in the Malaysian context.

Discussion of the theoretical approaches to education policy research is presented in the fourth Chapter. This is the basis for the conceptual framework of this research. In this Chapter, the literature and discussion on policy and policy research are utilised in framing the investigation of Malaysian education policy aimed at enhancing national integration. The policy cycle approach suggested by Ball (1994a) is adopted based on the assumption that the policy process is dynamic, contested and on-going. This approach is taken because of the desire to contribute to policy debates and affect what Ball (1994a) calls the contexts of policy influence, policy text production, and policy practice.



Chapter Five outlines the methodological consideration for carrying out the research. The Chapter looks at the strengths and weakness of the various methods and techniques in policy research. This Chapter analyses the different methodological assumptions, perspectives and modes of policy research. Following this, the Chapter provides justification for the approach taken in this study. The Chapter finally details the methodology utilised, explains the research methodology and the strategies adopted at the various research sites, the policy materials, research interviews, data collection procedures, approach to analysis, and research ethics that have been utilised for this study.

The intention of Chapter Six is to construct an account since 1970 of the development of Malaysian education policy aimed to achieve national unity. This Chapter provides a critical analysis that seeks to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3. The Chapter deals with the findings from the analysis of documents, a part of the research method for collecting data. This Chapter reviews and analyses a number of the primary and secondary sources, the analysis of which enables an understanding of the basic issues in relation to the ethnicity dimension in education policy for national integration in Malaysia. Furthermore, it also reviews the state of practice and the challenges faced by the education policy makers regarding national integration and attempts a critical analysis. The policy documents analysed in this Chapter are from various sources, including government policy texts, non-governmental organisational bodies' (NGOs') documents, official and unofficial reports, newspaper articles, media releases, and secondary documents that include a wide range of academic literature and research pertaining to ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss the findings from the interviews in light of the initial problem statement and research question raised. This Chapter analyses and discusses the policy processes and structure of Malaysian education policy. Chapter Eight deals with language and ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy aimed at achieving national integration through the school. This Chapter also presents an analysis and discussion of the national and global challenges in relation to Malaysian education policy. Drawing from the interview data, both Chapters identify and analyse the



policy in education aimed to foster national integration from the perspective of individuals from different ethnic groups and others within the policy community.

Finally, Chapter Nine concludes the study by discussing and summarising the various findings. I also propose some recommendations for the improvement of the system, as example of working across the analysis *offfor* policy divide. This Chapter also includes some recommendations for future research.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

The main aim of the study, as indicated in section 1.2.2 thus located my intention in researching and understanding ethnic challenges in Malaysian education policy production and implementation. This research of Malaysian education policy should be viewed as an endeavour to provide an alternative perspective and understanding on the issues being studied; thus it will contest the current main stream ideology regarding ethnicity issues in Malaysia education policy.

To understand issues of ethnicity and education policy in contemporary Malaysia, one needs to understand the effects of the British colonial legacy, which created ethnic divisions in the Malaysian pluralist society. In the next Chapter, I will explain and discuss the historical background of contemporary Malaysian plural society. This Chapter will also explain briefly the development of Malaysian education policy from independence in 1957 until 1970. The intention of this Chapter is to set the scene concerning the research intention of this thesis. It is to these considerations that the thesis now turns.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE HISTORICAL SCENE: AN OVERVIEW OF ETHNICITY IN MALAYSIAN SOCIETY AND RELATED EDUCATION POLICY**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This Chapter seeks to provide information about the pluralism of Malaysian society and the existence of related ethnicity issues, particularly in the field of education. The intention is to present an overview of the emergence and development of ethnic diversity issues in education in Malaysian society. As such, the Chapter will provide a brief account of the Malaysian context in terms of its being a pluralistic society. Education policy development which has attempted to enhance national integration, especially in the period after independence, will also be traced. The discussions are necessarily broad and encompass the nature of Malaysian society and its education system. The aim is to set the scene regarding ethnicity issues in education on which this study is focused.

The Chapter is concerned with the period before independence through until 1970 to offer initial understanding of the foundation of educational policy processes in relation to national integration. It documents policy production within the education system in Malaysia and discusses chronologically the policy events relevant to the focus of the research reported in the thesis.

#### **2.2 The Origins of Ethnic Diversity in Malaysia**

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Malaysia was quite homogenous as far as the demographic distribution was concerned. It was a singular society of Malays, the indigenous people. In 1880, they constituted about 90% of the population in Peninsular Malaysia (Gullick, 1969). During the British colonial rule, from 1874 to 1957, there was significant transformation of the Malaysian population. The British, through their policy of encouraging migration, especially from China and India, changed the nature of this relatively ethnically homogenous society to a more pluralistic society. This thus transformed the Malaysian society from a largely mono-ethnic society into a multi-ethnic one (Santhiram, 1999).



By the time of independence in 1957, Malaysia had become a distinctly ethnically mixed society, consisting of 49.8% Malays; 37.2% Chinese; 11.7% Indians and 1.3% others. Table 2.1 below shows the population of the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia from 1947 to 2000:

Table 2.1: Population of ethnic groups in Peninsula Malaysia, 1947, 1957, 1970, 1987 and 2000

Ethnic	1947	1957	1970	1987	2000
Malay/Bumiputra	2,427,834 (49.5%)	3,125,474 (49.8%)	4,685,838 (53.2%)	7,827,095 (57.3%)	14,560,000 (66.1)
Chinese	2,427,834 (38.4%)	2,333,756 (37.2%)	3,122,350 (35.4%)	4,377,097 (32.1%)	5,580,000 (25.3)
Indians	530,638 (10.8%)	735,038 (11.7%)	932,629 (10.6%)	1,362,061 (10.0%)	1,630,000 (7.4)
Others	65,080 (1.3%)	84,450 (1.3%)	69,531 (0.8%)	86,808 (0.6%)	270,000 (1.2)
Total	4,908,086	6,278,718	8,810,348	13,653,061	23,270,000

Source: (Malaysia, 1972a, Malaysia, 1987a, Malaysia, 2002a)

British colonial policy of encouraging immigration was a result of the labour demand in the tin industry and rubber plantations of Malaya. The Malay population was considered too small and scattered to meet the labour demands of a regimented plantation economy (Stevenson, 1975). Due to the successful planting of the rubber tree in Malaya and the phenomenal growth of the rubber industry at the end of the nineteenth century, there was a demand for Indian labourers to work as rubber tapers in British rubber plantations and in the laying of the network of transport systems of road and railways. Most of the Indian immigration came from the British administered territories of India and Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) and their recruitment was well organised. They were recruited under the 'indenture' system. It was estimated that there was a total of sixteen million Indians and Chinese immigrants over a period in the 1930s (Gullick, 1969, p.74).

Meanwhile, the production of tin was also extremely labour intensive and this kind of wage labour was not forthcoming from the indigenous population. Therefore, foreign



labour was imported to serve the needs of a colonial capitalist mining economy. During the colonial period, Chinese settlers were encouraged by the British authorities into the Federated Malay States (FMS) particularly to develop the local tin industry. As a result, Chinese workers flocked to the rich tin fields in several parts of the Malay Peninsula. Towards the later part of the nineteenth century, with the establishment of British control over the four Malay states of Perak, Selangor, N. Sembilan and Pahang and the prevailing political calm over these states, the Chinese came in substantial numbers, even as indentured labourers to work in the tin mines.

At the same time, to minimise the disruptions brought about by immigrant labour and to maintain a form of colonial rule which would be seen as in the interests of the Malays, the concept of 'protection' was created. Malay peasants and fisherman would be protected in their traditional mode of existence (Lim, 1985). Moreover, by a conscious policy of 'minimum interference', the British were able to ensure that the vast majority of Malays stayed on in their traditional role as 'tillers of the soil and catchers of fish' (Stevenson, 1975).

Based on the above explanation, the British rulers clearly created an artificial occupational segregation on ethnic lines (Malay in agriculture, the Chinese in commerce, and Indians in plantation); reinforced a sense of interethnic divisions, economic imbalance, and therefore prohibited any kind of solidarity between these major ethnic groups (Stockwell, 1982; Sarji, 1989; Andaya and Andaya, 2001). Under the Colonial rule, with the injection of major immigrant communities, Furnival (1948) described the existing society as a unit of disparate parts that 'mix but do not combine which each group holds its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways' (p.313). As a result, there was a relative absence of consensus values, with relative autonomy for the separate parts of the social system, resulting in tension and ethnic conflict (Chan, 1971).

### **2.3 Ethnic Differences in Malaysian Society**

The emergence of a plural society motivated by British colonial policy has resulted in the Malaysian population today comprising three major ethnic groups, which are Malay, Chinese and Indian. They speak different languages, follow different cultures and traditions, and commonly profess different religions. The situation was further



aggravated when ethnic cleavages were deepened by political, economic and educational institutions.

According to the Census 2000, the total population of Malaysia is nearly 23 million of which 21,890 million (95%) are Malaysian citizens. Of the total Malaysian citizens, the Malays and other indigenous groups (namely Bumiputera or 'son of the soil') comprised over 66.1%, the Chinese 25.3% and Indians 7.4% (Malaysia, 2002a). The estimated population in the Eighth Malaysia Plan (RM8) shows the growth of the multiethnic population in Malaysia in 2005, when the Malay will comprise 67.3%, Chinese 24.5% and the Indians 7.2% of the total population (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2: Malaysian Population Growth According to Ethnic Groups 1995 – 2000**  
(Million)

	1995	%	2000	%	2005	%
<b>Citizen</b>	19.68	100.0	22.04	100.0	24.66	100.0
<b>Total Population</b>	20.68		23.27		26.04	
<b>Malay/Bumiputera</b>	12.47	63.3	14.56	66.1	16.59	67.3
<b>Chinese</b>	5.22	26.5	5.58	25.3	6.04	24.5
<b>Indian</b>	1.49	7.6	1.63	7.4	1.78	7.2
<b>Others</b>	0.50	2.6	0.27	1.2	0.25	1.0
<b>Non-Citizen</b>	1.00		1.23		1.38	

(Source: Malaysia, 2001a, 2002a & 2002b)

According to the Malaysian Constitution, a Malay is a person who was born locally, habitually speaks Malay, and who follows Malay customs and professes Islam (Hashim, 1976). Religion is highly correlated with ethnicity. Islam is the professed religion in Malaysia, and 66% of the Malaysian population is Islamic. For the Malays, the sense of ethnic identity is reinforced by Islamic attitudes (Means, 1986). Meanwhile, Malaysia as being a multi-religious nation also had other religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism and other Chinese religions.

The Malay and other indigenous groups in Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak are collectively termed as the 'bumiputera', which literally means 'son of the soil'. On the other hand, the Chinese and Indians in the Malaysian population are made up of the descendants of immigrants from China and India (Hirschman, 1987). All these three major ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese and Indians) have their heritage from the great civilisations of Asia, and as a result, ethnic cleavages are underscored. There was also a concentration of certain ethnic group in particular geographical areas. The non-Malay population is mostly concentrated on the West coast of Peninsula Malaysia in the states of Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka (see Appendix A). In these states, the non-Malay population made up almost 40 percent of the total population.

According to Ratnam (1965), there is no cultural homogeneity in Malaysian society with each ethnic group having their own religion, language, culture and customs. For example, the Malays speak Malay language, another powerful factor in binding the Malays together. No doubt, language is an important rallying point for the Malays, and it has been one of the most sensitive issues in Malaysian politics. The Chinese are the second largest ethnic group bound together by common culture and heritage. The Chinese community uses a numbers of dialects including Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin. Even though they are separate linguistic groups and mutually unintelligible orally, for the purpose of education and writing, the Chinese use Mandarin. In this sense, the written language has been one of the important integrating forces amongst the Chinese, besides their common culture and heritage. The Indian community in Malaysia is largely South Indian Tamils, constituting about 85 percent of the total Indian population in Malaysia (Santhiram, 1999). For the Indian society in Malaysia, the language spoken is Tamil.

The different ethnic identities have constituted a multi-ethnic or pluralistic Malaysian society. However, even though such distinctive ethnic groups are quite clear, in some cases hybrid identities have also occurred because of the processes of assimilation and interethnic marriage. For example, a minority of Chinese lineage in Malaysia, known as Baba Chinese have adopted much of Malay culture, including language, dress and cuisine. In other ways, converting to Islam and the adoption of Malay language and



custom normally allows a person of any ancestry to be considered Malay (Othman, 1983).

Since the socioeconomic structure of Malaysia before and after independence is ethnically divided, it is not surprising that politics, responding to this reality, is also organised on this basis. Accordingly, the practice of ethnic-based political parties reinforces the distinction of Malaysia's numerous ethnic communities. In this sense, most of the political parties in Malaysia were mere pressure groups seeking privileges and advantages for their ethnically oriented members (Saad, 1979). They always act as a mediator of ethnic symbols and interests. Till today, ethnic differences have been given a political dimension; thus education issues are also being structured and debated around ethnicity dimensions.

The championing of educational issues by the pertinent mono-ethnic parties perpetuates a clear line of division amongst the three major ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese and Indian in terms of each ethnic group's interest in education policy. The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) as the major partner in the ruling coalition has worked as a Malay custodian and representative of Malay interests. The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) regarded itself as the guardian of Chinese cultural and educational matters; and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) took up a similar role on behalf of the Malaysian Indian. In the same way, other political parties outside the ruling coalition and as opposition parties also functioned in a similar role of articulating and representing interests amongst the various ethnic groups. For example, the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) has also played a significant role in ensuring and articulating the interests of Malay groups. Identically, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) as one of the opposition parties was considered an envoy for Chinese interests.

Accordingly, when education is framed on ethnic lines and interests, the demand for policies are always ethnic in orientation. People began to organise themselves along ethnic lines to demand betterment in the education field for their ethnic group, and seeking political power appeared as the best way to achieve this. Thus, most of the political parties in Malaysia are ethnically oriented and exist to look after specific

ethnic interests and confront any policy, which might be viewed as leading to a marginalisation of their ethnic group.

Due to these different identities affiliated with various sections of the population in Malaysia, the society is divided into major ethnic groups, each with its respective identities (Haque, 2003) and with the notion of difference to others. These differences between these groups should be called ethnicity. The researcher refers to these differences as 'ethnic' because this is the way they have been identified in Malaysian pluralistic society by both the government and by individuals themselves.

Ethnic composition is the key to understanding the whole picture of Malaysian economic, political and social patterns. In fact, everything political and economic in Malaysia is dominated by the considerations of 'ethnic arithmetic' (Milne, 1967). This concept designates the pattern of the social arrangement, politics, and economy and has helped to shape the Constitution, and influenced the democratic process and the party system (Ratnam, 1965, p.1). In other words, Malaysians are cognisant of their ethnic background and are being constantly reminded of the fact in all social, economic and political transactions in which they are involved.

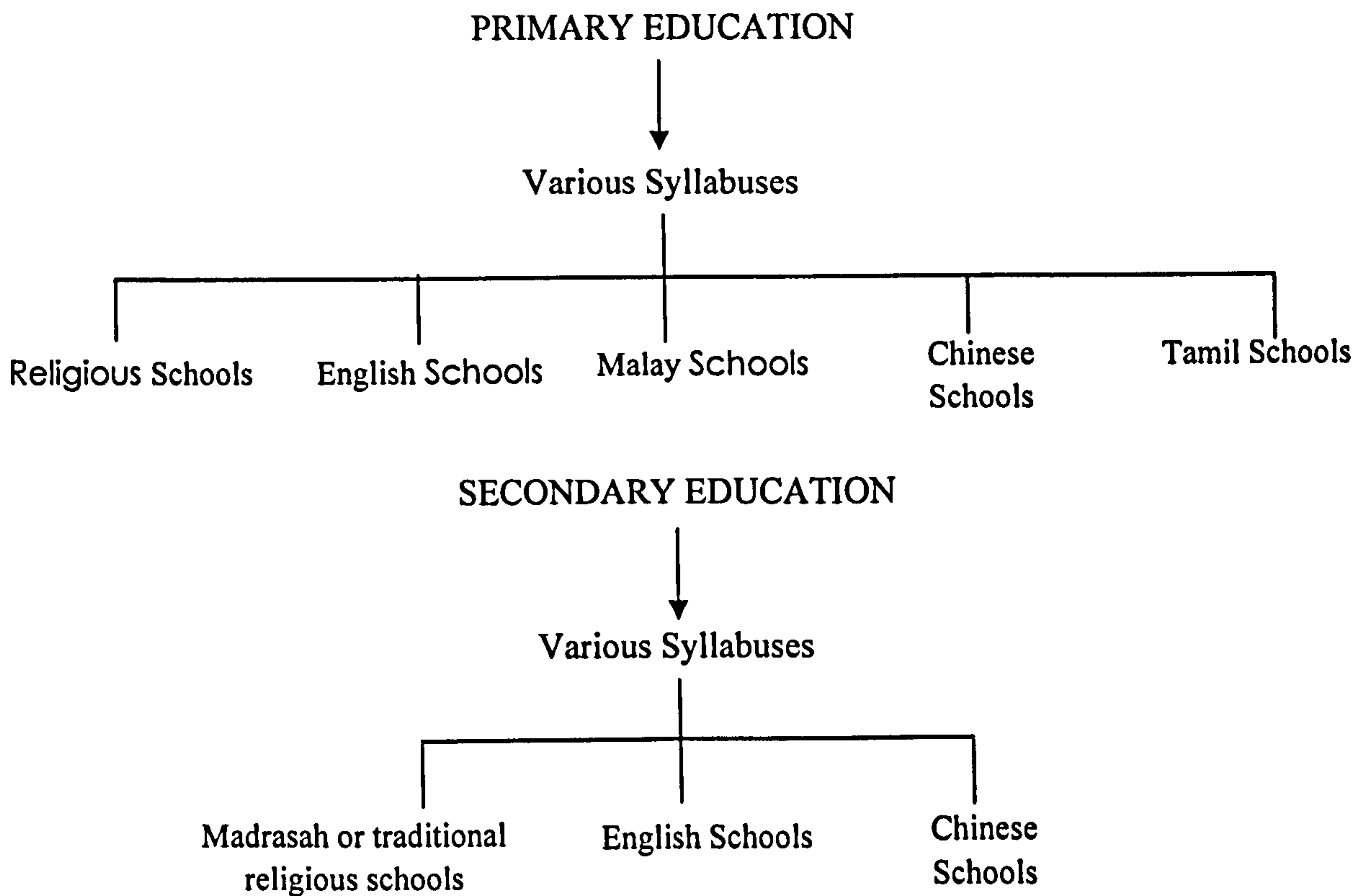
The different ethnic identities in Malaysian society have also affected the formation of the state and its policy agendas, especially in the education system. This situation has drawn the state into the role of mediating and managing interethnic tensions arising from contestation among major ethnic groups for sharing economic and political power and cultural space. In the following section, the researcher explains briefly education policies in Malaysia since British Colonial administrations, which are related to ethnic differences in Malaysian plural society.

#### **2.4 An Overview Educational Policies during the British Period**

The motives of British domination in Malaysia, which was fundamentally economic imperialism, governed the British attitudes towards the provision of education. These motives became the main mechanism to ensure the compartmentalisation of the various ethnic groups and of ensuring socialisation into the respective ethnic groups. The result of educational policies of British ruler was a 'vernacular system of



schooling'. Figure 2.1 shows the structure of the vernacular system in Malaysia during the pre independent period.



*Figure 2.1:* Pre Independent Education System in Malaysia

A dualistic educational policy of official sponsorship of primary Malay vernacular education for the indigenous population and a laissez-faire approach for the immigrant was introduced by the British administration. Due to their special status, the Malays enjoyed compulsory vernacular education at the elementary level, supported by the government. For the indigenous Malays, the government felt an obligation to provide an elementary form of education designed to keep them in their villages to continue in their age-old occupations as farmers and fishermen. The aim of educating the Malays was to teach them habits of punctuality and good behaviour (Phang, 1973). The primary Malay school curriculum during the British colonial period was only for the purpose of meeting minimum requirements for reading, writing and calculating (3Rs). Moreover, schooling was limited to four years and beside the 3Rs, the Koran was taught (Means, 1986). Malays who sought to obtain a better education had to enter the English medium schools.

There were two types of English schools established during the British period: one, which received financial support and which was controlled by the government and the other the mission English school. The English medium schools were originally started by the missionary groups. These schools received financial aid from the British administration. This missionary role of English education had both positive and a negative effects. It made English education much more accessible to the children of Chinese and Indian people, a large percentage of whom populated the urban areas (Seng, 1975), but in contrast, it received a poor response from the Malay, due to the stigma of being operated by Christian missions (Means, 1986). Furthermore, British policy in the 1870s and throughout its subsequent administration of the Malay states was clearly protective of the Islamic religion, and thus Christian missionary enterprises were allowed only in non-Muslim area. As a result, the English-medium schools were established in the urban areas, where less than 20 percent of Malays lived, and were largely attended by Chinese, Indians, and elite Malays (who sought an English-medium education). Thus, Malay as a major indigenous community was isolated from the English school, an important agent for modernisation (Seng, 1975).

Until the 1920s and 1930s, the British authorities ignored the education of the immigrant Indians and Chinese and allowed these groups to develop their own schools. The Chinese took the initiative to set up schools of their own, usually through the initiative of a former teacher or a local community leader (Seng, 1975). Originally, the children were taught in the different dialects spoken amongst the Chinese and the curriculum was of the old style, for instance, they learned the classics and the use of the abacus (Phang, 1973).

For the Indians, the responsibility of stipulation of education was passed to the estate management (Santhiram, 1999). As with the Chinese, the British government treated the Indian population as a transient one that would eventually return to India after a short sojourn. Consequently, the British also let the Indian community develop their own education system with instruction in the mother tongue and their own curriculum centred on India.

After the Second World War, the British colonial rule began to be concerned about the direction of the school system in this plural society. The British attempted



something like a national policy involvement in the post war years. A central Advisory Committee on Education was set up in 1946. Its task was to look into the role of education in nullifying communal divisions and achieving the integration of all into one Malayan entity. This report suggested that only a neutral language i.e. English could unify the multi racial population of the country. However, the Federal Legislative Council rejected this report.

The government appointed another committee in 1950 to look into the issue of Malay education. This committee was under the chair of L.J. Barnes and the report of the committee was called the Barnes' Report. This committee recommended a single type of primary school open to children of all ethnic backgrounds; here either English or Malay would be the medium of instruction. The emphasis was on the primary school as an instrument for building a common Malayan nationality (Federation of Malaya, 1951a).

The ultimate aim of the Barnes' Report was to promote national unity and nationhood through the creation of children who would be bilingual. However, the non-Malays would have to pay a very high premium to show their loyalty to the Malayan nation; it would mean that they would have to give up their own vernacular schools for the implementation of this policy. Especially the Chinese community criticised this proposal and the Chinese reaction to its recommendations was swift. They assumed that the proposal by the Barnes' Committee did not acknowledge the vernacular school system. Two objections were raised; every ethnic group had a right to preserve its cultural heritage and it was unjust to create a sense of Malayan identity without including the cultural heritages of the immigrant races (Koon, 1988).

To appease Chinese feelings, the British government formed another committee in 1951 to encourage tolerance. Dr. W.P Fen Wu and Dr. Y.T Wu headed the committee. This committee was assigned to oversee all the education domains of the Chinese, referring to:

- (i) Bridging the gap between the present communal system of school and the time when education will be on a non-communal basis with English or Malay as medium of instruction and other language as optional subject, and advising on
- (ii) Preparation of text books for present use with a Malayan as distinct from a Chinese background and content.

(Federation of Malaya, 1951b, p. I-Introduction, paragraph 6)

The recommendations of the Fenn-Wu Report represented the different views of nation building inherent in Malayan pluralist society. It took an opposite stand to that of the Barnes Report. The Fen-Wu report recommended the continuation of Chinese schools and suggested that the Chinese schools should become trilingual as means of integrating them into a national system.

The Education Ordinance of 1952 came into existence based on the Barnes and the Fen Wu Reports. However, all people in the Federation of Malaya opposed this ordinance. Strong opposition came from the Chinese community. They perceived the ordinance as a tool to degrade the status of the Chinese language and schools, which ultimately would lead to their extinction. On the other hand, the Malays too opposed the ordinance on the issue that it would weaken the Malay language (Haris, 1990).

The education policies and the scenario of the ethnicity and political challenges toward the educational policy before independence have been elaborated in general. The perspective of the challenges experienced by the government in planning and implementing the policies was mostly in relation to ethnicity and political effects such as language and in regard to the vernacular school system. The challenges toward the setting up of the educational policies for nation building were ceaseless in the process of setting up further educational policies.

#### **2.4.1 British Colonial Education Policy: A Retrospect**

The vernacular education system during the time of British colonial rule of Malaya resulted in the strengthening of divisions between the three major ethnic groups, which were already distinguished by economic divisions. The differences in the medium of instruction, curriculum, and the school system have kept the young generation of the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia apart and this has led to the



deepening of divisions between the groups. There was very limited cultural contact and interaction between the young generations of each ethnic group because of the apparent differences in the school systems, which did not provide any crosscutting links but rather deepened already existing divisions. Thus, this scenario created each ethnic group mutually exclusive of each other. In other words, ethnicity elements were created by the British policy in the education system, and this has contributed to the construction of ethnic identity and culture boundaries between the different ethnic groups in education developments since that time.

The paternalistic and protectionist British attitude towards the Malays was reflected in their educational policy to protect the Malays from the impact of modernisation and intense competition from the immigrants. However, this also led to inter and intra-group separation among the various ethnic groups. Social mobility was unbalanced among and within the ethnic groups. The result was an undemocratic and unequal educational system, which consisted of double standards in curriculum – there were curriculum differences among the schools, with the English School system focused more on credentials and meritocracy through various types of examination. Furthermore, the English education based on the principle of user fees for the immigrants and the Malay masses, but free for a select nobility and royalty demonstrates the classic ingredients of a divide and rule policy. Hence, it strengthened elitism, when pupils from disadvantage groups were likely to drop out. As Seng (1975) has pointed out, for the Malay, the ‘British approach to the education of Malays focused on two major policy objectives: the preservation of Malay social structure and the modernization of Malay royalty’ (p.79).

In fact, the seeds of separatism were sown because of colonial educational policies that allowed four parallel school systems to develop; hence, social and cultural divisions were reinforced through education. The result of this arrangement was that three forms of ethnic divisions were created i.e. social divisions, cultural divisions and economic divisions. Social division came about because English medium education, leading to the most prestigious social positions, was only available for the Malay aristocracy and urban dwellers; Malay education was available for the subject, and largely rural classes. Cultural divisions came about because the four language media schools reinforced the ethnic identity and cultural separation of the different ethnic



groups. Only the English medium schools were neutral, but they helped create the third kind of division – economic, because those who attended them gained socio-economic advantage. The residues of this colonial heritage are played out today in postcolonial Malaysia. This is what Gregory (2004) has referred to as ‘the colonial present’ despite postcolonial political aspiration.

## **2.5 Malaysian Educational Policies: Post Independence**

Due to the social, cultural and economic divisions, which were created by the British colonial policy, especially in education, the formulation and implementation of educational policies for and in independent Malaya have focused on creating a mutual outlook and shared loyalty to the country. For the following discussion of the Malaysian educational policies after independence, I will divide the period into two phases which consist of the period from 1957 to 1967, and the second phase from 1967 till 1970.

### **2.5.1 Developing the Malaysian Outlook: The Education System**

The settlement of policy in education for post independence was the result of an agreement reached among the major ethnic communities (Malay, Chinese and Indians). This consensus agreement amongst political elites from the three major ethnic groups can be looked as a binding agreement between all major ethnic groups in Malaysia.

In state and public discourse, the consensus between the major ethnic groups has commonly been understood as a ‘social contract’ between them. This contains provisions which protect the legitimate interests of each community in the country and is enshrined in the Malaysian Constitution. It clearly distinguished the special rights of the Malay and other ethnic groups’ rights as citizens in Malaysian pluralist society. In this sense, the concept of social contract is about the special position for the Malays for granting of citizenship. This has been considered as an underpinning element for a guiding principle of Malaysian independence and further development of the country. In this sense, ethnic compromises between the major ethnic groups were an important aspect that made the population determined to gain independence from the British. In the education context, this compromise and bargaining also constructed the policy process and set the scene for political bargaining and striking



fair deals for the ethnic members in relation to language and school in Malaysian education system. Such accommodative politics have been the norm in education policy since this time.

This ethnic groups' consensus also framed educational policy in Malaysia when independent, and was manifested in the Razak Report of the 1956, that became the most consequential document in the subsequent development of Malaysian education (Roof, 1974). The Razak Report (1956) stated:

We believe further that the ultimate objective of educational policy in this country must be to bring together the children of all races under a national educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction, though we recognize that progress towards this goal cannot be rushed and must be gradual.

(Federation of Malaya, Report of the Education Committee 1956,  
p. 3, paragraph 12)

Amongst the many important aspects of this Report, there was the suggestion the Malay language become a compulsory subject to be taught in schools and become the sole official language after 1967 (Lim, 1985). This was based on the belief that the process of uniting the nation could be achieved through national language in the education system. The Razak Report of 1956 clearly stated that the ultimate objective of Malay language as a medium of instruction would be gradually implemented in the Malaysian education system post independence.

Based on this notion of language for unifying the nation, the 'ultimate objective' of National Language as the medium of instruction in the Malaysian education system has underlined the state policy orientation in achieving the aim of national unity. This has led to the recognition the national language be used in the education system as an instrument to achieve social integration of the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. The first step towards implementing national language in the education system occurred in 1958 when the state set up for the first time secondary classes in the medium of the National Language (Federation of Malaya, 1960, p.9).

Another of the major changes resulting from this policy ideology in the Razak Report on the Chinese school was the conversion of all Chinese schools into national type Chinese medium schools. This included the introduction of common curriculum in the

Chinese schools. With this policy, the previous character of Chinese schools before independence, in which the content of the curriculum was China centred, had been eliminated. Thus with this national curriculum character, the Chinese medium schools became an integral part of the national education system. This meant that the implementation of education policy to develop the Malaysian outlook in the education system had begun with the significant change of the schools' identity that removed the vernacular schools character extant during the colonial time.

Among its recommendations was the recognition of the principle of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the primary level, thus making Chinese and Tamil primary schools a permanent feature of the education system. Hence, The Report recommended two types of government assisted primary schools:

1. National schools using Bahasa Melayu (henceforth Malay language) as the medium of instruction;
2. National-type schools using English, Mandarin, or Tamil as the medium of instruction. English and Malay were made compulsory in all schools.

At the secondary level, the Razak Report granted official approval for three language media schools, namely Malay, English, and Chinese, medium of instruction. The Chinese medium would be allowed if it conformed to certain curricular conditions and accommodated the compulsory teaching of Malay and English. The Report's pronouncements on the aim and function of secondary education revealed the accommodative stance and assurance that particular ethnic groups would have their interests taken into consideration within the framework of a national educational policy. The aim of secondary education was:

To train employable and loyal Malayan citizens ... one of the primary functions is to foster and encourage the culture and languages of the Malayan community... and we see no educational objection to the learning of three languages in secondary schools or the use of more than one language in the same school as the medium of instruction.

(Federation of Malaya, 1956)

This statement regarding language in education is perhaps to lessen concern with cultural claims and interests at the time, when an emphasis on solidarity was crucial on the road to independence. The collaboration and cooperation among the three major ethnic groups in the political field on the way to independence meant that a



coalition government would be in power and compromises would have to be agreed upon and achieved by the leaders of the ethnic parties. It also meant that major decisions on any matters of government would have to take into consideration the opinions and views of all concerned. It set the scene for political bargaining and striking fair deals for the ethnic members, an ongoing feature of Malaysian politics.

After the Razak Report, in 1960 the Rahman Talib committee was appointed to review the implementation of the 1956 Report of the education committee recommendations. This education review committee produced their report, namely the Report of the Education Review Committee 1960, commonly known as the Rahman Talib Report 1960. This Committee accepted and recognised that the Razak Report of 1956 'succeeded in recommending an educational policy which is national in its scope and propose, while at the same time preserving and sustaining the various cultures of the country' (Federation of Malaya, 1960, p. 3, paragraph 13). While it recognised the Reports of 1956 as accomplishing the interests of various ethnic groups in the education system in Malaysia, this committee stressed the need for policy action to achieve the 'ultimate objective' of national language as stated in the Razak Report.

In addition to achieving the 'ultimate objective' of national language, as a start towards implementing national language as medium of instruction at primary level, the Committee suggested that '...primary education in Malay must also be made available to more children by the introduction, for a start, of Malay-medium streams in what were formerly Government English primary schools' (Federation of Malaya, 1960, paragraph 133). This, according to the Committee 'is essential move towards the ultimate objective of making Malay the main medium of instruction in all schools' (Federation of Malaya, 1960, paragraph, 133).

Based on the Rahman Talib report, multi-lingual primary schools were to continue, but wider recognition was given to Mandarin and Tamil within the primary school framework. The review also introduced changes at the secondary level, which furthered the principle of a unified Malay language, government aided education system (Federation of Malaya, 1960, p.49). The Report took the view that after a ten years period after independence, Malays should assume a dominant role. As such,

after 1967 Malay language should be the main medium of instruction in secondary schools, with provisions for teaching the other languages as subjects.

In line with these recommendations, while free primary education in all media was endorsed, government assistance to Chinese secondary schools was to be withdrawn. As a first step, these schools had to convert to the English medium to be eligible for government grants. To lend force to this aspect of its recommendations, it was promulgated that henceforth all public examinations at the secondary level would be conducted in English and Malay only. To facilitate the linguistic transition on the part of the pupils from Chinese and Tamil National type primary schools, a special one-year Remove class was instituted prior to the secondary level. Here, the pupils were given a one-year immersion programme in English and Malay language to help them cope with the change of media in the secondary level.

It is understandable that the 1960s Education Review Committee Report suggestions demonstrate the intention to improve and realise the policy framework that been set up by the Report of 1956. However, such suggestions of converting the English medium primary schools to Malay medium is understandable in the situation where the state needs to accommodate the Malay interests in education and at the same time needs to meet the demands of other ethnic groups for their mother tongue. This delicate issue needed to be tackled appropriately to ensure that the policy implementation was not contradicted with what has been stated in the policy text. Thus, English was a neutral domain for implementing the policy that did not touch each ethnic group's interests in language of education. In other words, English is not a mother-tongue for other ethnic groups and is accommodated to the Malay nationalistic phase during the time of post independence to eliminate the colonial heritage in the education system in order to develop the new national identity.

In a sense of developing national outlooks within the Malaysian education system, the Rahman Talib Report 1960 made a further change to the Chinese medium schools' character. This report recommended that pupils of all secondary schools irrespective of the medium of instruction would be required to sit government public examinations in the country's official language – that is Malay or English. The committee explained that



...the only way to reconcile the existing basic objectives of education policy which are to create a national consciousness while at the same time preserving and sustaining the various cultures of the country is to conduct education at the primary level in the language of the family and thereafter to reduce the language and racial differential in our educational system. For the sake of national unity, the objective must be to eliminate communal secondary schools from the national system of assisted schools and to ensure that pupils of all races shall attend both national and national-type secondary schools. An essential requirement of this policy is that public examination at secondary level should be conducted only in the country's official language.

(Federation of Malaya, 1960, phase 175, p.31)

The belief of the importance of national language as the medium of instruction and to eliminate ethnic and language differences in the education system is consistently stated in this report as a necessary requirement of a policy 'acceptable to the people as a whole' (Federation of Malaya, 1960). It is clear that the committee held the belief that for the nation to be united the notion of one language for one nation was centrally important. While it suggested primary education continue in mother-tongue, the committee also viewed this as contradictory with the education policy designed to promote national language and national consciousness amongst children from different ethnic groups.

The first requirement is met by providing for the time being at public expense primary education in the language of the family. It would, however, be incompatible with an educational policy designed to create national consciousness and having 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-financed educational system.

(Federation of Malaya, 1960, phase 18, p.3)

In contrast with the Razak Report (1956) that allowed the existence of the vernacular system, this report put the idea that the ethnic and language differences in the education system should be reduced in order to create national consciousness based on Malay language. Based on this principle, the committee rejected ethnic demands considering that they would break the national education system.

It is not possible, 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.

(Federation of Malaya, 1960, phase 18, p.3)

The suggestions regarding education system changes in this report carried two implications for subsequent Malaysian education policy development. Despite the fact that this report recognised the need to fulfil the interest of ethnic minorities for their

mother tongue, this committee also tried to reduce the pressure of language and ethnic differences in the education system. For instance, the suggestion of eliminating Chinese schools to bring them into the national education system and at the same time provide opportunity for education through mother tongue at primary level, could be understood as a compromise and an aspect of policy strategy for gradual change of the education system in relation to the national language.

The suggestions are based on this compromise or accommodative strategy to avoid conflict with the policy statement that also recognised other ethnic groups' rights to develop, learn and use their mother tongue in the education system. These suggestions for education policy are strategic for balancing the policy implementation suggested by the Razak Report of 1956, which aimed to have a school system with one language of instruction.

This period of development of national education policy saw the attainment of national integration and unity. In this sense, the construction of this policy was based on a belief that this was to be achieved through a plural school system and ambivalent language policy. This period is often referred to as a period of education policy for accommodation (Santhiram, 1999) of the different interests amongst different ethnic groups in respect of education. Accordingly, the development of the educational policies in this period involved collaboration and cooperation among the three major ethnic groups in the political field. It set the scene of political bargaining and striking fair deals for the ethnic members and an accommodative state strategy in education policy.

### **2.5.2 The National Language Act 1967: The Role of Language for National Identity**

The second phase began with the passing of the National Language Act of 1967. The run-up to the National Language Bill of 1967 saw the build up of tensions and anxieties within the Malay and Chinese political parties as to how the role of their language would be compromised (Roff, 1974). In the face of these pressures, a reappraisal of the overall language policy came in 1967.



The ensuing National Language Act of 1967 reaffirmed Malay as the only national and official language of the country from September 1967. Nevertheless, many compromises were built into the Act, which left the precise position of Malay language in uncertainty. For instance, the King had the prerogative to permit the continued use of English language in certain areas of government activity such as the law courts. In the education system, although four minor subjects like Moral Education, Music, Physical Education, and Health Education were to be taught in the National language in the English medium primary school, the Act left unresolved the vital issue of when Malay medium instruction would eventually replace the English medium. With this kind of ambiguity, the Malays began to wonder just how much Malay would be used officially as opposed to the English language.

However, the ambivalence of the 1967 Act on the position of the National Language was put to rest by the events that followed the aftermath of the traumatic race riots of 1969. It put an end to the government's liberal policy of deliberate gradualism in its national language policy. Hence, the period after the riots saw a fundamental policy change in Malaysian education.

## **2.6 Education for National Integration: The Breakdown of Consensus**

After independence in 1957, the aim of the Malaysian government to build a Malaysian nation in terms of national unity had been the major concern in the development of educational policy. Due to the social, cultural, and economic imbalances because of the British colonial legacy, recommendations from the Razak Report of 1956 and the Rahman Talib Report of 1961 were implemented. These were aimed at creating a mutual outlook and shared loyalty to the country, by introducing English and Malay medium secondary schools and a common syllabus throughout the national education system. Chai, as cited by (Watson, 1980, p.14) reiterated that:

The underlying rationale of Malaysia's educational policy is that education with a common content syllabus, reinforced by a common language, would promote the growth of a nationally homogenous outlook and the development of a core of shared values leading eventually to the evolution of a common culture which would then provide the basis for social cohesion and national unity.

In early independence, the government was compromised in achieving this goal, especially on the issue of the language of instruction in the educational system. However, these educational policies were not effective enough in preventing the outbreak of racial riots on May 13 in 1969. In the 1969 general election, the flow of votes towards opposition political parties with their narrow communal interests gave communal and primordial interests priority, because of the obvious ethnic issues that dominated during the election campaign. Among the salient education issues of the election campaign was the demand for an education system using all the languages of the population as medium of instruction (Vasil, 1971). After the result of 1969 election was announced, the Chinese saw their political power ascending, while not losing their supremacy of the Malaysian economy. On the other hand, the Malay saw that their security was devastated with the rising political power of the Chinese (Mohamad, 1971), and due to the hostile victory celebrations of the non-Malays, the situation became worse and led to racial violence on a national scale.

The riots of 1969, which occurred on a national scale, showed that the development programmes until the late 60s had failed to meet the challenges of national integration and unity and thus serious rethinking of this problem began. The government was of the view that this ethnic conflict was primarily a result of public dissatisfaction over the great disparity of income between the Malays and the non-Malays. The dissatisfaction about economic imbalance, particularly amongst the Malay who felt there was unequal distribution of income and opportunity, was underlined as the most significant element of ethnic tensions. Many writers agree that the ethnic riots of May 13, 1969 showed that the development programmes until the late 60s failed to meet the challenges of national integration and unity. Accordingly, the May 13 tragedy has been regarded as a catalyst for fundamental policy changes in Malaysian public policy after 1970, including education policy.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Due to the historical development of education policies in Malaysia, there is no doubt that the government has cited education as one of the main instruments in building a united and harmonious Malaysian nation. The overall intent today of Malaysian educational policy is to achieve national unity in a multi-ethnic society. In other words, efforts toward national unity and social cohesion remain a major agenda of



national education policy. The objective of national unity ranks very high as a national agenda, and is particularly acknowledged as the top agenda item for achieving the aim to be a developed country in 2020 (Mohamad, 1991, p.28).

However, in spite of that, not all these efforts were simply implemented; rather there was contestation and ethnic bargaining. Ethnic considerations remain central in the production and implementation of education policy in Malaysia. How the government attempts to satisfy the demands and need of the respective ethnic groups is a delicate business that touches on ethnic sensitivities and interests. Therefore, education policy processes aimed at achieving national unity always need to consider ethnicity issues and face many challenges based on ethnic interests. The researcher refers to this reality as the 'ethnic arithmetic' in Malaysian education policy development. This, the researcher will analyse and discuss in the data chapters, Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. Indeed, this topic is the focus of the research reported in this thesis: how ethnic arithmetic has framed education policy in Malaysia post 1970.

**3.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Two, I discussed and explained broadly the heterogeneous nature of the Malaysian population, in terms of culture, language, religion and social, economic and the political features in which and through which Malaysian plural society exists. There was also discussion of the ways the state sought to resolve the issues of ethnicity and develop national integration, particularly through the education system in the early independence period until 1969.

In connecting the nature of Malaysian society to the main concepts in this research, this Chapter presents a discussion of the concepts of ethnicity, nation, nation-building, and national integration in relation to education policy. It is important to discuss more academically and theoretically all these concepts, which are the main underlying aspects of investigation in the policy issues addressed in this thesis. The aim is to connect them to the Malaysian education context, so as to understand Malaysian education and education policy as a means of promoting ethnic integration as a part of nation building processes.

This Chapter endeavours to explore these related concepts underpinning this research, and by doing so, it aims to conceptualise them in the context of Malaysia. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 overview the literature on the concepts of plural society and ethnicity and in this, I shall describe various perspectives. Then, I will present a conceptual framework for the idea of ethnicity which is related specifically to the Malaysian context. The literature section on ethnicity provides an in-depth review from various theoretical perspectives in general, and anthropological and sociological theories in particular, from which current concepts of ethnic and ethnicity are developed.

In the subsequent section, the concepts of nation, nation-building and national integration are presented. Towards the end, I attempt to conceptualise the concepts of the nation and explains how they fit with the Malaysian context. In addition, the discussion of some models in educational policy aimed at integrating the multi-ethnic



society are also presented as a means of providing insights into the issue of national integration and education in a multi-ethnic society and state.

### **3.2 Theories of Plural Society**

Discussion in Chapter Two provided a broad explanation of the background of Malaysian society which is generally viewed as pluralist. The discussion indicated that the Malaysian pluralistic society is an inheritance from colonial political and economic policies that helped constitute and institutionalise ethnic differences in relation to culture, language and economic opportunities. It is understood that the emergence of a Malaysian plural society from colonialism continues to be a dominant feature of the newly independent nation and remains in existence today in terms of cultural differences amongst different ethnic groups.

The term 'plural' applied to nation-states has been given no consistent meaning or interpretation in the literature. It has been applied to distinct types of social organisation and in the process defined. This term has been used to refer societies with sharp cleavages between different ethnic groups living in the same political unit. For example, one classic definition of plural society related to such social division is associated with Furnival (1948), who defines plural society as

....being composed of groups which were socially and culturally discrete, which were integrated through economic symbiosis (or mutual interdependence) and the political domination of one group (the colonial masters), but which were otherwise socially discrete, as well as being distinctive concerning language, religion and customs. There were no shared values in these societies. The groups were held together in a political system by the coercive force of the state, the police and the military. Such societies were in this view deeply divided. (p.49)

Furnival further stressed that each group maintained its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. He called it a society without a common social will in which each group maintains their identity and is thus discrete from others in the same political unit. Based on Furnival's formulation of plural society, a plural society consisted of sharply differentiated cultural groups which have minimum interaction with each other but a common economic link.

Barth (1969) has a similar view to that of Furnivall when he refers to the social system in a plural society as a poly-ethnic system. According to Barth, this system

maintains the division of different ethnic groups based on cultural, social, and economic attachment. Barth argues that in a plural society, members of the society are integrated in the market place, under the control of a state system dominated by one of the groups, but leaving large areas of cultural diversity in the religious and domestic sectors of activity (Barth, 1969, p.16). In this concept of plural society, different ethnic groups remain distinct from each other based on different cultural, social and economic divisions. Following this, a plural society can be regarded as one consisting of different multi ethnic communities within a larger population of the nation-state, which have limited interaction with each other, without common or shared values and identities, and bonded by their ethnic, social and cultural systems.

This conception according to Rex (1986) was concerned with the view that the plural society comprises various groups of people who are not bonded together in a single unit by any kind of normative ties. In this situation, ethnic groups organise their own separate communities, which are held together by primordial ties of ethnicity. Similarly, Lijphart (1977) sees this idea of plural society as one where the different ethnic groups make a geographical mixture with avoidance of mutual social relations. Thus, this concept of plural society recognises cultural differences amongst the groups, in which those groups have a clear boundary around their identities, culture and values.

There are a number of implications of this concept of plural society. Firstly, the separate ethnic groups are often framed by thick boundaries and this offers a sense of division between ethnic groups; secondly, harmony amongst groups exists by political force, rather than consensus; and thirdly, the groups have minimum contact based on specific interests and in the marketplace. In such a situation, there is limited endeavour of the state to enhance national integration. Hence, the communities continue in their distinctiveness from each other in terms of culture, language, religion, and identity. The idea of a plural society in this sense is restricted to the model of each group isolated from others and bonded by their own culture, values, and institutions.

Kuper (1974) sees pluralism as the cleavages between societal segments. 'Race', ethnicity, religion, and culture are the aspect of cleavages between groups in the



society. They are differentiated based on different types of these markers. In other instances, Kuper (1974) says that various other names can be used for the same phenomena such as multiple societies or composite societies. In respect of the notion of society as plural, Young (1976) concludes that a society is said to be plural if it exists in a single political unit, but with distinct groups in terms of ethnicity, language, culture and religion. In this sense, society is said to be plural when there are diverse and different social groups associated with different cultures and ethnic markers within the same political entity which is a state or a country.

There is another way of looking at plural societies, that is to narrow the definition to one specific subject rather than being all encompassing. Anderson (1967, p.17) exemplifies this approach with the term 'cultural pluralism'. Rabushka and Shepsle (1972, p.21) also see pluralism from a cultural point of view when they regard plural society as a society which is culturally diverse with cultural sections organised into cohesive political sections. Schermerhorn (1970) looks to a broader concept of pluralism in relation to society and views that the majority-minority relationship is also a project of pluralist society. He classifies four types of pluralism in such a society:

1. Ideological designation or normative pluralism
2. Political designation or political pluralism
3. Cultural designation or cultural pluralism
4. Structural designation or social pluralism

Smith (1960) suggests that cultural variations are not a sufficient condition for pluralism, since such variations could describe a merely heterogeneous society. To Smith, a plural society must contain differences amongst cultural groups in their basic institutions such as kinship, education, religion, property and economic, recreation and certain sodalities.

To attach the concept of plural society as provided by Furnival's work is to recognise that Malaysian population has retained intensive cultural distinctiveness and isolation between the different ethnic groups. This is contradicted by the nature of contemporary Malaysian plural society, in the context of democratic and modern society, which has been influenced by local and global contexts, and where the

boundaries between groups depend on economic, social and political circumstances. In a such a modern society, although they are plural with culturally different identities, each members of the Malaysian population has things in common to share, and the social boundaries between them have become more fluid because of development and modernisation of the country, and because of the construction of a national ideology of the nation-state through education, and other social and political means.

In the Malaysian context, Furnival's idea of plural society is more appropriate to describe Malaya in the colonial age, created by colonial policy and objectives, with no attention to developing national identities as a nation, and having different groups living side by side and only meeting in the market, where they mix but do not combine (Furnival, 1948). In such a society, the immigrant groups especially exist without the feeling of being part of a nation in the new land in which they live. In other words, this concept of plural society refers to the colonial context, rather than considering the Malaysian society that remains plural in subsequent democratic and post colonial periods. This also provides a notion that each group has their own interests and identities without common shared values and national identity as a nation.

Based on other definitions of plural society, we can see that the term plural society has been used to define such a broad range of social and cultural differences in a multiethnic society, which are bound by a single political unit and state boundary. The word pluralism in this sense can be seen to refer to the cultural heterogeneity of such a society. This is connected to pluralism in terms of cultural elements such as language, tradition, and religion, all of which are linked to ethnic identities. These cultural differences also result in cleavages in the social, political and economic institutions of the society. For example, in the case of Malaysia, such cultural differences have also resulted in constructing ethnic cleavages along social, political and economic dimensions. Nevertheless, it also needs to be considered that the colonial residue remains influential in constructing the notion of differences amongst the different ethnic groups in relation to their culture, identities, language, religion and social and economic institutions. Subsequently, such differences have constructed a sense of



ethnicity in Malaysian contemporary pluralistic society; such a sense plays out in social, political and economic issues, and also in relation to education policy.

### **3.3 Concepts of Ethnic and Ethnicity**

The concept of ethnicity is complex, and has been historically and theoretically developed across disciplines. According to Hale (2004), social scientists broadly agree that ethnicity is among the most important phenomena in politics and that we are in the beginning stage of understanding it. This concept has acquired an important place in contemporary social and political theory and research. Indeed, Basham and DeGroot (1977 in Yinger, 1985) speak of the volume of material produced as an 'academic ethnicity industry'.

According to Thompson and Rudolph (1986), in most societies, ethnicity has become an important focal point for the formulation of public policy. Rivzi (1991) asserts that ethnicity is a major new focus for the mobilisation of political interest because the need for cultural identification in modern society is even greater than in traditional societies. Eriksen (1993) also agrees that ethnicity has grown in political importance in the world. According to Eriksen (1993), in many parts of the world, ethnicity is high on the political agenda, in relation to nation building, the creation of political cohesion and national identity. This is particularly the case in former colonies, such as Malaysia.

#### **3.3.1 Ethnicity and Race**

The essential question is whether ethnicity and race constitute a single concept. Some authors see race based on phenotypical criteria as a foundation for a categorised group. For example, van den Berghe (1987) sees race on the basis of hereditary phenotypical characteristics. Furthermore, he argues that races are seen to exist in the society when a phenotype criterion is socially used to categorise groups. In this sense, race is a biological concept used to categorise a group of people based on physical appearances or phenotypical differences.

The ideology supporting this classification of group based on phenotype criteria can be called racism. Related, Harvey (1990) asserts that race and racism are intertwined because racial attribution is seen as fundamental to racism. He further explains that

racism operates overtly by design, or indirectly reflects laws, policies, and administrative practices. In this sense, racism operates positively through policies, rules and their interpretation or negatively through a failure to do anything about racism or even recognise it (Harvey, 1990).

Many authors make a conceptual distinction between race and ethnicity (Young, 1976; Wallman, 1979; Yinger, 1985; Banton, 1983 & 1986; Wolpe, 1986; Smith, 1986; Rex, 1986; Harvey, 1990; Smith, 1993; Jenkins, 1997). Rex (1986) distinguishes racial groups as groups which are thought to have a genetic or another deterministic base; in contrast, ethnic groups are thought of as those whose behaviour is capable of changing. In line with these arguments, Wolpe (1986) refers to race as a physically based category, and in contrast, ethnicity does not necessarily entail the use of biological differences, but rather focuses on cultural differences.

As a means to distinguish race from ethnicity, Wallman, (1979), Banton (1983 & 1986) and Young (1976), all of them agree that ethnicity is a more general social phenomena than race. For example, Wallman (1979) argues that ethnicity is more commonly to do with group identification which is associated with cultural markers. In more specific terms, Balman (1986 in Harvey, 1990) links ethnicity with linguistic and cultural practices through which a dynamic sense of collective identity is produced and transmitted from generation to generation. This notion is similar to that of Banton (1986), who argues that ethnicity does not persist as a product of genetic processes, but it has to do with group identification and culture. For Banton (1983), ethnicity attached to cultural characteristics, is more malleable and less stable than race which is associated with physical characteristics. Young (1976) attempts to define the meaning of race and distinguishes it from ethnicity, when he states that race is based upon conspicuous physical differentiation. With the same viewpoint, Schermerhorn (1970) says race refers to the 'phenotypical feature' of an individual and groups.

In this sense, while race seems to be much more a matter of social categorisation than of group identification, ethnicity seems to be more a social phenomenon. A corollary of this is that the distinction between race and ethnicity is one between physical attachment and culture for social groups in society. In other words, race can be



regarded as a biological concept in contradistinction to ethnicity which is a cultural concept; but both of these concepts are utilised to categorise social groups. This is so, irrespective of the validity of race as a category.

Smith (1993) and Yinger (1985) commonly agree that it is not accurate to view ethnicity as being the same as race, since race has become a strictly biological concept and has been defined based on biological characteristics. In addition, Eriksen (1993) asserts that modern genetics tend not to speak of race based on two reasons: firstly, there has been so much inter-breeding between human populations that would be meaningless to talk of fixed boundaries between races; secondly, the distribution of hereditary physical traits does not follow clear boundaries. Supporting this view, van den Berghe (1987) argues that sentiments of group-belonging based on physical attributes alone are irrational. In contrast, he sees such group sentiments as based more on cultural attributes, such as language, religion, and other customs. In other words, ethnicity extends beyond the biological dimension attributed to the concept of race and thus has challenged the biological construction of a social phenomenon such as race.

In accordance with above discussion, there is some legitimacy in the idea that forms of identification based on social realities as different as culture, religion, language have something in common, and the concept of ethnicity can refer to all of them. Therefore, ethnicity can be understood as the cultural characteristics of those social groups which have common culture, identity, language, religion and other relevant cultural markers. In contrast, the categorisation of social groups based on their phenotypical characteristics ignores other features of social groups such as culture, identity, language, and religion. Accordingly, scholars tend to use ethnicity in the pristine sense of involving a feeling of common ancestry (Connor, 1994). Malik (1996, in Spencer and Wollman, 2002) argues that the concept of ethnicity has been developed when race ideology became theoretically invalid and politically unacceptable. Eriksen (1993) and Wood (1990) both agreed that ethnic group became the preferred term when “race” became discredited.

### **3.3.2 Ethnicity as a Group Identity (Self-Naming and Being-Named)**

One perspective on the definition of ethnicity is to regard the phenomenon of ethnicity as a social dimension. The notion of ethnicity as a social dimension focused on cultural identification and other ethnic markers that have been used by members of groups to identify themselves as different from others. For example, Barth (1969) defines ethnicity as whatever the 'natives' say it is or the natives' perception of reality and defines ethnicity and creates boundaries with others. In the anthropological definition, some scholars called it self-ascription of cultural identity (Rex, 1986; Eriksen, 1993; Anderson, 1997; Gil-White, 1999).

Gill-White (1999) defines ethnicity 'as a collection of individuals sharing a common self-ascription' (p.792). Such identities' construction involves various descriptive features including language and religion. These features utilised self or group identification and as a function for inter group relations with other individuals or groups who have different identification (Edwards, 1977). This means that ethnicity exists based on cultural and common identification shared by members of a group.

The one classical theorist who defined the ethnic concept within this perspective is Max Weber. Weber (in Guibernau and Rex, 1999) calls ethnic groups those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent and this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation (p.18). From the same perspective, Hutchinson and Smith (1996, p.7) propose six main features for ethnic communities that developed an identity among the members of the group which differ from other groups, which are:

1. a common proper name
2. a myth of common ancestry
3. shared historical memories
4. a link with homeland
5. one or more elements of common culture – religion, custom or language
6. a sense of solidarity on a part or at least some sections of the ethnic population

The individual or members within the ethnic group also have loyalties to social and culture features attached to them. Geertz (1963) calls such cultural and identity attachment as 'primordial', which may be based on language, religion, custom,



region, or assumed blood ties. These identities developed the feeling of belonging to a group and being different from others. The members of the group consider that they are a different group and name themselves as such as an ethnic group, and act in ways that endorse this perception that they are in that group. Their cultural identifications are important for their self identification and for being identified by others. This construction of ethnicity is what Moerman (1965, in Eriksen, 1993) called an 'emic category of ascription', as opposed to the external attribution of ethnicity as an 'etic' category, which uses an imposed frame of identification.

Yinger (1985) defines an ethnic group as 'a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/or others, to have common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and, who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients' (p.159). In line with Yinger's definition, Schermerhorn (1970) defines an ethnic group as a collectivity within a larger group having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a distinct historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their people. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism and regionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these. There is some consciousness of such an identity among members of the group. Both Yinger's and Schermerhorn's definition of ethnicity are more concerned with the variables of culture and ancestry which develop an identity for the group.

Identity can be related to how such an individual views him/herself in relation to others which involve questions such as "Who am I?" and 'Who am I going to be?' (Baruth and Manning, 1992, p.157). In this sense, Hale (2004) posits a psychological explanation of ethnic identification. He defines ethnicity as a 'set of personal points of reference' that involves distinctions between people. According to him, an ethnic group is thus a set of people who have common points of reference and who perceive that they have something in common. The common points of reference (such as common descent, history, culture, language, ritual and regulation) develop an idea and belief of similarities among members of the group. An ethnic group tends to identify itself separately in terms of ethnic origin and cultural affiliations to preserve these

cultural characteristics. The culturally patterned forms of behaviour bring them into closer relations with some people than it does with others and they therefore find themselves part of a close network (Rex, 1986).

Although, they interact with other cultural groups, they have often managed to preserve their cultural distinctiveness. In this sense, van der Berghe (1987) and Fishman (1996) agree that language and ethnicity are tangible features of identity. Van den Berghe (1987) argues that cultural characteristics, especially language, are more appropriate for defining ethnic boundaries. Similarly, Fishman (1996) agrees that language is a concrete feature of identity related to other perceived cultural attributes. In other words, the differences in language help construct the differences between ethnic groups.

Language is a visible identifier of cultural identity, one that is a powerful vehicle for emotional communication, as a symbol of group identification and is inextricably linked with ethnicity (van den Berghe, 1987; Edward 1985). Ethnicity frequently defines itself, at least in part, as a speech community. It is one of the important distinctions between ethnic groups. Those who share a common language usually share a common identification. De Vos (1975) sees language as an overt symbol that can demonstrate group identification. According to De Vos, language is important to developing ethnic identity, which functions as a subjective symbol to differentiate such a group from others. The shared language creates a communication system which tends to exclude those not sharing the code. Therefore, language represents the basis of the distinct culture. Those speaking the same language, usually share common symbols, implicit values, cultural history, and often common ancestry (Anderson, 1967). Another important feature of identity is religion with its developed rituals and ceremonial practices, an important identity to those who profess it. Religion provides a basis for a common perception and shared emotional reactions to real or imagined threats from other groups.

In some societies, such group identities have become fluid because of the absorption of this group into the host society through intermarriages and assimilation. For instance, a 'Baba Chinese' (from Chinese ancestry but assimilated into Malay culture) and 'Mamak' (Malay and Indian ancestry through intermarriage) in Malaysian society



are amongst the cases of multicultural or hybrid identities. However, the reality that the majority of Chinese and Indians in Malaysia were not assimilated to the dominant culture and identity has maintained the pluralistic nature in cultural and ethnic identities in Malaysian society. Hence, the emergence of such hybrid identities can be regarded as an exceptional case, rather than a common feature in Malaysian plural society.

Ethnicity also depends on cultural attribution; where it can refer to a decision people make to depict themselves as the owners of a certain cultural identity. Cohen (1994) asserts ethnicity has come to be regarded as 'a mode of action and representation' (p.120) of a group of people to show their identity. Chai (1996) defines an ethnic boundary as the ascriptive criteria that determine membership in particular groups organised for collective action (p.282). Everyone in a certain ethnic group will act similarly according to their common preferences, such as preferences for wealth, power and honour (Hechter, 1986).

Following the above discussion, it can be pointed out that ethnicity is a group identity with a primordial attachment and cultural association in which group members feel that they do not belong to other groups with different identities. Therefore, an ethnic group tends to constitute their identity based on their culture and often language, thus constructing a division from others. In this sense, ethnicity has been experienced as a cultural phenomenon, continuity within the self and between those who share similar traditions and cultural identities. It is a feeling of group identification that emerged from perceptions concerning language, 'race' and religion or other cultural attachments. This notion of group identification develops the idea of 'othering' amongst groups with different identities.

### **3.3.3 Ethnicity and Group-Relations (Us and Them)**

.....ethnicity can only happen at the boundary of 'us', in contact or confrontation or by contrast with 'them'. And as the sense of 'us' changes, so the boundary between 'us' and 'them' shifts. Not only does the boundary shift, but the criteria which mark it change.

(Wallman, 1979, p.3)

Ethnic groups do not persist as a product of genetic processes. Rather, ethnic groups persist because ethnic divisions are maintained by the efforts of their members as part



of a pattern of social interaction, according to Banton (1986). According to Anderson (1997), an ethnic group is a group that shared some common cultural heritage. Hall (1989) sees ethnicity as relating to origins, roots and traditions, constructing belonging rather than exclusion, and thus making boundaries with others groups in relation to culture and identities.

The aspect of the relationship between groups is the feature which determines the meaning of ethnicity. Eriksen (1993) claims that ethnicity refers to aspects of the relationship between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being 'culturally' distinctive. Barth (in Hutchinson and Smith, 1996) argues that ethnic groups must be treated as units of ascription where the social boundaries ensure the persistence of the group. In other words, there is no ethnic group without relations between groups.

For ethnicity to come about, groups must have at least minimum contact with each other, and they must entertain ideas of each other as being culturally different from themselves. For instance, Esman (1994) says that ethnicity is shaped not only by self-definition, but also by the constraints imposed by outsiders. Moreover, he argues that the internal 'we' must be distinguished from the external 'they' (Esman, 1994, p.13). Esman notes that the need of solidarity of the group arises when strange, threatening, competitive outsiders must be faced. Related, Eriksen (1993) emphasises that there is no ethnicity if this condition of group' relationships is not fulfilled. Ethnicity is thus essentially an aspect of a relationship between societal groups, not only the sense of belonging of a group.

Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between groups who consider themselves culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have regular interaction. When cultural differences regularly make a difference in interaction between members of groups, the social relationship has an ethnic element. This is the process where the cultural differences are used to enhance the sense of 'us' for the purpose of organisation or identification. However, according to Wallman (1979), the ways 'us' and 'them' feel about differences vary, depending on the circumstances in which 'us' are using or perceiving 'them'. A case in point here is that the sense of 'us' and 'them' which refers to ethnicity is not static and permanent; rather, it is



transactional, shifting and essentially impermanent. In other words, ethnic boundaries and the notion of 'othering' depend on the function of context or situation. In relation to this, Wallman (1979), Jenkins (1986) and Hale (2004) all agree that the boundary between ethnic groups becomes thick or thin depending on the strength of the sense of 'us' and 'them' of the ethnic group members, and that this can change over time.

### **3.3.4 Ethnicity for the Minority and the Dominant**

Given migration over time, in every country a certain level of ethnic differences occurs. The movements of groups of people belonging to such common ancestry, with a common past and culture into another territory or region have resulted in the setting up of particular enclaves of people amongst host societies. Normally, people who migrate try to maintain their old kinship and neighbourhood social networks in the new territory context, and thus an ethnic segment and ethnic political groupings often emerge. This segment in the society produces a social unit creating differences between majority and minority groups, or between the host society and the immigrant.

Some authors employ ethnic group only for a minority in a given society (Connor, 1994; Guibernau and Rex, 1999). Connors (1994) defines ethnic group as synonymous with minority, when he refers to an ethnic group as a group with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity, which exists as a subgroup of a larger society. In the same way, Guibernau and Rex (1999) argue that the term 'ethnic group' may be used only to classify minorities. While some discourses concerning ethnicity tend to refer to minorities that are relatively powerless or are politically non-dominant, relative smallness or numerically inferior with cultural differences, many scholars reject the notion that ethnicity refers only to minorities (Schermerhorn, 1970; Glazer and Moynihan, 1975; Jeffcoate, 1984; Jenkins, 1986; Eriksen, 1992 & 1993). In other words, it can be said that majorities or dominant peoples are no less 'ethnic' than minorities.

Schermerhorn (1970) claims the notion of ethnicity is applicable to both minority and majority groups. He argues that each society in the modern world contains subsections or sub-systems more or less distinct from the rest of the population and the most fitting generic term to designate this fraction of the whole is ethnic group. Thus, ethnic group can be associated with both dominant and minority groups.

Schermerhorn (1970) uses criteria of size and power to define majority and minority group. According to Schermerhorn (1970), a minority is a group which is small in numerical size or has less than 50% of the whole population, which is a subordinate status. He asserts that to be a majority group, the group must both dominant in size and power. Table 3.1 shows the criteria to determine the dominant and subordinate group in term of size and power.

Table 3.1: Dominant and Minority Groups (Adopted from Schermerhorn, 1970)

Dominant Groups			
	Size	Power	
Group A	+	+	Majority Group
Group B	-	+	Elite
Subordinate Group			
Group C	+	-	Mass subjects
Group D	-	-	Minority group

Marger (1991, p.62-65) and Wirth (1970, p. 36) categorise four types of minority group which are: pluralistic minority, assimilationist, secessionist, and militant. An assimilationist minority is willing to assimilate to the dominant society, but in contrast secessionist seek to be politically independent from the dominant group. Militant minorities attempt to dominate other groups in such society, and the minority pluralistic are keen to preserve their culture, while being involved in the political, social and economical institution in a society. In the context of Malaysian plural society, minority pluralistic as a type appears applicable to the two major non-Malay ethnic groups which are Chinese and Indian. The pluralistic minority is not passive; in contrast they are inclined to achieve their aimed for social justice in economics, politics and social matters and tend to preserve their culture when threatened by the dominant group (Wirth, 1970). This brings conflict with the majority group on some issues, for instances issues to do with language.

Rothermund and Simon (1986) see the status of minority and majority based on concepts of privileged and underprivileged. According to them, the minority group which has the privileged status will be in conflict with the majority which has



underprivileged status. For the minority with privileged status, they have a sense of relative deprivation; on the other hand, the majority with underprivileged status will use official discrimination and demand their rights. In this sense, this is not referring to ethnicity alone; the minority and majority dichotomy also refers to the economic, social and political circumstances of such social group. In this conflict, education has a significant role for balancing both groups' demand and avoiding disintegration (Rothermund and Simon, 1986).

### **3.3.5 Ethnicity and Social Class**

Theories of social class always refer to systems of social ranking and distribution of power, linked to economic structure. The Marxist view of social classes emphasises economic aspects – one's social class is defined in terms of one's relationship to the means of production. On the other hand, the Weberian view of social stratification works in terms of status group rather than classes based solely on economic and labour market location.

There can be a significant interrelation between class and ethnicity. For instance, both class and ethnicity can be criteria or rank, or in other words, ethnic membership can be an important factor in class membership. In addition, Rex (1986) argues that there are close similarities and strong relationships between class conflict and ethnic conflict.

However, while both class and ethnic differences are features of all societies and both concepts are interrelated, they are not the same thing and can be distinguished from one another analytically. For instance, Eriksen (1993) distinguishes class and ethnicity when he refers to class as a social stratification or social status, in contrast, according to him, ethnicity does not refer to rank, but refers to imputed cultural differences (p.7). Van den Berghe (1987) also agrees that we should distinguish class and ethnicity which are fundamentally distinct bases of sociality. For him, ethnicity is rooted in commonality of 'genetic interest'; in contrast, class is rooted in commonality of material interest. Therefore, it can be argued that class is an economic relation and ethnicity is a non-economic relation, or ethnicity, in other senses, can be argued to refer to ascribed cultural differences, not to property or achieved statuses.



### 3.3.6 Ethnicity as Social and Political Construction

Ethnicity is a plastic, variegated, and originally ascriptive trait, in certain historical and socioeconomic circumstances, is readily politicized.

(Rothschild, 1981, p.1)

Ethnicity is both self- and socially-constructed. Ethnicity is self constructed by those who feel that they are distinct from other groups according to their language, culture and religion and other primordial attachments and have feelings of belonging to a group that shares common culture and values. It is socially constructed within or by groups themselves and from the outside or through the state. Once constructed, individuals within each group begin to internalise the label, to accept ethnicity as a given and to act according to cultural norms. For instance, the National Census attempts to define a group. This collection of data actually constitutes ethnic categories and thus contributes to the construction of ethnicity. In this case, ethnicity is socially constructed; having said that, I do not deny that there are deep cultural differences between groups. Ian Hacking (2002) has referred to the 'looping effects' of such categorisation in public policy, that is, the fact that census categorisation has effects.

According to van den Berghe (1987), an instrumental or circumstantialist position posited that ethnicity is something manipulable, variable, situationally expressed and subjectively defined. Jenkins (1986) for instance, claims that the idea of ethnicity is not fixed but socially and situationally defined. Given a general idea of ethnicity, Jenkins (1997) defines ethnicity as collective identification that is socially constructed with reference to putative cultural similarities and differences, and has emerged since humans have lived in social groups. However, an ethnic group cannot only be defined with reference to objective cultural features. Eriksen (1993) argues that cultural differences between two groups are not the decisive feature of ethnicity. Some groups may seem culturally similar, but there can be a socially highly relevant interethnic relationship between them. On the other hand, there may also be cultural variation within a group without ethnicity (for example, within the Malay, there are various cultural groups with different native tongues; the same applies to the Chinese who have various languages).



While there was a general agreement in the literature that ethnicity is a social construction, based on the idea that each group has a different identity in terms of language, culture, religion, values and customs, does the preservation of the group formation not depend on political elements? In relation to this question, Hirschman (1987) argues that the way in which ethnic groups are defined and structured depends on the degree of differences among the groups and their relative positions in the political and economic orders. Jenkins (1986) asserts that the competition for political and economic niches plays an important role in the generation of ethnicity. Similarly, van den Berghe (1987, p. 18) argues that ethnic sentiments wax and wane, and ethnic group boundaries sometime are quite fluid, depending on circumstances and boundaries can be manipulated for personal or political gain and interest.

In the same way, Guibernau and Rex (1999) assert that the propagation of group formation does not depend on whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. They argue that ethnic membership does not constitute a group, but it only facilitates group formation, particularly in the political sphere. The political community, no matter how artificially organised, inspired the belief in common ethnicity. In this sense, a common ethnicity and the nation will seem to be co-existent.

In describing how ethnicity is politicised, Rothschild (1981) asserts that the society mobilises ethnicity from cultural and social factors into political leverage. Rothschild describes this process of politicised ethnicity as producing an 'ethnic entrepreneur' (Rothschild, 1981, p.2). In some plural societies, politicised ethnicity has become an important aspect of political position. Malaysia in this context, demonstrates such an example where being Malay represent a dominant political position in this ethnic-based political society. At the same time, it has become an effective instrument for pressing group interests in society's competition for wealth, economic and various social and political aims. In this sense, ethnicity often is politically constructed to serve a purpose. Related, Guibernau (1996) agrees that ethnicity today is perceived as a channel through which competition for the gaining of wealth, power or status is expected. In this sense, ethnicity becomes salient not as a result of deeply rooted or primordial ties, but because of political and sometimes economic processes (Spencer and Wollman, 2002, p. 69).



### **3.3.7 The Operational Concept of Plural Society and Ethnicity**

In this study, plural society is utilised to refer to a society with diverse ethnic identities, which exist within a single political unit, and tend to preserve their cultural and ethnic identification. In this respect, different ethnic elements in the society are not to be regarded as a cleavage between groups, but as referring to cultural differences within the pluralistic society. However, referring to some specific contexts and situations, these differences become boundaries and provoke tensions between groups. In Malaysia, such ethnic differences in social and economic dimensions are inherited from colonial policy and thus affect the social institutions of the society; for example, in the education system the continuous existence of the vernacular schools serves the purpose of different ethnic communities' rights.

However, in spite of this cultural diversity, it needs to be recognised that the members of the plural Malaysian nation have common values in forming the Malaysian national identity, including common symbols, the sense of a nation, and sense of loyalty and patriotism. In this sense, in post colonial Malaysia society, which is pluralistic in nature, groups have come together in creating a Malaysian affiliation, in sense of co-operation, community and identity, especially in terms of facing common external contestation now with a globalised economy. In this respect, Malaysia has moved away from the Furnivallian concept of a 'plural society' (Kheng, 2003a). However, while it needs to be acknowledged that contemporary Malaysia is a modern nation, rather than a society that still exists in the colonial era, it also must be recognised that residual aspects of ethnicity of the colonial post still play out in the present. In this sense, ethnicity as defined here continues to be important in contemporary Malaysian social, economic and political life. This aspect of ethnicity in Malaysian plural society is also socially and politically constructed by the state in and through policy and by social, political and economic discourses of Malaysian pluralist society.

Within this diversity, Malaysian plural society has gone through various experiences of ethnic tensions and conflict in relation to the ethnicity issues, which have emerged since the end of British colonial administration, and become a continuing problem of reconciling a heterogeneous population for the government. From the historical perspective, ethnic divisions in Malaysia were constructed for political and economic purposes during British colonial rule and thus created different ethnic groups in the



society. Continuously, the creation of communal political parties tended to strengthen the 'sense of ethnicity', which also created an exercise of power more focused on the interest of 'us' rather than 'them'. Hence, in Malaysian plural society, the place of ethnicity is related to social, economic, and political circumstances of the different groups, and is a complex issue. The linkages between ethnicity in these dimensions created complicated issues for the state to manage in order to ensure the unity and harmony of the nation.

In the Malaysian plural society, the meaning of ethnicity follows everyday usage as well as official definition. The Malaysian categorisation of ethnicity, which is Malays, Chinese, and Indians, is so well internalised, and emerged from relatively recent history. This ethnic categorisation was created by the British for administrative expediency during the colonial period and has evolved since Malaysia's independence in 1957 (Watson, 1980; Takei et al., 1973b). The way in which ethnic populations are defined and structured depends on the degree of differences among the populations, the nature of their contact, and their relative positions in the political, social and economic order. Furthermore, these distinct groups are culturally and identically heterogeneous amongst themselves.

In official policy, the terms of ethnic and ethnic classification are interchangeable due to the ambiguous words that are used to differentiate or classify people in a plural society such as Malaysia (Hirschman, 1987). Since British colonial days, the official terms have changed from nationalities to race to community to ethnicity (to connote group members all of which are bonded together by a community of interest, that is to say by common ties of language, religion, custom, allegiance).

The emerging themes from the literature are drawn together to form the framework for the operational concept of ethnicity as used in this research and are demonstrated in Figure 3.1.



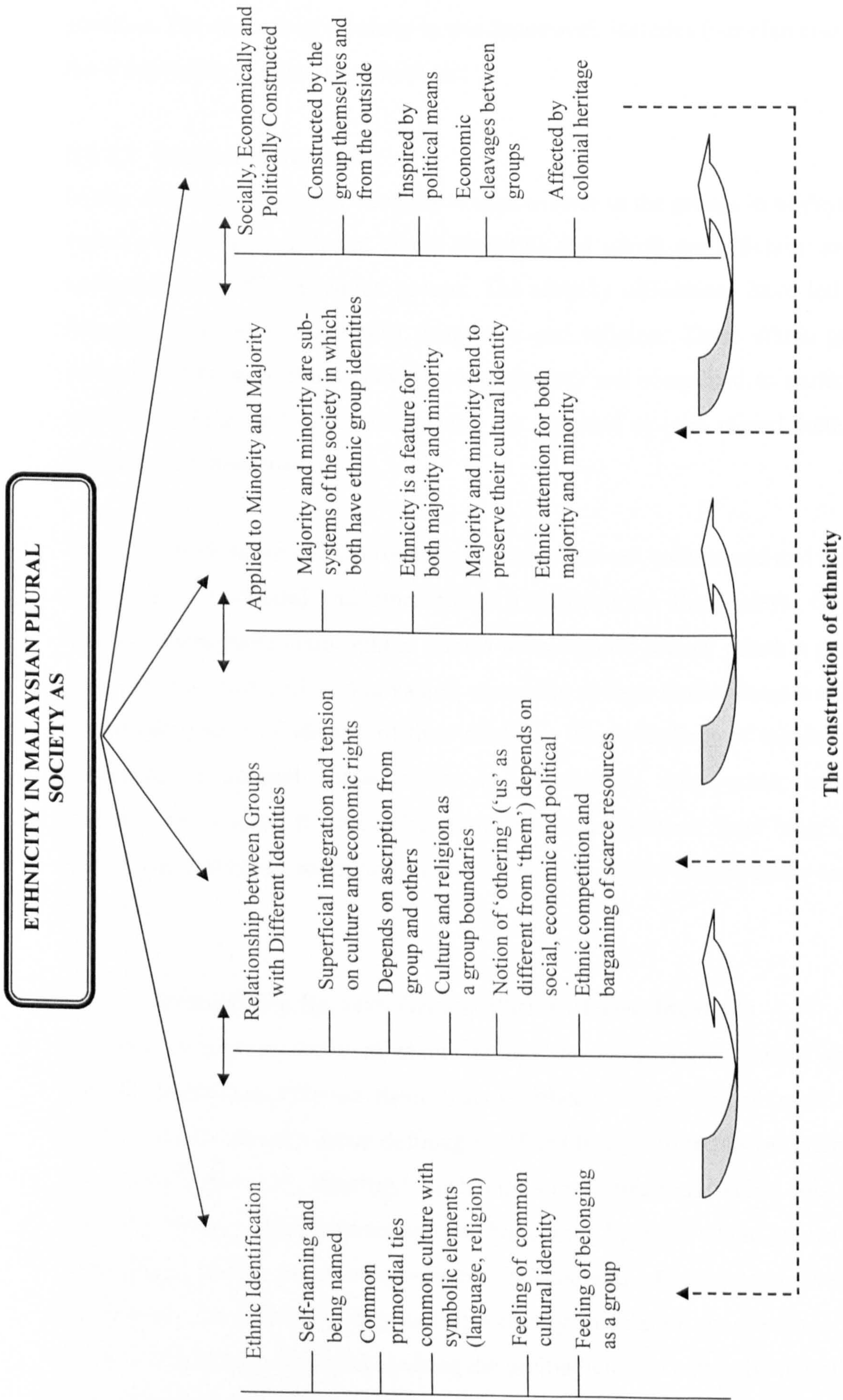


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework for Ethnicity



This application of the concept of ethnicity is related to the Malaysian context and situation. The concept of ethnicity in this framework includes four elements regarding the construction of ethnicity, which are:

### **3.3.7.1 Ethnic Identification**

In this study, the concept of ethnicity is used to refer to the groups in Malaysian plural society, which have different ethnic identities and which are officially and socially categorised as different ethnic groups. The identity differences have led to reflect divisions of politics, economics, languages and religion. These ethnic groups that make up Malaysian plural society, although they are compelled to participate in a uniform political and economic system, are regarded as (and regard themselves) as distinctive in other matters.

There are three major ethnic groups in Malaysia that are both named and self-naming, based on their cultural and other ethnic identifications: the Malays, Chinese, and Indians. These three major ethnic groups in this plural society attach a great deal of importance to their culture and values, especially to their mother-tongue and religion, as a major source of identity of their ethnicity. These feelings of ethnicity, whether primordial, a cultural characteristics or situationally constructed, normally and formally, are utilised to categorise those groups as different from others, based on their cultural identification, and in some situations based on economic and political positions.

### **3.3.7.2 Relationship Between Groups With Different Identities**

In terms of relations between ethnic groups, to some extent, culture and religion become boundaries between them. This is related to the idea of 'emic' and 'etic' constructions with each group defining itself and being defined by outsiders, which is the related notion of 'othering.' Such inter-ethnic relations within this context of 'othering' has produced competition and bargaining between ethnic groups in relation to social, economic and political matters. In Malaysian ethnic groups division, issues of ethnicity are about equality and opportunity in relation to economic and social needs. For instance, whilst recognising the multiethnic and culturally pluralistic nature of the Malaysian society, the Malay was identified as a disadvantaged group, which has been left behind in the economic field, especially compared with the Chinese,

who control the economy, particularly in business and most of the professional sector. This has been seen as an economic cleavage amongst ethnic groups; namely, ethnic competition for scarce resources and has affected the state in the process of policy production, including in education.

The economic structure, economic development or any kind of policy implementation (including in education) in relation to national development and national cohesion is often looked upon not as a betterment of the nation, but rather it is looked upon as betterment of one ethnic groups at the cost of others, either for the majority or the minority groups. Hence, when this ethnic-based paradigm has led to ethnic group's interests, then demands for betterment are usually ethnically oriented and people begin to organise themselves along ethnic lines to pursue the betterment of their group. This is an issue of ethnic groups' competition for the majority of Malaysians in their ethnically plural society, which becomes a delicate business for the state in managing the cleavages between groups. There are aspects of politics (gains and losses as in ethnic competition) in relation to the scarce resources, as well as meaning (social identity and belonging) in the ethnic relations reproduced by the component groups of plural society. In this kind of plural society, ethnicity tends to be articulated as group competition.

The notions of ethnicity and ethnic identity in Malaysian plural society are vital for galvanising ethnic individuals to preserve, protect, and promote their culture, language, and religion, including their economic objectives. Consciousness of ethnic identity is further strengthened by the role of the middle class in ethnic construction and ethnic reproduction (Balasubramaniam, 2006). This is related to the role of the middle class in promoting their ethnic community's interests through ethnic based organisations. Guan (2000) argues that because ethnicity combines 'an interest with an affective tie', ethnic groups are effective and successful in mobilising their members in pursuit of collective ends. In this sense, ethnic attachments are variously seen as a way to preserve a precious cultural heritage, to protect or to win economic and political advantages and retard the shift of power to the state (Yinger, 1985).

The tension between primordial ties and a socially constructed notion of ethnicity also occurs in some aspects of ethnic relations. Generally, such primordial ties have been



viewed as becoming more fluid, particularly amongst the younger generation, who have been educated through the mass education system within the national framework, and have been educated within a Malaysia orientation in school. Homogenising global cultural pressures have also had effects in this regard. However, the sense of ethnicity as socially and politically constructed to some extent continues to flourish within specific contexts and in relation to specific issues.

### **3.3.7.3 Ethnicity for Both Majority and Minority Groups**

In this research, ethnicity is regarded as a characteristic of both majority and minority groups, which refers to both Malay and non-Malay in Malaysian pluralistic society. The majority and minority status amongst the ethnic groups in Malaysia exists based on numbers, political power and the historical context of Malaysian society. This is also political and officially constructed by the notion of 'bumiputera' in contrast to descendents of immigrants (Chinese and Indians), who are named as non-bumiputera in the context of Malaysian economic policy. The relationship between the Malay and non-Malay in social, economic and political contexts, and the provision of such status of the Malay has been based on a social contract or consensus agreement of those ethnic groups' political leaders since independence.

The majority-minority relationship in numerical terms is changed if state boundaries are redrawn. For instance, whereas the Chinese formed a tiny minority in east Peninsula Malaysia, they formed a large portion of the population (in some areas like Penang, Chinese made up substantial population with Malay and as a majority in most of the urban areas) in most of the state in the area of west Peninsula Malaysia. As soon as minorities become majorities due to the definitions of system boundaries, new minorities tend to appear. Another example: when Singapore was part of Malaysia, the Chinese were a minority ethnic group and then became a majority in Singapore when Singapore split off from Malaysia in 1965. Here we should note that group boundaries and the label of minority and majority themselves may remain or change through such a processes. However, in the policy and political context in Malaysia, the privileged status of the Malay remains through the political hegemony of this group.

Both the majority and minority have their own objectives and purposes in terms of different ethnic groups' interests and in relation to the preservation of values, culture and language identities. The relationship between these ethnic groups in Malaysia is commonly viewed as harmonious and integrated in a superficial sense, but in such issues as those related to social, cultural and economic dimensions, there is the existence of the feeling of discrimination and unfair treatment between groups.

#### **3.3.7.4 Ethnicity as Socially, Economically and Politically Constructed**

The notion of ethnicity within the Malaysian context is also situationally constructed and discursively produced (Joseph, 2006a), involving economic, social and political issues. The border between ethnic groups is thick or thin based on the perception and feeling of the groups regarding some issues related to their ethnic communities' rights and interests. The feeling of ethnicity also waxes and wanes, depending on the extent of political manipulation for social and economic means.

In the Malaysian context, in terms of policy and general perceptions amongst the population, ranges of distinctions between the ethnic groups are offered. The social, economic, and political scenarios at certain levels have developed ethnic feelings and intense identifications. For example, the majority-minority dichotomy took on an indigenous-non-indigenous grouping. The Malays and the other native groups came under a common generic term of 'bumiputera' – literally meaning 'son of the soil' and the non-Malay, Chinese and Indian and others as 'non-bumiputera'. This majority-minority ratio in the Malaysian context develops the feelings of 'othering' between the groups recognised as 'bumiputera' and 'non-bumiputera'. The Malay position was further entrenched as the majority group through the efforts of the government to service the interests of the Malays and maintain the status-quo as the dominant ethnic group in Malaysia. Joseph's (2006a) research on the construction of ethnicity amongst Malaysian schoolgirls indicates that the policy has influenced Malaysian children in how they negotiate the discourse of ethnicity. She shows how policy was involved in framing the construction of the different ethnicities amongst schoolgirls from different ethnic backgrounds.



The feeling of ethnicity sometime has been inspired by political means, to serve political interests and power. Sometimes, politicians speak about differences and at other times, they speak across these differences. The sense of ethnicity is always being utilised politically, together with issues related to language, religion and economy in Malaysian pluralistic society. This is amongst challenges of the nation in seeking national integration.

### **3.4 Nation, Nation-State and Nation-Building**

The concepts of nation, nation-building and nation-state have been defined and redefined by scholars in a wide range of disciplines. A definition arises either from the influence of the writer's own discipline or area of research, or to suit the situation, time and the local context. Nevertheless, I believe that we cannot discard all these concepts if we are doing work which is related to nation-building. Therefore, this section provides a discussion of the concept of nation and the cluster of associated concepts such as nation-state, nation-building and national integration, with some care taken about their differentiation. Discussion about these concepts has been connected to education policy and ethnicity issues in relation to the process of nation-building in plural societies, especially in the Malaysian context. I believe that the discussion of these terms can provide a better understanding of the focus of this research.

The main concern here is to explore and discuss the concept of nation which is an underpinning element for the ideas of national integration in terms of nation-building. Though I felt it was difficult to deal with this abstract concept, it is my endeavour to understand more about this concept, which is I think, an essential foundation for conceptualising and framing the nation-building concept utilised in this research. Based on the review of literature, the emerging themes on the notion of nation have been produced with the intention of conceptualising and contextualising this term in the Malaysian situation. Towards the end of this section, the discussion is connected to education policy and ethnicity issues in a plural society in relation to national integration for nation-building, specifically in the Malaysian context.

#### **3.4.1 Concept of Nation**

The concept of nation is mired in difficult arguments in the various relevant literatures, involving various perspectives and approaches. A discussion of nation has

been carried on by a number of well known scholars from a wide range of disciplines, including history (Seton-Watson, 1977; Tilly, 1975; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawn, 1990; Schulze, 1996), anthropology (Deutsch, 1979; Guibernau, 1996; Appadurai, 1996), the field of sociology (writers such as Smith, 1986, 1991a & 1991b; Anderson, 1991; James, 1996) and political science (for example Connor, 1972 & 1994). Particularly, cited within these literatures were the perspectives and arguments that many definitions of nation exists either from the basis of long historical circumstances or by the establishment of political coercion, or through the imagination and will of members of the nation. The following is a brief discussion of the ideas and propositions of the main perspectives on the concept of the nation.

#### **3.4.1.1 The Nation as Cultural or Ethnic Community**

One view of nation is associated with culture, which locates the ethnic dimension as a main aspect of nation formation. Most of the authors within this perspective see culture and ethnicity as significant elements for explaining the concept of nation (Geertz, 1963; Deutsch, 1979; Armstrong, 1982; Smith, 1981, 1986 & 1991a; Connor, 1994). Geertz (1963) and Deutsch (1979) for instance, commonly view that nations are related to an ethnic dimension. Geertz (1963) argues that the nation is based on ethnic group and distinguishes one nation from another in terms of objective cultural markers such as language, religion, myth of ancestry, values and traditions. Deutsch (1979) asserts that the nation is the result of the transformation of people, or several ethnic elements, in the process of social mobilisation. Following these ideas, we can consider a nation as a group of people with apparently common cultural ties and having control of the members within the territory of the state.

Writers such as Armstrong (1982), Smith (1981, 1986, 1991a) and Connor (1994) define nation with consideration to ethnicity and cultural aspects. Generally, they view the growth of the nation as a process through long historical and social transformations, which involves culture and ethnic elements. Smith (1986) believes that nations are developing from ethnic cores which have existed since early human history. He claims that all modern nations are products of age-old building material which is based on the cultural, symbolic, ethnic and myth-making aspect of nation-building. In a modern society, ethnic elements still seem important in the existence of



nation. This has been shown by most of the states' leaders, who remain concerned about ethnicity in developing their nation (Smith, 1986). As Smith observes

Even for the most recently created states, ethnic homogeneity and cultural unity are paramount considerations. Even where their societies are genuinely "plural" and there is an ideological commitment to pluralism and cultural toleration, the elites of the new states find themselves compelled, by their own ideals and the logic of the ethnic situation, to forge new myths and symbols of their emergent nations and new "political culture" of anti-colonialism and the post-colonial (African and Asian) state (Smith, 1986, p.147)

In his other writing, Smith (1991a) further emphasises the ethnic dimension in the process of developing national identity for a new nation, especially in most countries which have been colonies. According to Smith, the creation of a civic and territorial nation in these kinds of countries is achieved through two main ways (Smith, 1991a, p.110):

1. A dominant ethnic model in which the culture of the new state's core ethnic community becomes the main pillar of the new national political identity and community, especially where the culture in question can claim to be historic and living among the core community. Though other cultures continue to flourish, the identity of the emerging political community is shaped by the historic culture of its dominant ethnic group.
2. Creating a supra-ethnic political culture for the new political community. In this case, there is no acknowledged dominant ethnicity; the new state contains a number of equally small ethnic communities and categories, none of which can dominate the state.

In supporting this view, Gottlieb (1993) asserts that nation and ethnic community are related to each other. Gottlieb argues that nations and ethnic groups are individuals' collective entities in which 'prominent political spokesmen and personalities voice their claims in terms of independence, of self-determination, of autonomy, of minorities' rights, or of secession' (Gottlieb, 1993, p. xii). The distinct identity of a nation is often expressed through culture and territory of the nation (Gottlieb 1993). This means that the differences between nations are based on cultural and spatial boundaries amongst them. Drawing from this perspective, the concept of nation can be said to be the community of common cultural bonds, which have similar origins and cultural identities. Nation, from this perspective, is a group or people of a

particular ethnicity who have a shared history, traditions, and culture, sometimes religion, live in the same territory and usually seek for their self-determination to distinguish themselves from other communities or nations. Some scholars speak of an ethno-nation (Connor, 1994); Smith (1991a) has considered these matters under the name 'ethno-symbolism'.

Connor (1994) specifically reserves the concept of the nation for ethnic groups based on a common ancestry and kinship relations. He regards nation as the largest human groups characterised by a myth of common ancestry (Connor, 1994, p.80). Myth is a significant word in this definition. As Connor states, the nation is 'a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related. It is the largest group that can command a person's loyalty because of felt kinship ties; it is the fully extended family' (Connor, 1994, p.196-98). However, he rejects all objective cultural markers such as common language, common religion, or either shared cultural factors as valid identity of the groups. For him there is no valid identity within a group qualified as a real symbol of nationhood. This is probably true when we consider that the identity of a group is fluid and changeable based on various circumstances and factors that influence the members of the group. In this sense, the members of the community need to have relationships with each other to become the nation. In contrast, a group of people who do not have the same ancestry is not compatible with nation. This notion of the nation creates difficulty for analysing populations with heterogeneous cultures, kinship and ancestry relation, especially for the states which have different groups of people with different cultures and group identifications. In other words, how does this notion fit with ethnically pluralistic nations?

#### **3.4.1.2 The Nation as Imagined Community**

In contrast, others view the nation in relation to modern times and define nation as a form of imagination of the people of the nation. This is what has been referred to by Benedict Anderson, with his now popular terminology, as nation as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991). Smith (1991b) asserts that the uses of 'imaginary' have come to occupy a pre-eminent place in attempts to explain the formation of nations and the spread of nationalism. According to Smith (1991b), the nation in this version is an abstract concept 'which emerges in specific historical circumstances, ones in which human agency and imagination play a pivotal role' (p.353).



As noted, the pioneer scholar who has coined the idea of nation as 'imagined community' is Benedict Anderson (1991). He suggests that nation is socially constructed and ultimately imagined by the people who perceived themselves as a part of such a group. According to Anderson, the nation is imagined because the members never know all their fellow members. In other words, the nation as a form of community is a product of imagination. The members of the nation do not learn about each other personally and face to face, but in their minds live the image of their nation.

Anderson states that the nation is an 'imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (Anderson, 1991, p.6.). Nation in this sense is something imagined by the members of the community rather than a concrete social product. It is a product of social imagination because the members of the community identify and consider themselves as a nation, bonded by their political unit and recognised by others based on what they imagined. Anderson says 'communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson, 1991, p.6). This means that people's images of being collected into a nation differ from each other (Gilbert, 2000, p.64).

Nation is imagined based on identification and the feeling amongst members that they have a relationship with each other in a somewhat abstract sense. This belief holds influence over the believers or the members of the community who imagine themselves as a nation, yet somehow the nation is still a powerful entity with political cohesion and sovereignty. In addition, Anderson (1991) emphasises that nation is imagined as a community because the nation is conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship. This view propounds the idea that nations can only be defined as imagined, as a product of the imagination of the members of the community. This has been the underpinning concept of most of the recent writers in their discussion of the nation (Edensor, 2002; Gilbert, 2000; Schulze, 1996; James, 1996).

In the process of developing an image of the nation, it is important to determine how the imagination and the ideas of the nation have been developed amongst the members of the community. Anderson notes that capitalism and printing are important means for dominant human thought and social organisation (Anderson, 1991, p.43).

The languages, through the medium of 'capitalism and print' distribute the knowledge, information and the ideas of the nation amongst its members. He also notes that universal literacy through mass schooling is very important to the creation of the imagined community of the nation. Indeed, he sees the gestation of mass schooling in these terms.

The community that has been imagined, the so-called 'nation' has territorial, cultural and political boundaries, and sovereignty. Related, Edensor (2002) when discussing national identity, asserts that nation is spatially distinguished as a bounded entity, possessing borders (p.37). However, the borders of a nation are also imagined and enclosed to a particular culture for their identification. Smith also agrees on the importance of space and boundary of a nation, as he remarks that nations 'define a definite social space within which members must live and work, and demarcate an historic territory that locates a community in time and space' (Smith, 1991a: p.16).

The imaginary aspect of nation is also considered by Hagen Schulze (1996). According to Schulze, nations come to know themselves through their common history, but this common history of the nation as a rule has no more than limited reality and it is more the product of dreams and visions than the product of facts (p.98). The nation as an 'imagined community' is an abstract concept developed from the imagination and feeling of the community itself. James (1996) for example, agrees that the idea of nation is abstract in terms of level of integration in relation to their members' relationships.

From another perspective, Appadurai (1996) proposes the imaginary ideas of nations in a global or transnational context, which influences the boundaries and the characters of the nation. Appadurai's ideas of modernity develop a theory of globalisation, transnationalism and an emergent postnationalism. He sees that the process of nation-building is a continuous process and affected by circumstances in the global context. Thus, he asserts that the state has to continue work to create the nation, hold the members together with flows of people and all of the ways which globalisation has affected the boundaries of the nation (Appadurai, 1996).



According to Appadurai, globalisation affects national boundaries and national identities through the flows of various kinds which move across national boundaries. The idea of nation is not limited within the boundaries of the states, it 'flourishes transnationally' (Appadurai, 1996, p.172) because of the flows of people, information, technologies, the economy and ideologies around the world, across the boundaries of nation-states. In this sense, national identities of nations are 'threatened' or at least challenged by the globalisation of culture and therefore, 'states play an increasingly delicate role: too much openness to global flows and the nation-state is threatened by revolt' (Appadurai, 1996, p.42). Indeed, Appadurai argues that in this context the hyphen between nation and state has become attenuated and each today becomes the project of the other. This appears to be the case in contemporary Malaysia, as the research reported in subsequent Chapters will show.

Appadurai proposes five components of global cultural flows that affect the character and image of nation in the contemporary context of globalisation:

- 1) **Ethnoscape** – is the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree (p.33)
- 2) **Technoscape** – is the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology and the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kind of preciously impervious boundaries (p.34)
- 3) **Financescape** – as the disposition of global capital which is a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape to follow than ever before (p.34)
- 4) **Mediascape** – refers both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information. According to Appadurai, what is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and the ethnoscape to viewers throughout the world (p.35)
- 5) **Ideoscape** – another concatenation of images but directly political and frequently have to do with ideologies of states – consist of a chain of ideas, terms and images, including freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty and democracy (p.36)

These landscapes, according to Appadurai are the 'building blocks' for what he called 'imagined worlds' (p.33) that is the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe. In this sense, nations seem to develop multicultural or multinational identities affected by these kinds of global flows. Through ethnoscares, member of a particular nation can also live outside of the nation but still participate politically within the nation through what Appadurai (1996) calls a 'diasporic public sphere'. Therefore, in order to build the nation within global demands and influences, the leaders and the population of the nation somehow need to face a tension between the local and global interests. In this sense, the nation today is transnational or even in extreme form postnational, where its members, ideologies, information, technologies, and economic dimensions flow in and out across the borders, and influence the ways the nation is imagined. As Appadurai noted: 'an important fact of the world we live today is that many persons on the globe live in such imagined worlds (and not just imagined communities) and thus are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surrounds them' (Appadurai, 1996, p.33). For him, imagination, imaginary and the capacity to imagine are now traits that everybody has and are evident in everyday life.

Appadurai also argues that the way nations were created is often linked to parallel creations. The introduction of a mass schooling system and the move to mass literacy developed the feeling and imagination of the people to be a nation (Appadurai, 1996). Furthermore, he argues that now the access to technology and information (computer, information technology) other than print material allows movement beyond the enclosure of the nation. This situation has moved members of the nation into an emergent post-national context; the new technology allows people to participate in politics away from where they are, where they are located. In this way, Appadurai sees the construction of post-national diasporic public sphere, where through information and communication technologies (ICTs), migrant citizens are able to participate in the politics of the 'home' country, while actually living in another country.

Based on Appadurai's perspective, the nation nowadays cannot only be viewed as referring to the historical, cultural or ethnic aspects of the groups of people within a



limited geographical space of the boundaries of a nation. The new important factor that needs to be considered relates to the effects of globalisation in creating the images, imagination, and the identity of the nation. In this sense, states are in more complicated situation to build their nation because of the tension between local and global interest around the nation. As a consequence and as already noted, Appadurai argues that today nation and state have become the project of each other in a context of what he calls an emergent post-nationalism. I would note, though, that there has been some strengthening of national boundaries post September 11.

### **3.4.1.3 The Nation as Invention and Fabricated Community**

Some scholars view the nation as a political and cultural creation, one which is invented and designed by political and cultural means. For instance, Deutsch (1979), Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawn (1983 & 1990) view the nation as a modern creation. Deutsch (1979) sees that the nation can be built according to different plans, various materials, rapidly or gradually, by different sequences of steps, and in partial independence from its environment. He defines a nation as a people which have gained control over some institutions of social coercion, leading eventually to a full-fledged nation-state (Deutsch, 1979, p. 14). According to Smith (1991a), the invention of the nation is crucial, especially in periods of rapid social change, particularly in so-called modern societies. The important factor of this 'created national community' (Smith, 1991a, p.21) is to secure the cohesion of its members in the face of fragmentation and disintegration engendered by rapid industrial change.

The nation is invented, created, or developed by some elements which contributed to forming the nation. For instance, Gellner (1983) regards nationalism as an important element in creating a nation. He argues that nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism, observing there is no 'nation without nationalism' (Gellner, 1983). Hobsbawn (1983) proposes a tradition of the people as an important element for national invention to develop the nation. His idea of 'invented tradition' suggests that the nation is a product of the invention of tradition. In supporting this idea, Hobsbawn (1990) in his book entitled 'Nation and Nationalism Since 1780' also interprets nation as invention and fabrication. He states that modern nations have been created by the unification of various people into a common society or community as a means to political and economic ends.



Certain scholars posited the idea of the nation as invention or fabricated community as a process of social and political construction. Smith (1981) claims the nation is created in various ways and circumstances which involve two common bases: the territorial state or political community, and secondly a community of culture. In his other discussion about the nation, Smith regards the nation as an artefact of cultural engineers and also as an historical invention through the recombination of existing elements, particularly the elements of tradition and historical consciousness (Smith, 1998, 1991a). This idea is comparable with Hobsbawn's of invented tradition; however, in contrast Smith maintains the ethnic aspect is important in national fabrication (Smith, 1981, 1986, 1991a, 1991b, 1998). For him, those who set out to forge modern nations are reconstructing the traditions, customs, and institutions of the ethnic community or communities which form the basis of the nation, rather than of inventing new traditions.

In his argument concerning the idea of nation as invented or created, Smith (1998) questions whether the people would be able to follow or simply believe the propaganda or ceremonials for inventing the tradition to form a nation. According to him, unless the public was already attuned to the propaganda, and the propaganda and ritual expressed pre-existing popular sentiments which saw the ethnic nation as the family and locality writ large, the people would not willingly realise themselves as a nation. In this sense, those pre-existing sentiments such as ethnicity, culture, language, tradition and historical memories are important dimensions in creating or inventing the nation. Therefore, Smith claims that the absence of pre-existing state-wide traditions, myths, symbols, and memories in many new states in Africa and Asia (the states that have been colonies) has greatly hampered the process of national integration (Smith, 1998, p.131).

#### **3.4.1.4 The Nation as Civic Community**

Other authors view the nation as not necessarily based on ethnic cores, kinship or blood relation, language, culture or religion (Brubaker, 2004; Seymour, 2000). In this sense, the nation is regarded as any group of people who voluntarily aspire to a common political state. The voluntary aspect is a basis for will and commitment amongst the members of the group to their nation, rather than to ethnic or cultural identities. In this case, if such a group of people succeeds in forming a state, the



loyalties of the group members might be civic in nature, as opposed to ethnic (Brubaker, 2002). This idea of nation is based on a definition of nation which is different from the concept of nation based upon the ethnic cores, which can be defined as a civic nation.

Seymour (2000) in his proposal of a socio-cultural definition adds a political dimension in defining a nation. According to him, a nation is a cultural group not necessarily united by common descent, but also endowed with civic ties. Similarly, Smith (1991b) also agrees that nation involves both civic and ethnic aspects. In fact, according to him, every nation contains civic and ethnic elements in varying degrees and different forms (p.12). In this sense a nation is a somewhat mixed, involving both ethnic or cultural and civic elements.

Although all these views consider the importance of ethnic and civic aspects in defining the nation, the nation cannot be simply defined as equivalent to ethnicity, nor can it be regarded as the same as population which is homogenous in culture, language, religion and being united as a nation. Schulze (1996) asserts that a nation was not the same concept as ethnicity. Similarly, Connor (1994) distinguishes the nation from ethnic communities by degree of self-consciousness. According to Connor (1994), while an ethnic group may be other-defined, a nation must be self-defined. The views of nation which considered nation as an ethnic group are contradictory with the reality in the modern world today, in which most societies are ethnically mixed. This is even more so today, given the flows of people across the globe (Appadurai, 1996).

Guibernau (1996) also argues that nation needs to be distinguished from ethnic group. He refers to the nation as a 'human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself' (Guibernau, 1996; p.100). In this sense, a nation is not only sharing a common origin, diverse cultural and historical ties, rather the main feature of the nation is a specific political demand for sovereignty and interest which is supported by the loyalty and cohesion of its members.

The view of Smith (1991a) proposes that the nation comprises both cultural and political aspects. For him national identity for a nation is located in a political community as well as a cultural one. (p.99). Smith listed five fundamental features of national identity:

1. an historic territory or homeland
2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common, mass public culture
4. common legal rights and duties for all members
5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members

According to Smith (1991a), what distinguished the nation from other types of communities is its size, which is generally large but always limited; its sovereignty, which guarantees its freedom; and its powerful sense of fraternity which involves considerable self-sacrifice.

### **3.5 Nation-State**

There is considerable ambiguity relating to the concepts of nation and state. Connor (1994) pointed out the uncertainty in the uses of the term nation, when he noted that the concept 'nation-state' sometime is used with reference to cultural groups and people, while other times it describes political entities, by which is meant the 'state'. According to Connor (1994), it is probably that practice of inter utilising nation and state as alternative short forms for the expression nation-state. However, Connor comes to conclude that the very coining of the hyphenated nation-state illustrated the approval of the vital differences between nation and state. It was designed to describe a territorial-political unit (a state) whose borders coincided or nearly coincided with the territorial distribution of a national group (a nation). More concisely, it described a situation in which a nation had its own state.

Gellner (1983) perceived the nation to be a function of state; however, he argues that nation and state are not the same. According to Gellner (1983), before nation and state could become intended for each other, each of them had to emerge. Gellner further emphasises that the state has certainly emerged without the help of the nation, and the other way around; some nations have certainly emerged without the blessings of their state.



Others are of the view that on further consideration, ambiguity remains appropriate for conceptualising both nation and state. Referring specifically to Enloe (1980), we could understand how the nation and state can exist together. Enloe explains, 'when horizontal bonds of belonging exist among such people, nation and state are territorially coterminous and comprise a nation-state' (p.12). Enloe also pointed out that almost all independent states strive to be nation-states, but many fail to achieve this aim and remain simply states (p.12).

If we use the term nation for ethnic group and cultures and the term state for government, we can conclude that nation-state is a self-governing group of people with common ethnic ties. However, today more and more people are realising that the world is pluralist; that is to say, the so-called 'nation-state' is based on heterogeneous populations, while individual identities are often hybridised. We cannot deny that most of the countries in the world are composed of diverse ethnic communities; especially in the context of modernity and globalisation with the flows of people across state boundaries. Large or small states alike often have sizeable minorities, and most states have small ethnic minorities. In other words, few countries (or probably no countries) today can claim 'pure nation' (if we consider nation based on ethnic group) with completely homogenous ethnic composition, even if the description 'pure' is used in inappropriately here. As Smith (1981, p.9) argues, the fact is that very few of the world's states today are ethnically homogenous, and many of them are distinctly poly-ethnic states.

Consequently, if the notion of nation- state is based on ethnic group in form and appearance, it has ignored the reality of the state that has no one single ethnic group in their population. In the context of a plural society, to identify the nation-state based on one ethnic group identification will produce vagueness of the reality of the state, with each group jostling for influence and power, or living in uneasy harmony within state border. According to Smith (1981), the term 'nation-state' based on ethnic group identification is a misnomer because ethnic pluralism rather than ethnic homogeneity appears to be the norm today. Moreover, the flows of people associated with globalisation also ensure that ethnic composition of most nation-states continues to change.

### **3.6 Nation Building and National Integration**

Certain authors define nation-building as a process of bringing isolated communities into intimate contact with each other and as a process of making the population loyal and committed to the state (Deutsch and Foltz, 1966). The result of this process is that the communities become integrated, and turned their loyalties towards the larger entity. For instance, Deutsch and Foltz (1966) define nation-building as a process of social mobilisation and cultural assimilation. Pakenham (1970) sees nation-building as a process of bringing together regional, religious, caste, linguistic, tribal and other cleavages. This process also produces the necessary complementarity of social communication and the creation of linkages between centres and regions (Smith, 1991a).

Nation-building also has been used to describe various processes of change, including economic, social, culture and political development (Bendix, 1964; Tilly, 1975; Lijphart, 1977; Pye, 1965). For instance, Lipjhart (1977) insists that nation-building is a process of political development. He claims that nation-building must be seen as prescription for the leaders of the developing state in their policy-making.

Following the above discussion, nation building seems to be a concept developed to describe the processes of national integration and consolidation that lead to the establishment and progression of the modern nation-state. Lipjhart (1997) asserts that democratisation and other dimensions of development are usually thought to be dependent on national integration. A nation-building process involves various circumstances, policy making, enforcement and other symbolic elements to unite the members of the nation.

In many plural societies, the state has a problem when it attempts to build a viable nation and national cohesion and development. In this context, the process of nation-building always has been viewed as bringing together people of different ethnic groups, different languages, cultures, religions and other ethnic markers, and moulding their orientations towards a unified nation. In other words, nation-building can be regarded as a process of national integration for pulling together the heterogeneous population of the nation, or bringing together culturally and socially diverse groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity.



In this sense, in the context of an ethnically plural society, integration is an element of eliminating parochial loyalties of ethnic or cultural group identities. In some societies today, the concept of multiculturalism is a way of coping with ethnic pluralism and dual loyalties.

The same process has been called by different names. Jackman (1972, p.512) refers to the nation-building process as 'nationalisation'. Coleman and Rosberg (1964, p.9) call it 'horizontal integration', by which they meant it is a progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities on a horizontal plane in a process of creating a homogeneous territorial political community. Morrison and Stevenson (1972) label the same process as 'value integration'. They see it as a process of building up a congruency among values held by individuals who have differences of language, religion, and ethnicity.

Nation building in terms of national integration is a process associated with plural societies. Nation-building consists of all the processes and steps taken in bringing together people of different ethnic groups, language, culture, religion, and moulding their orientations and identities towards a nation which existed in the form of a state. It is then the national integration of the heterogeneous plural population which is vital for the development and progress of the state.

### **3.7 Education, Ethnicity, and the National Integration**

Education is usually viewed as playing a major role and carrying a principal objective to transmit to new generations all experiences of society and civilisation developed by previous generations, since this kind of learning is not transmitted biologically. The process of transmission of the group's culture usually aims to awaken and inculcate a sense of identity and a feeling of loyalty so as to be accepted as a member of the group or nation. In this sense, education has been viewed as a social artefact embodying aspirations about the good life for the individual and the best arrangements for the whole society (Kogan, 1978). Despite the fact that education is developing individual character, passing on knowledge and intellectual endeavours, education is also among the main modes of inclusion and control in the processes of nation-building (Smith, 1991b),

The main problem faced by states with ethnically plural populations is to find appropriate approaches to unite the heterogeneous population with different identities, cultures, languages, and religions. In this sense, national integration is an important element in the overall process of nation building, especially in those countries which are pluralistic. In some plural societies, a nationality integrated population is very necessary for political, economic, and social development, and education has always been seen as amongst the most important policy fields for achieving this intention. Rothermund and Simon (1986) in their introduction to their book on education and integration of ethnic minorities maintain that education is an important instrument of integration. They touch on language as a crucial issue in discussion of education and integration.

Whilst education has been recognised as an important instrument to develop a united and harmonious nation in a plural society and state, the school has always been seen as social institution that can play a significant role for achieving social cohesion amongst the young generation from various ethnic groups through various approaches and policies. Some scholars view social interaction in school across ethnic groups as essential to developing harmonious inter-ethnic relations and mutual understanding amongst groups in order to enhance national integration in a plural society. Holmes (1970), for instance, supports the policy of a single system of uniform schools. In supporting this view, Landsdown (1999) emphasises that ethnic segregation in an education system will develop inequality, maintain prejudice, and stereotypes between ethnic groups. Pattigrew and Pajonas (1973) also agree that schools with multi-ethnic children will provide positive environments to the children to interact with each other and will decrease prejudices and build understanding between different cultures, as they noted that 'heterogeneous worlds demands heterogeneous training' (p.87). These ideas perhaps can relate to Dewey's perspective in relation to the role of school as social medium for the children. He believed that 'the intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment' (Dewey, 1944, p.21).

However, although education seem to be an important instrument in order to unite the heterogeneous population in a plural society and nation, ethnicity issues have always co-existed in conjunction with government policies towards integration through the



school system. Some scholars discuss issues of ethnicity in education systems around the aspect of inequality in education for minority groups (Verma, 1997; Bagley, 1982; Sarup, 1986). According to Verma (1997), inequality in education systems has strengthened discriminatory behaviour towards some ethnic groups, especially for the minority. Conflicts between school and minority group occur because of different values, beliefs, and behaviours. Verma stressed that ethnic prejudices continue to exist and the minority groups always feel discriminated against because of the differences of culture, religion and language compared with the dominant group.

Education is seldom left to chance, especially when it is related to the groups' interests, or involving ethnicity issues in a plural society. As Collins (1975) remarks, education is one of the most important contributors to cultural distinctions, in which education can be seen as *pseudoethnicity* – a sub case of the same processes that also produce ethnicity. Gilborn (1995) suggests that ethnic issues are relevant in education because education has come to occupy an essential role in contemporary 'ethnic politics'. Rex (1986) also agrees that education is one sphere of ethnic tension because it is a part of the public and private domain in a multi-ethnic or plural society. He regards ethnic tensions in an education system as tensions around equality of opportunity. Furthermore, Rex emphasises that ethnic or culture differences can be a potential source of discord. The potential source of discord around ethnicity issues, according to Rex (1986), includes a clash of values, religion, instruction of minority culture and language. In the education system, these elements can produce tensions between ethnic groups which are related to equality of opportunity and ethnic differences. Easterly and Levine (1997) also argue that polarised societies are prone to competitive rent-seeking by the different groups and have difficulty agreeing on the provision of public goods such as education.

### **3.8 Contextualising the Nation, National Integration, Nation-Building**

The discussions here about the nation, nation-state, and nation building can be summarised by saying that all these concepts are normative with different perspectives and theoretical foundations for different people, and yet they remain a subject of much debate. However, whether it is a question of concrete or abstract theoretical work, it is necessary for these concepts to be located in a particular place.

Specifically, for the purpose of this research, the concepts and ideas need to be contextualised inside Malaysia and its history.

In this research, I contextualised these concepts in the Malaysian social, economic and political context in relation to the education as a mode of national integration. This proposed contextual framework is illustrated in Figure 3.2. I regard Malaysia as a nation with diverse ethnic groups that structure the population of the state. An important aspect in the process of building the nation which is ethnically diverse is national integration. Thus, national integration is seen as a central to nation-building processes, with education policy given a central role in relation to it.

Based on this framework, education has been located as an important mode to unite the diverse ethnic groups in contemporary Malaysia. In terms of building a nation which is integrated and harmonious, the education arena involves various issues in relation to ethnicity. Language, humanism, religion, and education provision are amongst ongoing ethnicity issues in the education system and education policy. The production of such policy aimed at enhancing ethnic integration, in this sense faced the challenges of managing ethnic community rights and national interests, and at the same time needed to consider global demands on the education system.

In consideration of the approach of the imaginary or imaginative concept of the nation, this framework explains that the image of the nation is continuously developed and created by the state through the symbolic national elements and specific or general state policy, but in conjunction, the members of a nation also have an image of what their nation is. In the context of Malaysia, with diverse ethnic groups with their heterogeneous cultures, the important image of the nation that the leaders try to build is one of a plural society which is united and in harmony and shares a common national identity. However, when it is formulating policy, the people tend to create their own image of the nation. The image and ideas about a nation also depend on the nature and structure of society, including the political objectives of the state.

Taking the views of Smith (1991a), who argues that in most developing countries, a dominant ethnic group usually tends to be the core for cultural, political, and national identities, Malaysia in this sense remains qualified to present a striking example. In



spite of the fact that other ethnic cultures and identities continue to thrive in Malaysia, the majority group dominates the development of the national policy, including in education. For instance, Malay Language is a national language. In addition, Islamic values have usually been viewed as a foundation of the National Culture Policy. In regard to the economic aspect, there are some policies that provide ethnic preferences, particularly for the Malays who have been official recognised as an indigenous people in the country (Means, 1986; Mauzy, 1993; Freedman, 2001).

In part due to the application of the term nation-building, this framework does not limit the perspective of the nation only to an ethnic group basis, nor the nation as only a civic society. Although both of these concepts of nation are important and have purchase in the reality of the Malaysian society, the fact is that, Malaysian heterogeneous ethnic groups probably bring different imaginations, views, and ideas of what the nation should be in relation to national integration. It is important to give attention to aspects of cultural and ethnic diversity in order to put the concept of nation-building in a real sense of social reality in Malaysian plural society. In this sense, nation building is a process of building up the plural society in the nation to be united and harmonious. This is a problem that must be confronted by the state.

In managing, mediating, and integrating the diverse ethnic groups, the state does not only face domestic issues. The problem of global influences and pressure on the nation, culturally, socially, economically, or politically, has been regarded as a crucial external factor of the nation-building process in Malaysia. This is to say that the national integration process in terms of nation-building needs to look at the local context, yet somehow has to link with the global objectives and demands on the nation. The local and global pressure becomes a mechanism of the local to produce fragmentation and difference within the nation (Henry et al., 2001). Accordingly, the state is always trying to intervene in both the local and the global. As Appadurai (1996) noted, the relation between local and global is not simply a spatial matter, but the most important issue for the government is how to deal with the tensions between the local and the global.



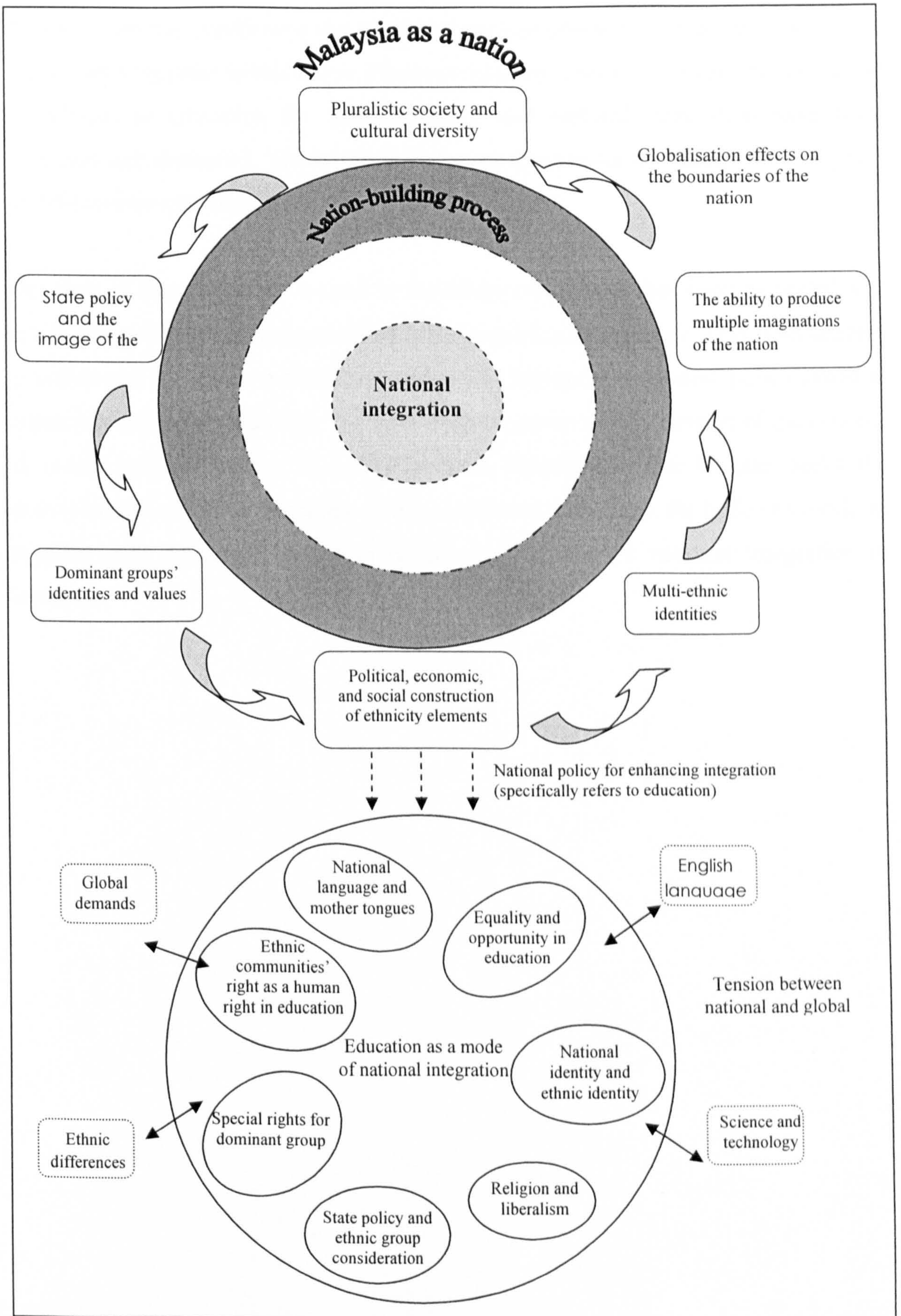


Figure 3.2: Conceptual framework of Malaysia as a nation and education as a mode of national integration



### **3.9 Conclusion**

This Chapter has overviewed and discussed various concepts which are important to the research reported in this thesis. The underpinning concepts of ethnicity and nation in relation to education for nation-building and national integration have been reviewed and discussed. The contextualising of these ideas in relation to Malaysian society is conceptualised in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2.

My view of these concepts located in the Malaysian context has been presented and this is adapted in the investigations of Malaysian education policy. This is an attempt to understand the issues surrounding ethnicity in Malaysian education policy aimed at achieving national integration. The next Chapter moves to a discussion of the concept of policy and approaches in policy research. Specifically, the Chapter seeks the underpinnings of the development of the conceptual framework for policy research on ethnicity and education policy in relation to the aim of national integration in Malaysia.

## CHAPTER 4

### POLICY AND POLICY RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

#### 4.1 Introduction

The study of policy has been of broad research interest in various social science disciplines. Despite the wide interest in policy study, this area of research is still in relative infancy. According to Taylor et al. (1997), policy study emerged in the late 1960s, initially to address technical aspects and distribution of resources within the state. From subsequent developments in approaches, methodologies, and concepts within and across disciplines, policy research is variously labelled as policy science, policy studies, policy analysis, policy scholarship (Grace, 1984 & 1995) and more recently, policy sociology (Ozga, 1987 & 2000; Ball, 1990, 1997; Bove et al., 1992; Lingard, 1993; Raab, 1994).

This Chapter is concerned with exploring the concept and the nature of policy in general and more specifically is concerned with education policy. In this Chapter, I begin with discussion of the meaning of policy by exploring its definitions, progressing in a broad direction from those that might be regarded as functional to more critical and post-structural accounts. This is followed by related considerations, in substance and perspective on what is education policy, its role and contribution, and approaches to analysis. Drawing from the discussion, a framework for analysing Malaysian education policy aimed at enhancing national integration was developed to drive this study. This Chapter advocates a critical approach to policy and policy analysis and understands policy in dialectical terms.

#### 4.2 Policy Definition

There is no complete consensual definition of policy amongst scholars in this field. Indeed, there is conceptual ambiguity within many policy definitions across disciplines (Ozga, 2000, Prunty, 1985). Although Ozga (2000) has noted that how the term is understood depends to a considerable degree on the perspective of the researcher, Ball (1994a) argues that many policy researchers fail to define conceptually what they mean by policy. In his comments, Ball notes:



One of the conceptual problems currently lurking within much policy research and policy sociology is that more often than not analysts fail to define conceptually what they mean by policy. The meaning of policy is taken for granted and theoretical and epistemological dry rot is built into the analytical structures they construct (Ball, 1994a, p. 15).

According to Ball (1994a, p. 15), the most important aspect that should be considered is that the meaning or possible meanings that we give to policy affects “how” we research and how we interpret what we find. Therefore, I believe that the research perspective on what policy is will affect the research approach.

Much of the literature on policy defines policy from the position of public policy. These literatures argue that ‘for the policy to be regarded as a public policy, it must to some degree have been generated or at least processed within the framework of government procedures, influences and organizations’ (Hogwood and Gunn (1984, p.24). Taylor et al. (1997) offer a similar view that public policy refers to government generated policies which are developed and implemented through state bureaucracies and machinery. According to Finch (1984) this approach to defining policy sees it as derived from public institutions, with governments seeking to meet social and individual needs and to solve social, political and economic problems. Here, policy in general is regarded as a field of activity, actions, plans, purposes and intentions of the government or state, dealing with various fields of economics, social and political problems and aims.

Some authors emphasise the definition of policy in terms of decision making within the government’s bureaucratic structure. For instance, Dye (1992, cited in Taylor et al., 1997) suggests that policy is whatever governments choose to do, or refers to government actions or statements. However, some scholars reject this kind of approach to defining policy and suggest that this constitutes a very limited sense of understanding policy (Trowler, 2003; Dale, 1989). Dale (1989) argues that this notion of policy portrays policy as isolated from other contexts of policy processes. In other words, this idea of defining policy offers an oversimplified understanding of policy and pays less attention to the other policy domains which are interrelated. It implies the idea that policies are generated and implemented in a straightforward and unproblematic way. Here, this notion of policy is based on a state control model of policy, which offers a managerial perspective on the policy concept. This conception



of policy, thus regards the policy process as linear in form, and clearly designed by legislation or the government. Taylor et al. (1997) argue that this approach of defining policy reflects a functionalist perspective that assumes society is underpinned by value consensus and that the various institutions in society contribute to the ongoing stability of the whole. According to Bowe et al. (1992), this framework of policy definition distorts the policy process and serves the powerful ideological purpose of reinforcing a linear conception of policy formulation and implementation.

#### **4.2.1 Policy as Statement of Purposes or document, as Action and Inaction.**

Policy can be defined as a statement of ideas, a plan of action or a specific document or proposal, regulation, order and activity undertaken by the government, institutions or organisations which are represented as the means for achieving the larger ends or purposes. This concept of policy is popular amongst policy researchers and the public at large.

Policy is a statement of purposes which has been formed by a group of actors and implemented by the implementer to achieve certain aims or goals. Hough (1984) defines policy as 'the implicit specification of a course of purposive action being followed or to be followed in dealing with a recognised problem or matter of concern and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals' (p.13). In a similar way, Anderson (1979) defines policy as a purposive course of action to be implemented in dealing with a problem or matter of concern (p.3). In this sense, policy is dealing with matters of concern in social, economic and economic problems and tends to achieve some aims or purpose in relation to such problems. This brings the meaning that policy is a prescription from the government to the implementer with the intention of achieving a specific propose, or to solve a specific problem. Thus, in this view, policy is produced as a direction, instruction to be implemented and put into practice in achieving specific aim or solving a specific problem.

Some scholars in policy research have given definitions of policy as a statement of some sort which usually in textual form. Bowe et al. (1992), Ranson (1995) and Trowler (1992) amongst others, view that a policy statement is typically expressed in particular types of utterance. In this sense, policy in its textual form is a document that



represents the government's intention at achieving general or specific aims and purposes. Furthermore, Bowe et al. (1992, p.20-21) provide a broad identification of policy which is represented in various documents, including official legal texts or as formal authorisation; formally and informally produced commentaries which offer to 'make sense of' the official texts which involves the media, the speeches of relevant politicians and officials, videos and another relevant popular representations of policy documents, including acts of parliament (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984).

The policy document is produced through official or formal government's machinery and procedures which involve various stages within policy formulation. It is a guideline and instruction for the implementers and expresses the intention, means, and aims of the government in relation to specific issue, problem or planning. Nakamura and Smallwood (1980, p. 13) describe policy as a document or set of instructions from policy makers to policy implementers that spells out both goals and the means for achieving those goals. Similarly, Trowler (2003) asserts that a policy document is a statement of intentions or a prescription of practice as policy-makers recognise it or as they would like it to be.

The policy as document also can be seen as expressing an aspiration and general purpose or desired state of affairs, which expresses the broad purposes or aims of governmental activity. The government activities, instructions and objective usually are explained through the policy documents. The document describes what governments do, why and with what strategy (Taylor et al., 1997). Related, Hogwood and Gunn (1984) suggest that the word 'policy' can be viewed as an expression of general purpose or specific proposal, decision of government, or as a programme, output or outcome.

However, the policy document can be rhetorical in expressing the ideals and aspirations outside the reality of policy practices. In other words, the intent of policy-makers is not always reflected in their policy's contents (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984) or in what is actually implemented. In this regard, policy involved action as well as inaction, as well as fidelity and infidelity in practice (Ball, 1994a). Hecllo (1972) and Codd (1988) agree that policy can be considered as a course of action or inaction,

‘relating to the selection of goals, the definition of values or the allocation of resources’ (Codd, 1988, p. 235).

In viewing policy as inaction, we can see that policy involves actions with involuntary failures to act and deliberate decisions not to act (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984). This concept of policy represents a deliberate choice of action or inaction which can be regarded as the politics of non-decision making in the policy process. In this sense, such activities or practices do not appear in a policy document, or in contrast with the policy content, have not been practised and exercised at the level of implementation. The idea or the statement of the policy that is represented is not being practised in the field of action; however, the practice in the field generally has been accepted as a policy. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) give a significant example which is related to such a policy activity:

...if government enacts a law – such as the Litter Act, but provides insufficient resources and generally does little to enforce it, then we are entitled to say that the government’s policy is not to implement its own law (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984, p.21)

Smith (1976) emphasises ‘inaction’ as well as action and reminds us that ‘intention should not focus exclusively on decisions which produce change, but must also be sensitive to those which resist change and are difficult to observe because they are not represented in the policy-making process by legislative enactment’ (Smith, 1976, p. 13). In the same way, Hill (1994) argues that policy involves a course of action and a web of decisions. Jenkins (1978) defines policy as ‘a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where these decisions should, in principle, be within the power of these actors to achieve’ (p. 15). Thus, policy in this sense consists of broad and general decisions rather than providing a specific decision and action to serve a particular matter; policy here is open and flexible and to be interpreted by a wide range of actors and groups involved in all level in the policy processes.

According to Hogwood and Gunn (1984, p. 19), policy usually involves a series of more specific decisions, and is generated by interactions among many related decisions. This is the democratic aspect in the policy process, which rejects the notion of policy as a single decision, and seeing policy in an autocratic sense in the policy



decision-making process. Experience of implementing a decision may feed back into the decision-making process and change the policy. In this sense, policy is not permanent, however continues to involve changes, amendments, improvements so as to resolve the continuous issues and problems raised within the policy process.

Policy also can be regarded as a programme, output, or outcome of such government activity at achieving large or specific purposes of the state. As a programme, policy is a particular package of legislation, organisation and resources, or the way of allocating the resources or public good such as education (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984). Such a policy can consist of a numbers of specific programmes geared at achieving the general aims of the policy.

#### **4.2.2 Policy as Both Text and Discourses**

More recent policy analysis, especially in policy sociology has been influenced by the analysis of language. It considers policy in relation to analysing the text, discourse, and ideology embodied in the policy content. Stephen Ball has been known as the main proponent within the perspective of policy as both text and discourses (Ball, 1994a & 1997). In Ball's view, 'policy is texts and action, words and deeds; it is what is enacted as well as what is intended' (p. 10).

According to Ball (1994a), policy is developed to meet and deal with problems or issues and to try to solve them. However, dealing with the issues and problem around the policy is not a straightforward process. There are competitions over and between interests, groups, ideologies, demands and intentions which need to be considered in policy production and the other policy processes through to implementation. The interaction between these various aspects of competition in policy processes thus build up the complexity of policy. Ball (1994a) concludes that this complexity of policy matters has led to the idea of policy as text which is opened for interpretation and re-interpretation in different contexts of policy process and by different actors. Ball (1994a) asserts that policy as text can produce a plurality of meanings and the authors cannot control the meaning of their texts. Here, policies shift and change their meaning in the arenas of politics, and in the arena of interests and within different circumstances (Ball, 1994a). For Ball, policies are always incomplete insofar as they relate or map on to the 'wild profusion' of local practice. While the construction of

the policy text may well involve different parties and processes in the implementation stage, the opportunity for re-forming and re-interpreting the text, means policy formation does not end with the legislative moment.

In Ball's account, policies are textual interventions into practice which bring the meaning and the intention of policies to be implemented and translated into the arena of policy practice. However, the translation of the policy text into practice is not without constraints or never occurs in a straightforward unproblematic way. Ball says there are constraints, circumstances and practicalities in the policy process. The translation of policy text into interactive and sustainable practices of some sort involves productive thought, invention and adaptation, according to Ball (1994a). In the context of policy text production, Ball notes that there are compromises at various stages which include the initial influence, the micro-politics of legislative formulation, the parliamentary process, and the politics of interest group articulations.

The enactment of a policy text is not simple and the policy text which is being followed by the implementers or the policies' recipients relies on aspects such as commitment, understanding, capability, resources, practical limitations, cooperation, interest and their contexts. In this sense, the intention and the meanings in the policy texts are not the same as how the policies are being performed or practised. This is related to what Bowe et al. (1992) see as a plurality of readers necessarily producing a plurality of readings of the policy text. Thus, such policy content cannot be seen as bringing an absolute meaning or limit to their meaning to their own interpretation and purpose. In a different context and at different levels, policy involves different people affected by the policy; hence, policy continues to be reinterpreted in the context of practice, bringing at times contradictions between the policy texts and policy enactment in terms of what it is and how it should be. As Ball (1994a) notes, there is the arbitration and delegitimation of policy text, and as a result, there is misunderstanding of the policy. As he argues, policies are basic and simple, but practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex, and unstable. This means that policy practice is in some ways always disjunctive with the policy text.

Whatever the issues as a basis to produce a policy, the formulation of such a policy is often vague whether it meets the meaning of the problem or issues to be solved.



Policies construct the problems to which they are putative responses in a particular fashion and policy representations are encoded and decoded in complex ways (Ball, 1994a). As Ball points out, ‘there is ad hocery, negotiation and serendipity within the state, within the policy formulation process’ (Ball, 1994a, p.97).

Policy is developed within the context of a particular set of values, ideals, principles, perspectives, argument, pressures and constraints. Usually, policy is developed in response to particular problems, requirements and aspirations. Policy is planned and produced through struggle, compromises, public interpretations and reinterpretations. Policy is implemented and translated through actors’ interpretations and meanings in relation to their experiences, skills, recourse, background and context. Codd (1988) argues that policy is about the exercise of political power and the language that is used to legitimate that process.

Trowler (2003) views policy as text referring to the contested, changing, and negotiated character of policy. For him, policy statements are always the outcome of struggle and compromise between different individuals, groups, and interests involved in policy making (Trowler, 2003, p. 130). The same argument can be productively applied to the policy implementation processes. Figure 4.1 represents the continuum of policy processes that produce and reproduce the policy text in the context of policy development, transmission, and implementation.

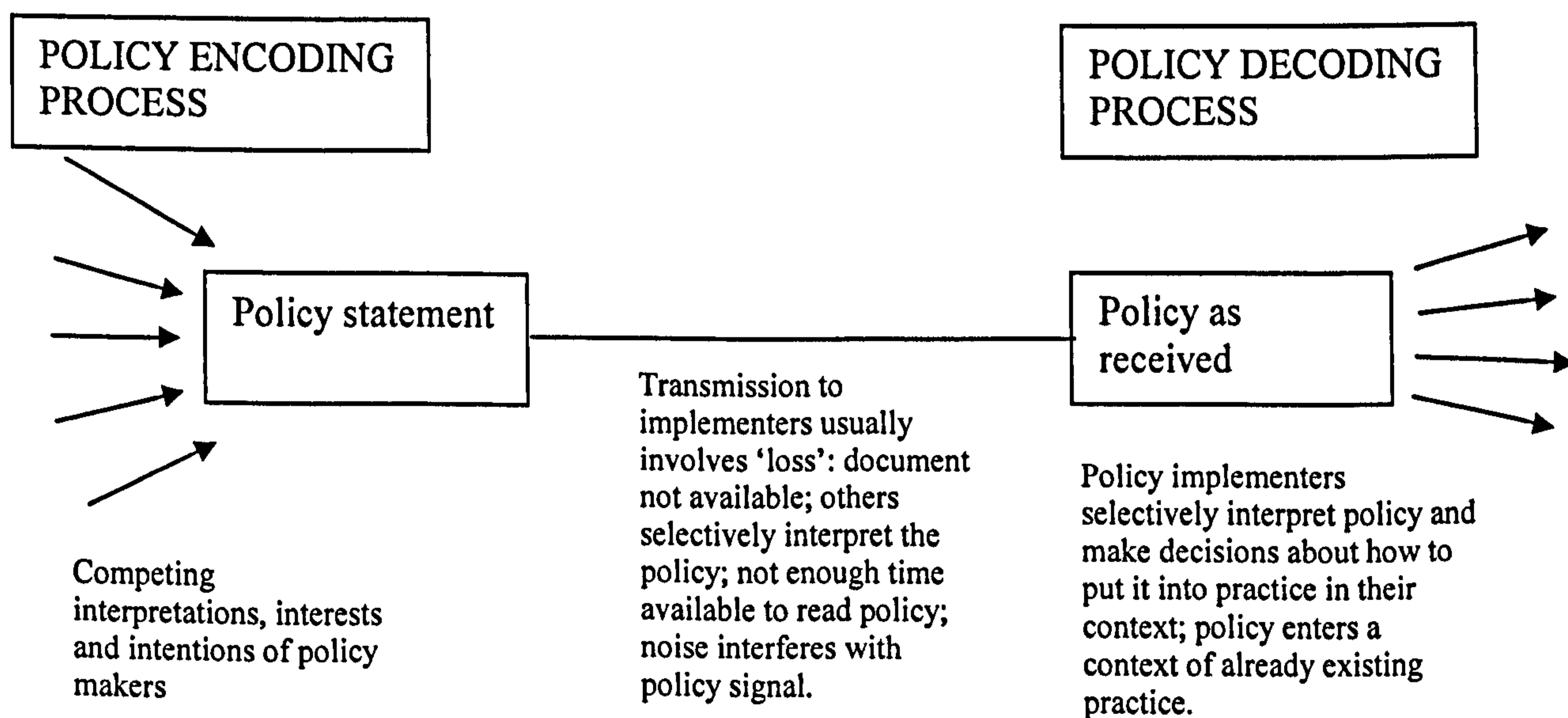


Figure 4.1: Policy encoding and decoding (Adopted from Trowler, 2003, p.97)

The contested character of policy is shown at the stage of the policy formulation, which consists of the dominance of ideas and values of the actors or groups involved. This uncertain character of policy also can be seen at the point of decoding the policy text, where individuals, the public, practitioners, implementers, and interest groups on the ground, in the context of their own culture, ideology, understanding, and resources interpret and re-interpret such policies (Ball, 1994a). In other words, policies as representations are encoded in complex way (via struggles, compromises, authorities) and decoded in complex ways (via actors' interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, recourses, and contexts). Once formulated, policies shift and change their meaning in the arenas of politics, and in different contexts and circumstances (Ball, 1994a, p. 16). Thus, it shows that there is always 'contested terrain' (Ozga, 2000) in policy processes, between policy statements and policy practices, between policy intentions and the resistance from reality and interests of policy recipients. Sometimes these contestations are actually included in the policy text itself.

This brings us to the consideration that policy as text needs to be complemented by an understanding of policy as discourse, as Ball (1994a) has pointed out. Ball (1994a) defines discourses as constraint in the following way: 'what can be said, and thought, but also...who can speak, when and where and without authority' (p.21). Each policy level provides discourses for those engaged in struggle over policy (Ball, 1990). Discourse refers to the language or other forms of communication that are used, the way ideas are expressed; discourse does not represent reality, but helps to create it (Ball, 1994a). Discourse also refers to the possibilities of what can be thought. Policy texts, in this sense are the point of interaction between policy production and policy interpretation, and translation into practice. Policy is represented differently by different actors and interests (Ball, 1994a, p.17), and interpreted differently within and across the policy contexts. For Luke et al. (1993, p. 141) policy involves social and institutional practices which together constitute a textual corpus and contestation across these policies. This means that policies are most often heteroglossic in character, suturing together different values. This is a discursive meta-framing of policy possibilities.



Policy texts are not just referential descriptions of extant conditions and clienteles, or not only prescriptions, but are public speech acts used to represent and stimulate the bureaucratic and ostensibly collective doing of something of substance. This is achieved through texts which 'systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Policy-makers can constrain the way we think about education in general and specific education policies in particular, through the language in which they frame policies. According to Foucault (1972), discourse is both constraining and enabling. This is the concept of discourse which Ball uses in his discourse-text relationship as applied to education policy and policy processes.

### 4.2.3 Policy as Process

The acknowledgment of policy as process has informed a number of policy definitions. Ozga (2000) for instance, defines policy as a process which involves negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may be situated outside the formal machinery of official policy-making. It also involves ongoing modification and struggle at all stages because of competing interests. According to Ozga (2000), in order to see policy as process, policy matters need to be viewed in a broader sense, not exclusively at the level of the formal mechanisms of government.

Policy involves various dimensions of influence which mean the nature of policy is not static, but continues to change to meet changing aims, interests, depending on circumstances. Ball (1990) and Taylor et al. (1997) argue that policy is continuous, complex and as a political process, so that 'policy cannot be divorced from interest, from conflict, from domination or from justice' (Ball, 1990, p.3). In all policy stages, there is negotiation which ensures that the policy purposes and intentions are continually revised and reoriented over time. This involves the temporal dimension and attempts to represent or re-represent policy and build-up overtime (Ball, 1994a). Thus, this brings the sense that policy cannot be seen as static, rather it is dynamic. Taylor et al. (1997) argue that policy is both text and processes.

Hogwood and Gunn (1984) acknowledge that policy involves 'comprises', a series of patterns of related decisions to which circumstances and personal, group, and organizational influences have contributed (p.23-24). For Ball (1997), policy is something 'done' to people which involves various dimensions in its processes,

including the stages of policy formulation, implementation and impact or outcomes. Within these dimensions, it involves policy-makers, the policy implementer and the policy recipients, who are the people located around the policy issues and the policy process. All these are linked and affected by each other.

Policies have their own momentum at all stages of the policy process. Each stage in the policy process is not static, but ever changing and influenced by various factors surrounding them. In this sense, the dimensions and the actors involved in policy and the policy processes are dynamic rather than static (Hill, 1994; Ozga, 2000; Ball, 1990 & 1994a; Hogwood and Peters, 1983) and continuously change to influence policy production and implementation. Therefore, a simple and straightforward definition does not really provide a deep understanding of the meaning of policy as a public matter, which involves various actors, interests, ideologies, discourses, and political behaviours that produce complex issues to do with policy processes, from problem setting, through policy text production to implementation and practices.

Trowler (2003) has described this aspect of dynamism in policy as possibly coming from a number of sources, including conflict among policy makers and the policy implementer regarding important problems or issues. This also involves various understandings and perspectives on the interpretation of the policy; and practices of policy on the ground which involve contradictions between implementation of policy and the intention of policy-makers. Similarly, Taylor et al. (1997) assert the policy as process is multi-dimensional which involves various perspectives and interests. The policy players in some ways contribute to the way the policy is developed and implemented. According to them, although policy-making is a state activity, policies are often shaped by the interaction within government and between economic, political and civil society. Policy implementation is never straightforward, the 'result is unintended as well as intended consequences' (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 15)

The idea of policy as dynamic brings the idea that policy is not permanent but continually changing. Regarding viewing policy as a process, Forester (1993) argues that policy development and implementation could be understood systematically as processes that modify the communicative infrastructure of society. The process that changes the institutional elements, mediates, and shapes the policy development



involves complexity and an abundance of circumstances. Policy, in this sense involves continuous change, being amended, and not fully accomplished, although it has been produced and implemented in the arena of practice. Policy continuously changes, improves, challenges, is interpreted and re-interpreted, based on various issues and circumstances in the policy process arena. Ball (1990) agrees that policy is not done and finished at the legislative moment, or simply received and implemented within the arena of practice; rather policy is subject to interpretation and then recreated. According to Kogan (1975), the actions and ideas of politicians, interest groups and the public are both a product and the producers of changes in policy, as are those who actually put the policy into practice at the site of implementation.

The development of policy continues to change and be reinvented at various stages of the policy process. Policy often continues to evolve within the implementation phase and is not finished at the policy-making phase of the policy process. Ball (1997) suggests that to see policy as a process, the perspective of the policy needs to attend to the ways in which policies evolve, change and decay through time and space and also recognise their incoherence. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) also agree that the policy process involves a much longer period of time than the moment of policy text production. Related, Ball proposes an approach in policy research to deal with the nature of policies as a process, which he called a 'policy trajectory' approach. According to him, this approach within policy research attempts to capture the dynamics of policy across and between levels. Policy research design using this approach traces through the development, formation and realisation of those policies from the context of influence, through policy text production, to practices and outcomes (Ball, 1997). From this approach, temporal aspects need to be included in policy analysis (Ball, 1997). A chronological narrative is central to such policy analysis.

The policy process in education embraces a vast range of sites of action and discourses, from the central-government machinery through to places where practice is settled. This is a long and elaborate implementation chain of policy (Raab, 1994, p.24). Taylor et al. (1997) argue that the courses of action towards the accomplishment of some intended goals do not sit in a simple linear relationship. Policy processes involve contestation, negotiation, and bargaining between various

arenas and people who direct or indirectly have a linkage with the policy. The social, political, and economic circumstances can influence policy processes and structures of production and practice. For instance, educational interaction can bring certain interest groups into a better position *vis-à-vis* educational resources because of their position and bargaining power.

Archer (1985) suggests three propositions which link groups and resources to educational policy interaction which involve the aspect of exchange negotiation – groups with low access to resources will be in the weakest negotiating position; groups with differential access to various resources will be in a stronger negotiation position; groups with high access to all resources will be in the best negotiating position. According to Archer (1985), three different types of negotiation in the policy process take place between different groups; these include: internal initiation – this is negotiation amongst educational personnel; external transaction which involves relations between internal and external interest groups; and political manipulation which encourages popular groups of various kinds to use political channels, and who have the capacity to impose negative reactions or influence policy production.

Different groups, with different interests and amounts of power are involved in contestation, struggle, and competition with each other over the scarce resources in policy processes, and thus directly or indirectly influence the policy, trying at all time to serve their own interests. Such a theory can provide an understanding of the relation of this situation. According to Ranson (1995), 'Resource Dependency Theory' is a theoretical model that can explain the relation between exchange and power. This theory provides a basic framework for studying the relations of the factors/groups/organisation that involve and have interest in developing the policy of education. This theory is based on the concepts of interest exchange and power, and conceives the relations between levels of government as forming a complex network of organisation, agencies and interest groups.

This theory explains that the organisation, agencies, interest groups have networks or relations, which they use as resources for policy processes. In competition for resources, such a group or organisation can pursue their interests and acquire strategic resources only by escaping or creating dependencies amongst actors. Furthermore, the

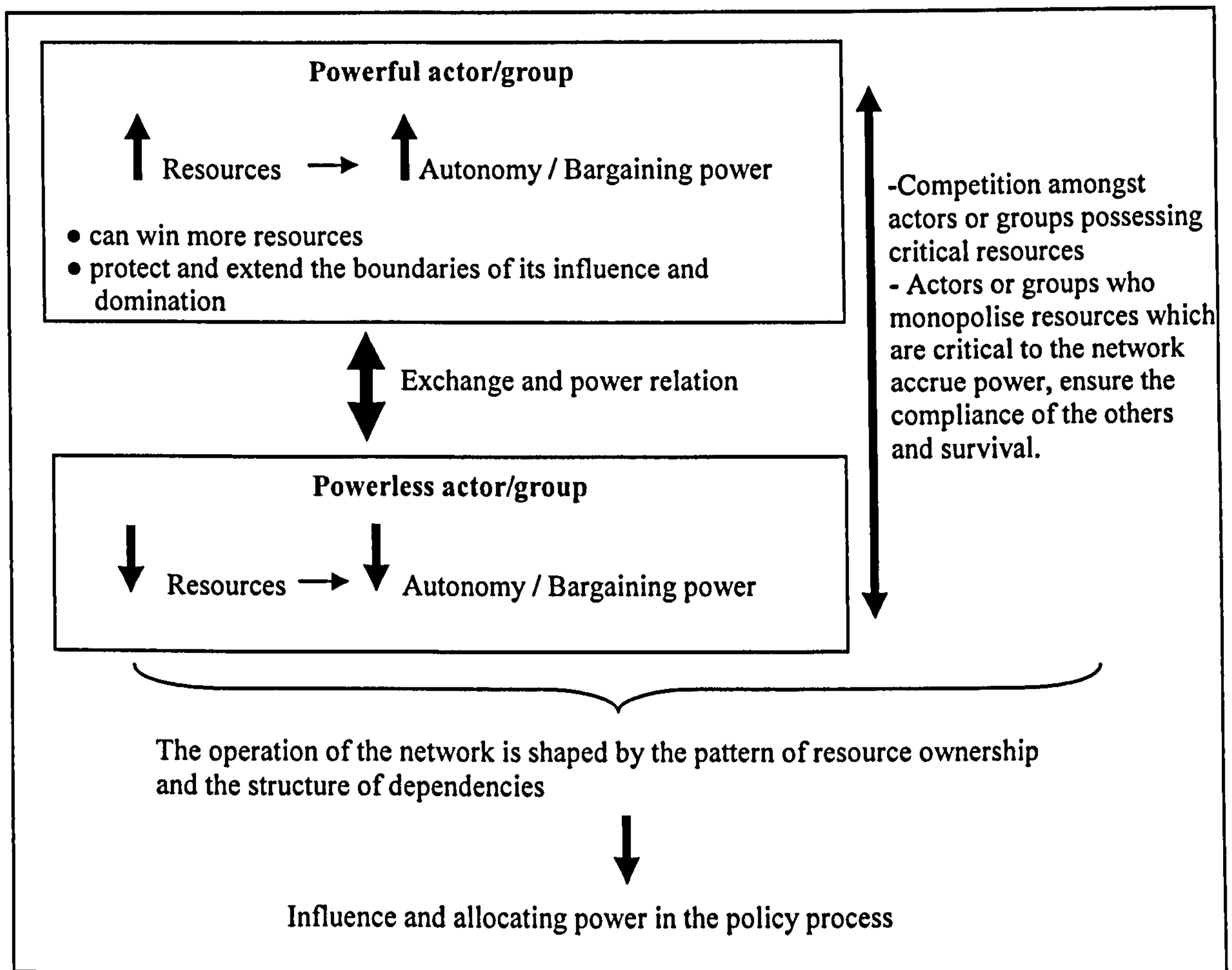


actors who can monopolise ownership of such critical resources can create dependencies, exact compliance and accrue power.

In relation to ethnic groups' competition over a public good such as education, such competition can parallel the situation of a zero-sum game in the interaction between the groups. In some situations, where a group can gain and control the relevant resources, the group will obtain benefits and other groups will be marginalised, and vice versa. In other words, the zero sum game situations mean that the increase of resources and interest of one group will decrease the interest and resources available to other group or groups.

This theory provides a basic framework to study the relations of the factors, groups, or organisations that are involved and have interest in policy production and policy processes in education. The complex network, relationships of groups and factors involved in all stages in the policy process can produce an understanding of related concepts of exchange and power and envisage the relations between policy and factors that influence policy production and subsequent policy processes. Figure 4.2 illustrates the relation of resources and power in the operation of the networks and competition amongst the actors in the policy process.

Related, Alford and Friedland (1985) assert that the pluralist state is open to influences from diverse groups which compete to influence governmental decisions. For Ball (1990), economic, political, and ideological factors are source and resources for education policy making. In similar fashion, Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) assert that the policy-making process, in particular, is open to various levels of access to the interest groups inside and outside the policy arenas to influence policy production. The policy process involves a diverse set of groups, formal and informal, authoritative within the governmental arena, plus a diverse set of interests and groups outside these arenas, who push their demands and influence on the formal leaders (Nakamura and Smallwood, 1980, p. 31-32). In addition, the influences on the policy education policy process is not limited to those emerging from within the nation-state, global influences on the policy process also shape the policy-making process because the educational field today is multi-layered, stretching from the local to the global (Lingard et al., 2005; Lingard and Ozga, 2007).



*Figure 4.2: Conceptualisation of the operation of networks and competition amongst the actors/groups in relation to resources (Adopted from Ranson, 1995)*

### 4.3 What is Education Policy?

There is no clear distinction between education policy and others policy fields. As Ozga (2000) points out, there are no easily identified lines of demarcation between education policy and other areas of social policy. However, referring specifically to the education field, Ball (1990) argues that education policy is what counts as education and is done to people. For Trowler (2002), education policy is ‘a specification of principles and actions, related to educational issues, which are followed or which should be followed and which are designed to bring about a desired goal’ (p. 95). Luke and Hogan (2006, p.170) define educational policy as the prescriptive regulation of flows of human resources, discourses, and capital across educational system towards normative social, economic, and cultural ends. This view of education policy sees education policy as regulation and as developed and implemented for achieving social, economic and cultural aims of the society.



Education as a part of the functions of the state is also an arena of social conflict (Morrell, 2004, p. 15). The tension between reproducing inequality and producing greater equality is inherent in any education system. The basis of this tension is not ideology as such, but ideology as it relates to the concrete reality of social position, material wealth and political power. This, according to Prunty (1985), is related to the concept of education policy as an exercise of power and control directed towards the attainment of some preferred arrangement of school and society. This definition stresses the relationship between education policy and power, thus, who exercises power involves those who formulate educational policy, and of course, who are involved in politics in this sense (McLaughlin, 2000).

In respect of those education policies that limit the possibilities for policy interpretation in relation to various contexts, education policy is only a state matter. In this sense, Scott (2000) argues that such education policy which is strictly controlled by the government in the process of formulation and development, allows less opportunity to the public and practitioners to interpret the policy from their own perspectives and contexts.

#### **4.4 Education Policy Research**

Educational policy is a set of operational decisions. Such policy needs information, knowledge and sources that can enable the aims of the policy to be effectively achieved. These involve various aspects and activities that can contribute to the policy development in education, including research *for* and *of* education policy.

Education policy research includes all areas of study in education, stretching across the spectrum and involves various levels in the system of education. In this sense, the field of policy research in education has to be concerned with general considerations of education issues. Education policy does not emerge in a vacuum, but also includes social, economic and political dimensions. Therefore, the approach, strategy and design of policy research are used in different ways and in different circumstances in a policy research project. As noted by Ozga (1987), 'the shape of the study of education policy is determined by where it is studied' (p.138) and by what issues are of concern.

Terms such as policy analysis, policy sciences and policy studies are used interchangeably across different areas of policy research with different intent and purposes (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984). In education policy research, the synonymous term used by some scholars is education policy analysis (Ozga, 2000; Taylor *et al.*, 1997; Ball, 1990). According to Coombs (1983), this field is so vast and varied that attempting to develop some understanding of its nature, taxes the abilities of most scholars. Coombs further asserts that education policy is also an extraordinarily complex subject, involving a pluralist situation, which acknowledges the multiple issues, values and interests in education and the wide variety among stakeholders and the public. Ball (1997) also notes that education policy research displays a variety of stances, styles and preoccupations which are positioned differently in relation to the processes and methods of reform and in relation to the traditions and practices of human sciences (p.264).

Ozga (1987) distinguishes two groups of education policy research approaches which are the so-called educational administration framework and educational policy sociology. According to Ozga (1987, p.138), the later which is located within a sociological perspective reflects the growth of interest among sociologists in education policy concerned with a range of educational issues such as welfare policy, ethnic issues and vocationalism. The former which applied in education management emphasises improved performance and the development of competence in educational administration, and as such is not concerned with policy substance and politics in education.

In discussing the aims and the purposes of research in policy, especially education policies, Ozga (2000) preferred to use Dale's term 'project' as meaning, aim or purpose of policy research. Developed in a systematic way, Dale (cited in Ozga 2000 and Ozga, 1987) proposes the aim and purpose of policy research in three categories of work. The first category is 'social administration' in which the purpose of research is to change and improve practice, generally administration practices. The build up and testing of core knowledge and the development of fundamental theory take second place to this concern. The second category is called 'policy analysis project'. In this, the purpose of policy research is to find ways of ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of social policies irrespective of their content. This project seeks



solutions to given policy problems and it defines policy research as the function of government. Policy research in this category is more strongly oriented towards finding solutions than enhancing understanding.

The third category is the 'social science project' where policy research is orientated towards an academic discipline rather than to achieve the need of policy makers in government. It is concerned with 'finding out how things are and how they came to be that way' (Ozga, 1987, p.142). According to Ozga (1987), this is a vital and serious distinction, which distinguishes the sociologist and the practitioners of educational administration in doing policy research. In this kind of policy research, the accountability of researchers is to the research community, rather than to the 'customer' or sponsor. Based on these categories of policy research, the distinction here is also between 'research *of* policy' that comes from within the sociological approach to education policy analysis and 'research *for* policy', which is more in line with the traditionalist administration policy research. While this research *off*for policy distinction is useful one, the position taken in this research as was indicated in Chapter One, is that research *of* policy can also very useful to policy makers, however in a less instrumental way. Such 'policy research' aims to enhance understanding as an example of a social science project. Such understanding can be very useful for policy practitioners.

#### **4.5 Different Perspectives on the Role and Contribution of Education Policy Research**

Ozga (2000) suggests that research in education policy does not need to be undertaken at the level of government; nor is it necessary to think of such research as large-scale and removed from the immediate context. In her view, 'policy can be found everywhere in education, and not just the level of central government' (Ozga 1992, p.3). This means, that research on education policy should involve participation at all levels in education and thus be a valuable resource for both the education community and policy-makers. According to Ozga (2000), practitioner involvement in education policy research will include them in policy processes directly and indirectly and contribute to the formation and development of independent, informed practitioners at level of the system, 'with the capacity to scrutinize education policy and to develop their own policy-making skill' (Ozga, 2000, p.7). This is what Ozga means in her

intention to see that policy research needs to be open to individuals at all level of the education system and not exclusively 'owned' by the official policy developing level of the state.

According to Ozga (2000), there are two main questions about the purpose of education policy research. The first, concerns the importance of educational policy research to the policy itself; and the second refers to the ways of doing policy research in education. Ozga (1992) believes that a stronger engagement with policy research in education would help to inhibit the misuse of research by policy-makers, who ignore research that does not support their chosen policy direction. Ozga (1990) also suggests that it is important to bring together structural and macro-level analysis of education systems and education policies at a micro-level investigation, especially that which takes account of people's perceptions and experiences.

There is a linkage between research and policy. The importance of policy research is to assist the policy-maker in choosing their policy direction. In this sense, research can generate knowledge and action in the policy process. According to Rist (2000), the contribution of research to policy can be understood in four phases of the policy cycle, which are policy formulation, policy text, policy implementation and policy accountability or policy outcome or policy impact. The contribution that research can make is to provide the information needed across all these levels of policy development. Table 4.1 adopted from Rist (2000) shows the potential contribution of research in the policy cycle phase for delivering knowledge in policy processes:



Table 4.1: The Contribution of Research in Policy Cycle (Adopted from Rist, 2000)

Phase	Policy Cycle	Contribution of Research (particularly qualitative research)
I	Policy Formulation	<p>Studies on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social construction of problems / issues</li> <li>• the differing interpretations of social problems</li> <li>• the building and sustaining of coalitions of change</li> <li>• previous program initiatives and their impacts</li> <li>• community and organisational receptivity to programs</li> <li>• organisational stability and cohesion during the formulation stage</li> <li>• the changing nature of social problems</li> <li>• the intended and unintended consequences of the various policy instruments or tools that might be selected as the means to implement the policy</li> </ul>
II	Policy Text	<p>Research study on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the meaning of policy</li> <li>• the interpretation of policy document</li> <li>• influences in the production of the policy document</li> </ul>
III	Policy Implementation	<p>Research informs policy implementers responsible for the implementation of the policy initiative through case studies, program monitoring and process evaluation.</p> <p>Studies in this phase provide information on the implementation per se Focus on the problem that prompted the policy response (provide an examination for policy implementers whether the program/action is or is not appropriate to the current problems) Focus on efforts made by the organisations or institutions to respond to the policy initiative</p>
IV	Policy Accountability	<p>The matter of what the policy did or did not accomplish or achieve addressing whether or what changes may have occurred in the problem or situation addressing concerns of leadership that would strengthen the capacity of the organization or institution to implement the policy initiative effectively</p>

Hogwood and Gunn (1984) suggest several possible classifications of approaches to the research of policy.

1. Studies of policy content – the focus is on the origin, intentions and operation of specific policies; aim is primarily descriptive and the analysis may be at a highly abstract level.
2. Studies of policy process – concern on how the policy being made in terms of the actions taken by actors at each stage.
3. Studies of policy output – to establish the determinants of the pattern of distribution of expenditure or other indicators of policy outputs.

4. Evaluation studies – the purpose is to assess specific policies in terms of the extent to which their outcomes have achieved the objectives of the policy.
5. Information for policy-making – research for policy in terms of aiding a policy decision or advising the policy-makers.
6. Process advocacy – the policy analysis is concerned both to understand and to change the policy. In other words, the analysis emphasis is on how policies ought to be made.
7. Policy advocacy – policy analysis as making an argument for a particular policy.

Research in education policy can be a resource for the education community, public, and the interest groups that are always involved, directly or indirectly in education arenas. Policy needs information and resources in the process of development of a certain plan. Hence, research in education policy needs to acknowledge the broad political, social and economic context in which policies are generated. In other words, it is inadequate to research policy in a single dimension of the policy matter. Moreover, it also needs to recognise the processes of policy generation (Troyna, 1992).

There are various sources of information, demands and pressure on the process to formulate and implement the policy. Rist (2000) has divided the information needs into three sets, in which each set has important opportunities for the appearance and use of policy research; firstly, the set of information that revolves around an understanding of the policy issues at hand. This is related to the ability of policy makers to define clearly and understand the problem that they are facing and for which they are expected to develop responses; secondly, the set of information that focuses on what has taken place previously in response to the problem. In other words, it is an effort to look back at what action has been taken towards such problems or the investigation about the previous action that had been taken regarding the problem. It is an analysis of the policy implementation and other matters and sees the differences and the similarities, and thus making decisions on what additional efforts are necessary; and thirdly, the set of information relevant to the policy formulation stage of the cycle that focuses on the previous efforts and their impact that would help one choose among present-day options.



Bulmer (1982), Hammersley (2002) and Trowler (2003) distinguish types of models in researching policy and their contribution to policy development. Bulmer in his book 'The Uses of Social Research' distinguishes policy research into three models, which he describes as empiricism, engineering, and enlightenment model. Hammersley (2002) and Trowler (2003) divide the policy research model into two categories, which are the engineering and enlightenment model. According to Hammersley (2002), the engineering research model used by the positivist is a kind of functionalism which seeks to make research more directly useful to policy-makers and practitioners. Trowler (2003) also asserts those two models of research are represented by the two perspectives of research methodology which are quantitative and qualitative. These two models of research based on different research perspectives adopted from Bulmer (1982), Hammersley (2002) and Trowler (2003) are shown in Table 4.2.

Weiss (1986) asserts that policy research based on the enlightenment model rejects the assumption that a single finding of a research study or a body of related studies would directly affect policy. Rather, this model provides concepts and theoretical perspectives that infuse the policy-making processes. According to Weiss (1986), the effect may be to widen and enrich our understanding of multiple facts of reality in policy processes (p.39). In addition, Finch (1986) says the relationship between research and policy in the enlightenment model is usually indirect. This model emphasises intellectual and conceptual contributions to policy processes and development that is in contrast with engineering model in policy research which involves 'linear relationship' between research and policy (Finch, 1986). Finch further argues that this type of research feeds the policy maker's needs and demands into specific decisions by providing information and understanding of the policy issue.

**Table 4.2: The Engineering and Enlightenment Model of Policy Research (adapted from Bulmer (1982a), Hammersley (2002) and Trowler (2003))**

	<b>Engineering Model</b>	<b>Enlightenment Model</b>
<b>Ontological position (i.e. view of the nature of reality)</b>	<b>Foundationalist: considers there to be an objective reality which is can be apprehended by research. Research results have a foundation in reality.</b>	<b>Relativist: considers social reality constructed (to a greater or lesser extent). Research results are true for particular social groups only. They are themselves constructed in natural stories.</b>
<b>Epistemological position (i.e. view of the state of 'knowledge' created by research)</b>	<b>Absolute/positivist: "true" knowledge that correctly describes reality can be achieved given sufficient effort and rigour in research.</b>	<b>Relative/interpretative 'knowledge' is conditional upon its social context. Absolute truths, at least in the social world, are not achievable. Insight and informed judgment are among the important goals of research</b>
<b>Supplying specific items or bodies of knowledge, or specific technique</b>	<b>The researcher as aide, setting out to produce specific information that meets the requirements of policy-makers and other practitioners</b>	<b>The researcher as 'specific intellectual' supplying facts and/or arguments that can be used to challenge the status quo</b>
<b>Supplying a whole theoretical framework, worldview, and/or mode of operation</b>	<b>The researcher as moderniser, supplying a 'scientific way of thinking' to replace the folk or craft methods that have previously been employed</b>	<b>The researcher as public intellectual. Providing a perspective that offers a new theoretical understanding of society to replace the ideological view built into what currently passes for common sense.</b>
<b>Relationship to policy</b>	<b>Informing policy-makers about the 'facts' and proposing solution of 'problem'.</b>	<b>Giving policy-makers enlightenment or challenging the accepted definitions of 'educational problems' and reframing what is problematic in education.</b>
<b>Type of data collected and analysis method</b>	<b>Bias towards quantitative</b>	<b>Bias towards qualitative</b>

According to Silverman (1993), the enlightenment model in policy analysis is Bulmer's preferred model in which there are two research aims: interaction – offering mutual contact between researcher and policy-makers; secondly, conceptualisation – creation of new problems for policy-makers to think about through the development



of new concepts (p. 176). Indeed, this model of policy research offers 'no simple solutions and preferring to provide knowledge rather than to recommend policies' (Silverman, 1993, p. 175). In this sense, this is action for analysis of policy and its relationship with policy makers.

In discussing the transmission and the use of knowledge in policy research, Ginsburg and Gorostiaga (2001) proposed three categories of knowledge utilisation of policy analysis:

1. **Instrumental Use of Knowledge:** Represents the process in terms of knowledge being used directly in making specific decisions. It includes two versions of knowledge used in policy-making, which are knowledge driven and problem solving.
2. **Conceptual Use of Knowledge:** This category draws attention to a more complex, indirect and diffuse processes. It consists of two forms of knowledge used in policy-making. First is interactive knowledge in which research findings are used along with experience, political insights, and opinions from a variety of actors in a nonlinear process of decision-making. Second, is the enlightenment approach in which concepts, theoretical perspectives and research findings diffuse in society and shape decision makers' general thinking about issues that subsequently become relevant to specific policy and practice decisions.
3. **Strategic Use of Knowledge:** This third category portrays the research findings to support a predetermined position related to a policy or practice decision. It can take three forms, which are:
  - a. **political** – research findings are used selectively to provide support for a previously adopted in relation to a policy or practice decision;
  - b. **tactical** – the fact that research which is being undertaken or has been commissioned, is used to enhanced the credibility of policy makers or practitioners and the non-decision or in-action they pursue;
  - c. **promotional** – research serves to disseminate and promote the implementation of policy and practice decisions to individuals who may not have been involved in the decision-making process.

Related, Ball (1995) critiques the technically framed policy research approach to social problems because such research perspectives are 'tightly tied to the policy

agendas of government' (p. 259). In this sense, it need to be considered that research in education policy is a resource for the education community, public and the interest groups that are always involved directly or indirectly in education arenas. The research can contribute to the development of independent, informed practitioners, at all levels in the system of education. Therefore, education policy research requires reflection on the formal construction of practices by policy. Indeed, educational policy research needs to deconstruct policy construction of the problem being addressed through the policy.

#### **4.6 Policy Sociology**

Various educational reforms particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States have mobilised educationists in policy research to develop a genre of policy studies approaches and perspectives (Troyna, 1994a, p.3). Some scholars distinguished a genre of policy studies based on the research approach and objective, for instance policy scholarship (Grace, 1984) or education policy sociology (Ozga, 1987; Ball, 1990; Lingard, 1993).

According to Grace (1984), policy scholarship gives centre stage to social scientific interpretations of the antecedents, production and orientation of education policy. This can be contrasted with studies undertaken by policy scientists who are reactive in respect of the description and evaluation of organisational reform, management improvement and implement strategies and procedures. Payne et al. (1981) use the term policy sociology to refer to a kind of sociology applied to policy in which, through involvement as advisers and consultants on the inside, sociologists bring their knowledge to bear in policy-making and thus gain some influence over it.

According to Ozga (1987, p.144), 'policy sociology is rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed and draws on qualitative and illuminative techniques'. Although methods and subjects vary, the policy sociologist examines the relationship between process and product, and between motive and action. In each case, however, knowledge of the former is to be gained empirically and not on the basis of inference from the later deduction from grand theory. Hence the importance of going beyond the public pronouncements of 'policy makers' and actually talking to them, their meanings and 'assumptive worlds' as essential parts of the policy process, which



require to be understood if policy action itself is to be understood (Ozga, 1987, p.24). According to Ozga, what is important in the policy sociology perspectives is the sense of 'policy as process' and not merely as substance. Policy is both process and text.

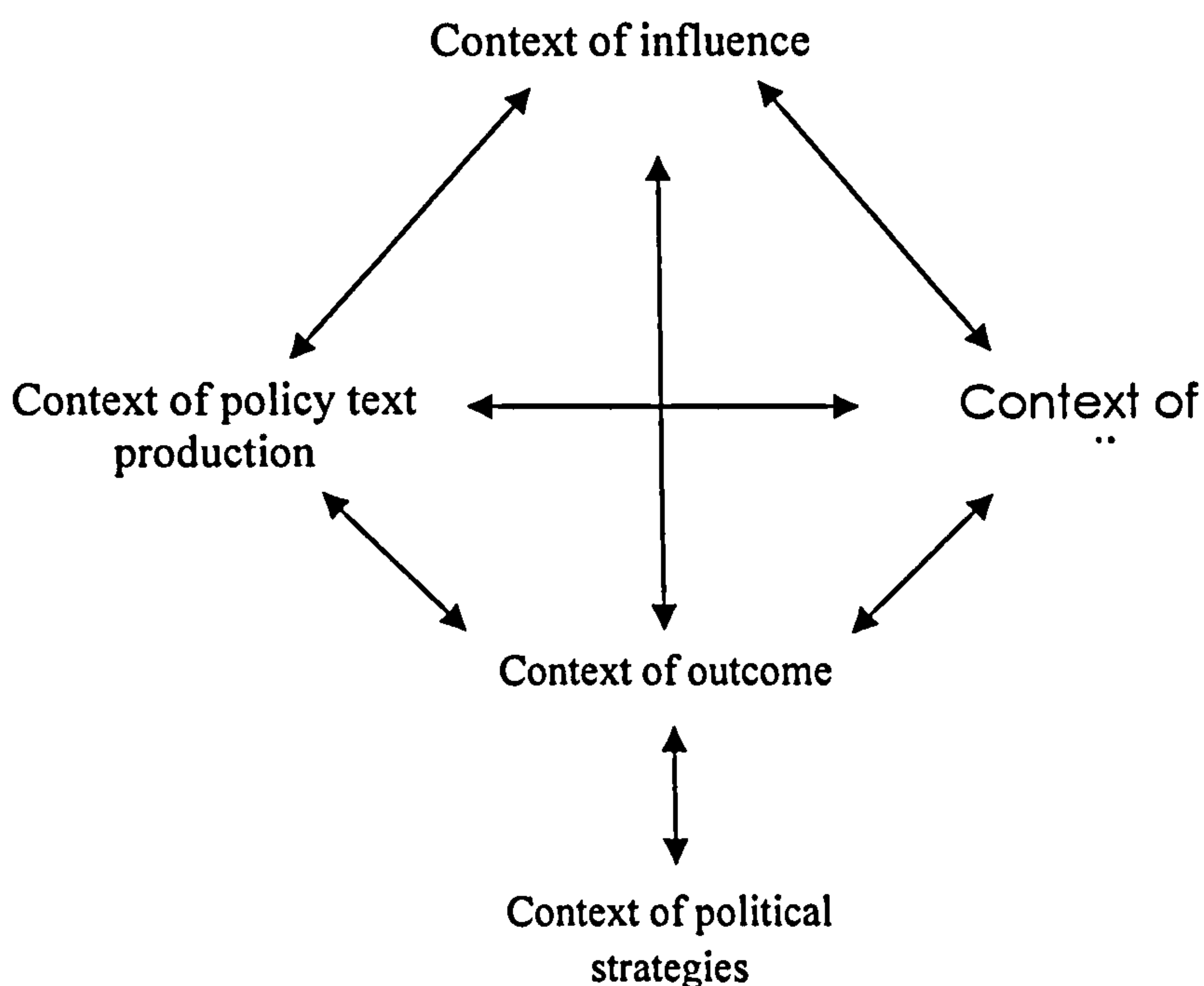
#### **4.7 Approaches in Education Policy Research**

Research in policy spans across a wide area and it is beyond the scope of this research to discuss all of these in detail. However, the discussion presented here is cognate with the model and approaches framing the policy research reported in this thesis. With this intention, the policy cycle as a model for analysing education policy and critical perspectives in policy analysis are discussed below.

##### **4.7.1 Policy Cycle Model**

Most of the scholars in policy research in education look at policy as both process and product (Bowe et al., 1992, Ball, 1994a, 1997; Taylor et al. 1997; Ozga, 2000; Gale, 2001). They see this process as being more complex, interactive and multi-layered, and thus reject a straightforwardly linear and top-down educational management conception of the policy process (Lingard, 1996). For instance, Taylor et al. (1997) assert that policy involves the production of text, the text itself, ongoing modifications to the text and processes of implementation into practice (p.25). In other words, there are complex relationships between policy development, implementation and evaluation. Bowe et al. (1992; p. 20) refer to this relationship as the 'policy cycle'. This policy analysis model looks at policies as both processes and products. According to Hogwood and Peters (1983), one of the advantages of the cycle model of policy as analytical framework is that it does stress the dynamics of policy, in contrast to treating policy processes in a straight forward linear form.

According to Bowe et al. (1992), inside the policy cycle, there are contexts within the process of policy production. First is the context of influence where interest groups struggle over construction of policy discourse. The second context involves policy text production. Third is the context of practice in which policy is subject to interpretation and recreation. These three contexts sit in non-linear, mutually interactive relationships to each other. This is shown in Figure 4.3.



*Figure 4.3: Contexts of policy (Adopted from Bowe et al. 1992, Ball, 1994a)*

These entire contexts are interrelated in the process of policy production. Inside this cycle, there are three interrelated contexts, which are context of influence where interest groups struggle over construction of policy discourse, context of practice where policy is subject to interpretation and recreation where research is about identifying the perception and meanings held by policy makers responsible for implementation of policies, and the context of policy text production. Ball (1994a) added two further contexts to his original framework of a policy trajectory, which are the context of outcomes and the context of political strategy. The former relates outcomes to those articulated in the policy itself, as well as to a consideration of the policy purposes as understood by the researcher. The latter utilises research insights to develop political strategies for getting outcomes more closely aligned with desired outcomes.

#### **4.7.2 Critical Policy Research**

The concept of critical research in policy analysis has been used in various ways in different approaches and aspects of policy research fields. For instance, Taylor et al. (1997), Prunty (1985) and Henry (1993) used the concept of 'critical policy analysis'; Grace (1991) calls it a critical policy scholarship; others such as Ozga (2000), Ball (1994), and Gale (2001) use the term critical policy sociology.



The critical paradigm rejects the positivist assumption that social scientific knowledge can be value-neutral and denies the fundamental distinction between facts and value (Taylor *et al.* 1997). Moreover, critical theory in relation to education policy is not implicated in the solution of problems, or at least not in the solution of problems defined by administrators and policy makers (Ozga and Gewirtz, 1994, Ozga, 2000). In a similar way, Prunty (1985), Taylor et al (1997) and Ball (1994a) agree that critical policy analysis focuses on a moral idea and concern with social justice. They suggest that critical policy analysis must give attention to both the content and processes of policy development and implementation.

In criticising one-dimensional policy research, Whitty (2002) says that much educational policy research remains uncritical and decontextualised. In addition, Whitty (2002) argues that such work in education policy study is being lost to the examination of politics, ideologies and interest groups of the policy making process. In line with this argument, Acher (1985) stresses that policy research must attempt to address the influences, inputs, processes and outputs of education, whether by legislation, pressure group or union action, international innovation or propaganda, because these are amongst the important political elements in policy processes. Ball (1990) asserts that any explanation of education policy must involve analysing what individuals and groups actually do and say in the arenas of influences in the policy process.

Critical research in education policy is not implicated in the solution of problems (Ozga, 2000). Working within a critical frame in policy research is more concerned with social justice. Prunty (1985) says that the personal values and political commitment of the critical policy analyst would be anchored in the vision of a moral order in which justice, equality and individual freedom are uncompromised by the avarice of the few.

The critical analyst engages with political, social and economic dimensions 'where persons are never treated as a means to an end, but treated as ends in their own right' (Prunty, 1985, p 136). Ozga and Gewirtz (1994, p. 122-123) stress that critical research in education policy can contribute to the outcomes of policy research in three ways:

1. It can draw attention to, and challenge, the assumptions informing policy and it can expose the effects of policy on the ground, particular where policies increase inequality and impact unfairly on particular group.
2. It can set out to explain how injustices and inequalities are produced, reproduced and sustained.
3. It can provide a basis for the development of strategies of social transformation.

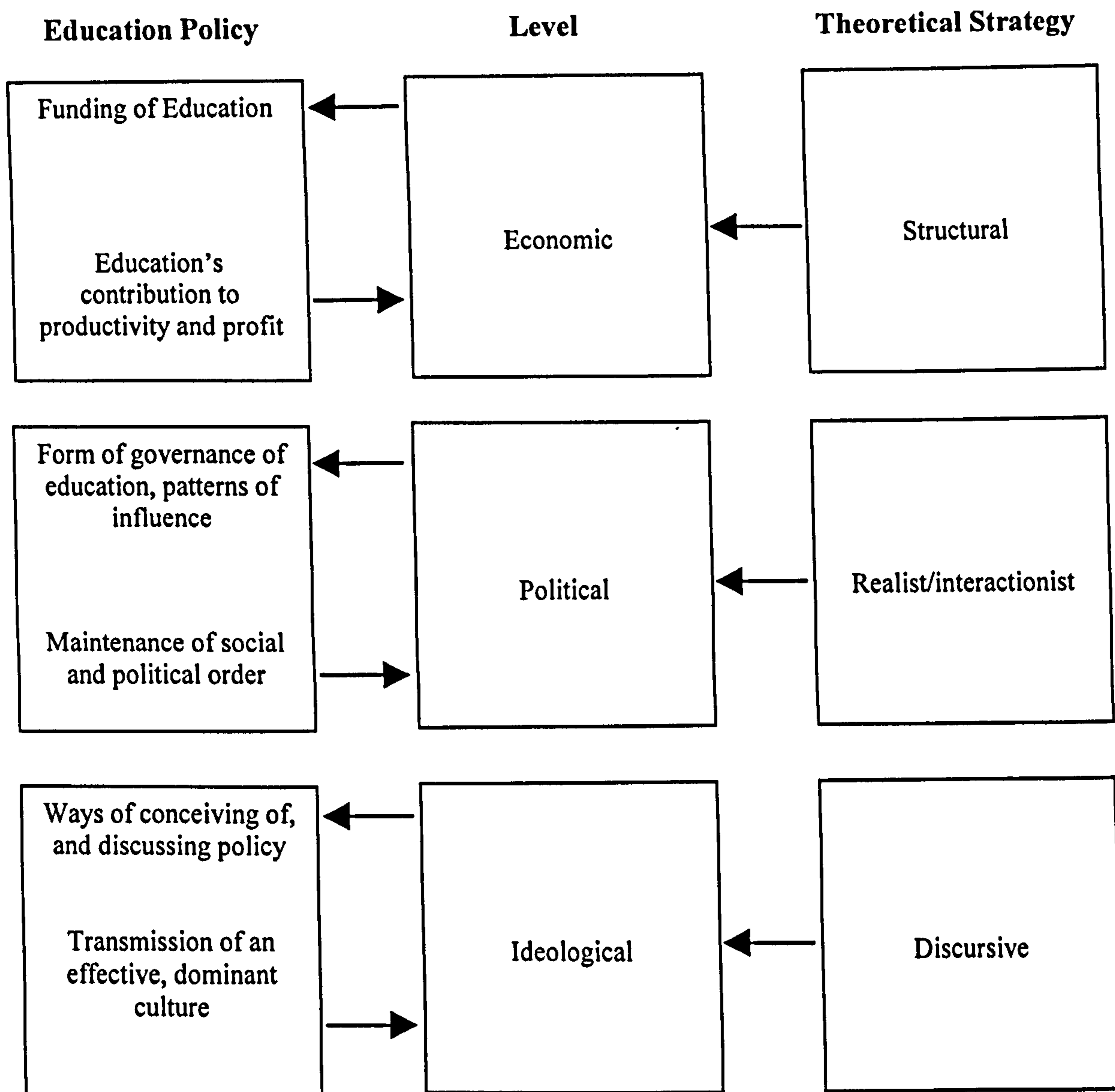
Scott (2000) pointed out several issues in relation to critical approaches in policy research. Firstly, research is always based on a set of political aspirations; secondly, because critical approaches are essentially political programmes, the researcher may ignore the strict evidential bases of the claims they are making (p.55). Critical researchers must be aware of the potential tension between politics and evidence. Harvey (1990) pointed out the differences between critical social researchers from other modes of inquiry. Firstly, critical social researchers are concerned with the broad social and historical context in which phenomena are interrelated; secondly, such researchers are 'interested in substantive issues and want to show what is really going on at a societal level' (Harvey, 1990, p.20).

Gale (2001) outlines three research methods that he claims have potential to more explicitly inform social policy analysis. According to Gale, there are three approaches in analysing policy critically, which he refers to as policy historiography, policy genealogy, and policy archaeology. Policy historiography approaches in educational policy analysis provide historical accounts of education 'to trace the processes of educational change and to expose the possible relationships between the socio-educational present and the socio-education past' (Gale, 2001, p. 384). In other words, the historical approach in education policy seeks to understand the relationships of present events in education policy with these of the past. Kogan (1975) in his approach to understand education policy study and the historical development of policy suggests the need to grasp the context of changing values, and to map the interest groups and their relationships to policy formation.

Ball (1990) asserts analysis of education policy can consist of three dimensions of education policy-making – economic, political and ideological. In addition, Ball suggests that theoretical strategies required to analyse each dimension are different.



As such, Ball (1990) provides a theoretical strategy to make sense of the complexity of the policy world. This theoretical strategy is alignment with the policy cycle model in policy analysis. Figure 4.4 shows Ball's framework of the theoretical strategy focused on a dynamic consideration of education policy in relation to the political, ideological and economic dimensions in education policy.



*Figure 4.4: Ball's Theoretical Strategy in Education Policy Research*  
 Source: Ball (1990, p.10)

The framework for Ball's theoretical strategies defines social systems in terms of their ideological, political, and economic levels. Thus, the theoretical strategy necessary to analyse the education policy was related to the specific level in the social system, be it economic, political or ideological. This theoretical approach consists of different

strategies to analyse policy at each level. In other words, each level requires its own appropriate theoretical strategy.

According to Ball (1990), the appropriate theoretical and analytical strategies at each level will differ. The economic level requires a 'structural analysis which examines the contribution which education makes to productivity and therefore the relation of education to capital' (Ball, 1990, 11). The realist/interactionist is the appropriate theoretical strategy appropriate to investigate education policy at the political level. This theoretical strategy involves analysis of the politics and governance of education and the changing interventions of powerful groups and constituencies in policy process (Ball, 1990). For investigation at the ideological level, the suitable form of investigation is a 'discursive' analysis of how education policy is conceived and discussed. Furthermore, Ball (1990) stated that 'each level is source and resource for education policy making; that is each level has effects in its own terms on the nature and possibility of policy' (p.11).

#### **4.8 The Conceptual Framework for Policy Research of Malaysian Education Policy for National Integration**

As indicated by the title of this Thesis, my aim is to investigate Malaysian education policy aimed at achieving national unity in relation to ethnic challenges. In accord with this intention, this research utilised the concept of policy as both process and text, which have been influenced by various factors, contestation, and struggles and changing circumstances. I tend to look into the policies produced at achieving this specific aim of ethnic integration and the processes of the development and implementation of such policy related to ethnic challenges. This also requires an analysis of the policy documents related to the issue being studied.

In a centralised education system such as that in Malaysia, education policies are determined and produced exclusively by the state or the central government. This system has not provided a permissive context for the development of local policies in response to the national interests and problems. The nature and orientation, and the socio-political context in which policy emerged, has been strongly determined and controlled by the central government. In the case of Malaysian educational policies, these features are very clear in the process of policy production and implementation.



Having regard to the fact that policy development in Malaysian education is top to the bottom in decision-making, policy is developed and acted out within the context of particular sets of values, pressures and constraints. Policy exists in response to particular problems, needs, and aspirations, and in the process of implementation of such policies, there is always a conflict between the various interests of political and social and economic groups.

From the definitions of policy suggested by a number of scholars, I have come to the consideration that it is better to look at policy as a process rather than focus on policy as a product *per se*. Policy consists of a web of decisions and actions, and it is more useful to regard it as a course of action or inaction. The argument over the meaning and definition of policy has persuaded me to look specifically into Malaysian education policy, which aims at nation building, as a process that involves negotiation, challenges and demands from the society, particular interests and ethnic groups and the public.

As an attempt to analyse the ethnic political influences in the production of Malaysian educational policy, this study will adapt the form of critical analysis of policy. Given that policy is a complex and dynamic subject, this study will look into policy processes, particularly in formulation and implementation. This framework is in line with the arguments that it is better to analyse the complex social issue like policy in a broad fashion and bring together structural, macro-level analysis and micro-level investigation (Ball, 1994a; Ozga 1990). As Ball points out;

The analysis of complex social issue like policy, two theories are probably better than one. The complexity and scope of policy analysis precludes the possibility of successful single theory explanations. What we need in policy analysis is toolbox of diverse concepts and theories. (Ball, 1994a, p14)

A numbers of theories, model and arguments have been considered for employment as the basis for the conceptual framework for this study. A framework that draws on a policy cycle model has been developed with some modifications. Drawing from this model, a critical theoretical paradigm will be linked to this research within the frame of 'conceptual use of knowledge' and the purpose of providing rich and broad understanding of the policy issues being studied, which is tailored to the enlightenment model of policy research. That is, I attempt to provide knowledge and



understanding regarding issues of Malaysian educational policies aimed at achieving national integration in the context of ethnic politics.

In addition, this research will take into account the three fundamental assumptions of this conceptual framework. First, the foundation or ontological assumption is realist, that is, the real world makes a difference in terms of ethnicity, ideologies and politics. Therefore, Malaysian education policy as a process and product is a complex phenomenon that includes challenges, demands, contestation and various interpretations, in a real context, in terms of ethnic politics and various demands on policy production. Secondly, based on the question of ‘what is policy and what can policy research/analysis contribute to the body of knowledge?’ and ‘what is the relationship of policy research to education policy?’ this research intends to contribute to the body of knowledge by preferring the frame of ‘conceptual use of knowledge’. Thus, the approach in this research is more aligned with the enlightenment rather than the engineering conception of knowledge. This contribution and transmission of knowledge is driven by a critical paradigm of policy analysis. Thirdly, this policy research regards policy as both a process and a product, focused on complex social issues and affected by various actors and influenced by various factors. The methodological assumption in this study is that a numbers of methods and techniques are necessary to collect appropriate data in dealing with the complexity of the policy process and context.

Consequently, I constructed the conceptual framework of this study by developing an eclectic approach to policy analysis, drawing on the strengths of the various approaches and strategies which have been considered to this point. This is embedded in the various acknowledged benefits of ‘eclecticism’ (Ball, 1997; Ozga, 2000) and assumes that combining various approaches offers a more complete picture than one approach alone in providing a framework for critical policy analysis. Using the policy cycle model proposed by Bowe et al. (1992) and Ball (1994a) with some modifications, I intend to look at education policy in Malaysia which focuses on the aim of national integration in two contexts within the policy cycle, which are:

1. The context of influences: The aim here is to document and understand the processes and challenges of ethnicity in the development of educational policies for national integration.



2. The context of policy text production: The aim here is to investigate policy processes and structures from the points of view of academicians, education administrators, and interest groups (specifically ethnic groups). Their points of view can be regarded as discourses on Malaysian education policy aimed at enhancing national integration in the education system.

Drawing from the policy cycle model developed by Bowe et al. (1992) and Ball (1994a), in this study, the researcher also takes into account two further contexts of influences in Malaysian education policy for national integration, which are the national context and the context of globalisation. Diagrammatically, Figure 4.5 below presents the policy cycle model adapted in this study for analysing Malaysian policy processes and production aimed at achieving national integration in respect of ethnicity

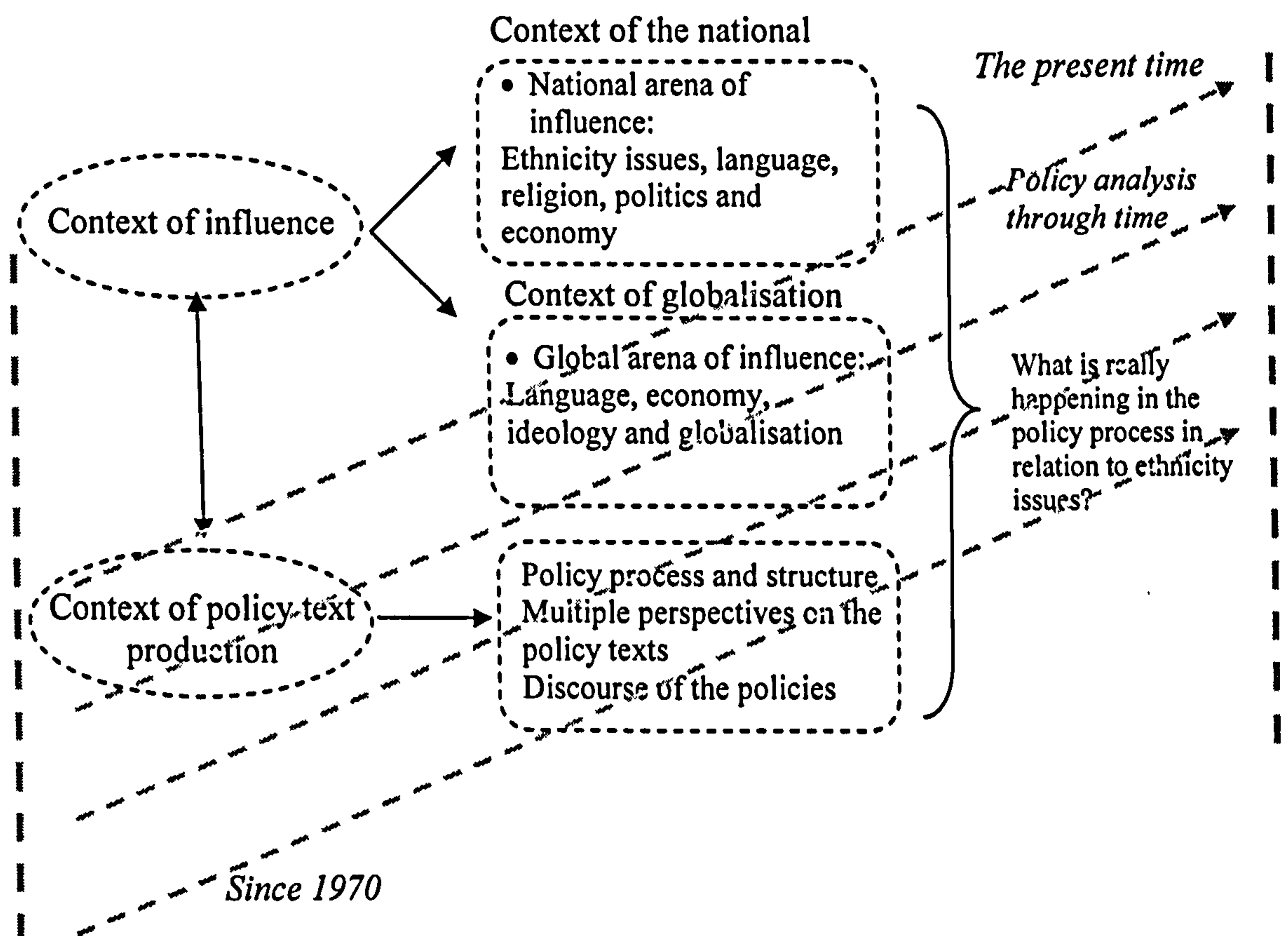


Figure 4.5: Context of policy analysis in Malaysian Educational Policies

Critical perspectives are utilised for analysing policy documents to gain an understanding concerning the underpinning elements of the challenges of ethnicity and the phenomena of the influences on the Malaysian education policy process

aimed at achieving national integration. Such perspectives are also utilised to analyse the stances of the academicians, education administrators and individuals from the relevant interest/ethnic groups. The critical perspective undertaken is intended to be 'constructive' and 'reflexive' (Ball, 1997, p.257) in relation to investigating the policy processes in Malaysian education system.

A historical or chronological approach is utilised to map policy production in Malaysian education system aimed at enhancing national integration. According to Gale (2001), this approach can be seen to be 'policy historiography', whose aim is to trace the processes of policy development in relation to ethnic challenges and other related issues which have influenced Malaysian education policy production since 1970 to the present in promoting national integration in and through schooling. This involved analysis of documents from primary and secondary sources, including official government records and reports, documents from relevant private institutions and academic literature related to the issues being studied.

The historical approach utilised in this research is based on consideration that Malaysian educational policies today, concerning ethnicity and other relevant issues, are mainly the products of the past. Hence, I believe, knowledge of the past is *sin qua non* to the understanding of the present situation. In addition, accepting that policy development is a dynamic and continuing process, this approach is able to provide the developmental and time dimensions of the policy being studied, and rejects the idea of envisaging policy as static rather than dynamic (Ozga, 2000; Taylor et al., 1997; Trowler, 2003). Since the development of Malaysian education policy aimed at enhancing national integration is dynamic and ongoing, that involves negotiation, contestation and struggle between different ethnic groups, the analysis of ethnic problem has to be pursued through time.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

The main aim of this Chapter has been to conceptualise the framework for analysis of education policy in Malaysia aimed at achieving national integration. This Chapter began with a discussion of policy definitions which considered the common features of policy in terms of its nature and meaning. The meaning of policy, as has been discussed, involves various perspectives and depends on the approach adapted to



policy study. In examining the literature, the Chapter identified how policy has been regarded in different frameworks.

As this discussion has noted, the policy cycle model will be adapted as a model for the analysis of Malaysian education policy, specifically in relation to the aim of national integration. Drawing from the perspective of policy as dynamic and involving a series of processes, the research methodology for this study is located within the framework of critical policy sociology. The following Chapter discuss these concerns and details the method utilised within this framework of research *of* policy.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This Chapter provides an account of how I, as the researcher, investigated issues of ethnicity in Malaysian education policy production aimed at achieving national integration. Specifically, my intention in this Chapter is making explicit the methodology, methods, research strategy, and ethics that informed this research. The Chapter provides a detailed explanation of the methodological approach utilised in this research.

Accordingly, the various sections of this Chapter discuss the research methodology, and the processes of collecting, producing, interpreting, and analysing the data collected in this research. The discussion in this Chapter begins broadly, providing a clarification related to methodological issues and approaches in policy research. In particular, details are provided of how the research data were produced, managed and analysed. This methodological approach is based on a relational and ecological view of 'good' research.

#### **5.2 Methodological Issues in Policy Research**

The preliminary intention is to arrive at a specific preferred methodology which is appropriate for this research and the questions being addressed. Consequently, I examine the different methodological approaches in education policy research and discuss their strengths and weaknesses. The discussion in the following sections is related to section 4.8 in Chapter Four which provided a conceptual framework of policy analysis for this study. A discussion of different research methodological approaches in policy analysis, each of which is based on different social inquiry perspectives, is provided.

##### **5.2.1 Policy Research Methodological Perspectives**

As regards methods of inquiry in education policy research, Cohen et al. (2000) and Neuman (2000) note that there are different approaches to research methodology in social science which can be grouped within three perspectives: positivist or scientific,



interpretative or naturalistic, and methodology from a critical social science perspective. These perspectives provide direction for the preferred methodological approach for an investigation of and inquiry into education policy. All these perspectives begin from different suppositions about social reality, the researcher-subject relationship, and the nature of truth. Each will be briefly discussed below.

#### **5.2.1.1 The Scientific /Positivist**

According to Hammersley (2002), this perspective believes that society is characterised by a high degree of structural integration generated by a high level of social integration. He observes that logical positivism sees societies as functioning wholes, and their parts are analysed in terms of how well they contribute to the operation of the whole.

In the inquiry into social problems, such as policy, the positivist research perspective follows the natural scientific approach, which is based on *a priori* theory and from which is derived an hypothesis being 'tested through quantitative measurement' (Finch, 1986, p. 6). The generalisation of the research finding in this research perspective is based on the belief that the nature of truth remains unchanged no matter what the context. Based on this basis, the positivists tend to make generalisations from the research to other contexts. Another trait of this research perspective, according to Holloway (1997), is that this type of research approach in social science is concerned with the quest for objectivity and value neutrality. Consequently, the main concern is to distance the researcher and subject in order to avoid biases in the research process.

This perspective in policy research utilise the research approach which is suitable and compatible in order to obtain the hard data or facts about the problem being researched. In policy analysis, the quantitative approach has normally been viewed as positivist. The paramount intention of this approach is to use systematic statistical procedures to establish certain objective social facts from the research methodology. Research methods such as survey questionnaires, experiments, and statistical procedures have been viewed as appropriate methods that can deliver these sorts of findings and facts. Generally in policy research, these methods have been viewed as compatible for the policy-maker for the purpose of policy and decision making. In



other words, this methodological perspective can be justifiable in relation to research *for* policy, which can serve to make authority more effective and efficient by providing information of use to policy-makers and planners (Mills, 1959 in Ozga and Gewirtz, 1994). The expectation is that research provides empirical evidence and conclusions that help to solve a problem (Weiss, 1980).

Ball (1995) criticises this research perspective because it 'rests upon an uncritical acceptance and operates within the hegemony of instrumental rationalism' (p.259). Related, Joseph (2006b) argues that research which is focused on the client's 'social' and 'rational' needs tends not to be critical in nature. In addition, Taylor et al. (1997) see this perspective as assuming that research can avoid the political complexities involved in policy-making processes.

The view of policy analysis based on this perspective might fit with a rational model of policy processes in solving social problems. It is derived from the assumption that decisions in the public sphere could be made in a value-neutral manner. This assumption stipulates that knowledge, if it is to be of any use, must be scrupulously value-neutral, grounded in essential facts provided by the most systematic observations possible (Taylor et al., 1997). Foster (2001) argues that in the positivistic approach, fact and value and means and ends are separated as a rational and managerial mechanism of control. This model is a more prescriptive, traditional approach, which conceptualises policy in separate and linear phases including policy development, implementation, and evaluation.

#### **5.2.1.2 Interpretive/Naturalistic Perspectives**

The interpretative perspective is positioned in contrast to positivist perspectives. Regarding the question of 'reality', the interpretative approach believes in multiple realities and multiple truths, which are interrelated to form a pattern of truth. This perspective brings a belief that there is no absolute truth in or about the social world. According to Bryman (2001), in the study of the social world, the interpretative approach considers 'that the subject matter of the social sciences – people and their institutions is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences' (p.12). He further argues that this perspective of the social world requires a different logic of



research procedures, and relies on field study as a fundamental data collection technique.

The assumptions about the researcher-subject relationship in interpretive points of views are also different from that of the positivist. While the positivist assumes that the researcher should have no effect on the phenomena being studied, the interpretive researcher assumes that all phenomena are characterised by interactivity and negotiation of meaning. Furthermore, the interpretive researcher avoids generalisation and goes to 'thick description'. Differences rather than similarities characterise different contexts and sufficient immersion in experience with the phenomenological yields conclusions about what is important, dynamic, and pervasive in the field (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

Further points of comparison between these two perspectives of inquiry are discussed by Bulmer (1982a), Finch (1986), Silverman (1993), Marsh and Smith (2001), who all agree that there are difficulties in working across these two research approaches; the appropriate research method ought to be based on the research design, context and the purpose of the research as articulated in the research questions. The distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches is, however sometimes over drawn. There can be quantitative aspects to qualitative data collection, and at the same, there are qualitative aspects to some elements of quantitative approaches, for example, in relation to the categories and their definition which form the basis of statistical analysis. Often as well, a crude alignment is assumed between quantitative approaches and a positivist epistemology, and between qualitative approaches and an interpretivist epistemology. The research here rejects such dichotomised and oversimplified binaries. The quantitative or qualitative data techniques for either the scientific/positivist or interpretive perspectives as both can be used whenever they seem appropriate and justifiable to the nature of inquiry and the research design being utilised (Finch, 1986).

### **5.2.1.3 The Critical Perspective**

Critical social theory describes social reality not as an equilibrium system, but as a system characterised by dominance, exploitation, struggle, oppression, and power. Johnstone (2002) says that research grounded in this perspective attempts to show

what is wrong with the status quo. Johnstone notes that this type of research approach is about struggles over power, and intended to help empower the relatively powerless. In other words, this perspective is grounded in a desire for a politics of emancipation and empowerment.

According to Harvey (1990), critical social research denies that its object of study is 'objective' social appearances (p.19). Harvey notes that critical research goes beneath surface appearances, and is interested in substantive issues, and wants to show what is really going on at a societal level. It is not only concerned with what is happening, but also concerned with doing something about it, that is a process of deconstruction and reconstruction (Harvey, 1990). Therefore, it regards the positivistic scientific method as unsatisfactory because it deals only with surface appearances.

Critical social research is also underpinned by a critical-dialectical perspective which attempts to dig beneath the surface of historically specific, oppressive, social structures. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) assert that the contribution of critical social research is to the rectification of injustice and inequality in society. The critical aspects in its analysis seeks to 'take things apart' (Kogan, 1979, p.5) and 'to evaluate the distributional impact of existing policies and the rationales underlying them' (Walker, 1981, p.225). According to Harvey (1990), this can be contrasted with the positivistic concern to discover the factors that cause the phenomena or to build grand theoretical edifices, and with phenomenological attempts to interpret the meanings of social actors or attempt close analysis of symbolic processes.

### **5.3 Methodological Framework: Critical Interpretive Approach**

The methodology framework of this study is inclined towards the critical and interpretive perspectives in policy sociology research. It derived from a conceptual framework which was developed in Section 4.8 in Chapter Four. The research positions its methodological approach within critical policy sociology (Ozga, 1987; Ball, 1990, Bowe et al., 1992; Troyna, 1994a & 1994b; Gale, 2001), which is based on the work of policy sociologists who 'gear their approaches more closely to those characteristics which distinguish critical social research from other modes of social inquiry' (Troyna, 1994b, p.72). This approach was based on a critical theory of society, which acknowledged that wealth, opportunity, and justice in education are



inequitably distributed. In this respect, this research seeks to examine critically the existing policies in Malaysian education for enhancing national integration since 1970. It seeks to understand and clarify 'what really happened and how it happened' in relation to the complex ethnic challenges in Malaysian education policy.

The intention, therefore, is to research critically, to pull things apart, 'especially policy discourse' (Troyna, 1994a, p. 71) in Malaysian education policy aimed at enhancing national integration. The depth-interpretive and critical approach to the investigation aims to explore and analysis the meaning and explanation of particular discourses, ideas, thoughts and concepts surrounding ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy. Thus, it seeks to provide knowledge and understanding which might be used in the situation in the development of policy in education aimed at enhancing national integration. The following sections consider the preferred method of research in more detail, which is informed by this research methodological framework.

### **5.3.1 Research Method**

Harvey (1990) refers to method in research as the way empirical data are collected and ranges from asking questions, through analysing documents, to observation of both controlled and uncontrolled situations. The research method depends on the research design and framework of the study and must be justifiable in terms of the research questions and type of data that need to be obtained. Generally speaking, two research methods based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions in respect of the social reality under investigation are described as quantitative and qualitative methods.

The quantitative research method is most often based within the positivist perspective of social reality which contends that 'there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood' (Guba, 1990, p.22). In quantitative methods, the research is processed in the same way as in natural science by adopting the natural science research method (Holloway, 1997). It follows the scientific paradigm of inquiry, involves generalising the findings to a wider population.

Quantitative methods of inquiry emphasise the use of strategies that tend to quantify the data including survey questionnaires, structured interviews, and statistical



procedures of analysis as their forte. Such methods follow the general ground rules for the validity of scientific propositions; adoption of a research design, hypotheses, controlled comparison and collection of data, processing of data, statistical analysis for significance and testing the hypotheses. This approach is based on the belief that the only phenomenon that can be measured is the one that can be counted (Tesch, 1990). In other words, the spirit of quantitative research lies in numerical measurement, statistical analysis and the search for cause and effect. Stenhouse (1983, p.1) describes these approaches of social research as a 'psycho-statistical paradigm'.

From the 1960s, quantitative research methods were in much demand by policy makers who believed in the power of the numerical, facts and hard data for policy-making decisions (Hamilton et al., 1977, p. 181). In other words, the capacity to provide 'objective facts' (Burgess, 1985a, p.116) and statistical information to government or policy-makers using quantitative method has often been viewed as an appropriate approach to research seeking to meet the needs of policy makers. Hammersley (2002) pointed out that this brings an implication that qualitative research is believed to be unable to deliver the sort of findings that are required for evidence-based practices.

Criticisms of quantitative methods are derived from the argument that these methods have their own limitations in researching the social world. Such critics see that this research method has not been able to answer the questions of 'what' and 'why'. For instance, in suggesting the limitation of survey research, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) point out, 'with something as complex (and hence unquantifiable) in survey research has not been able to answer the 'what' and 'how' or lack in addressing questions of meaning and causality' (p.2). Further, critics of quantitative methods emphasise the question of objectivity. For example, McCormick and James (1989) and Keeves (1999) amongst others, argue that the subjective element still exists in quantitative method in selecting what to measure, how to define what to measure and so on.

Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) note that there are inadequacies of the hypothetical-deductive methodology that characterised the experimental traditions of the quantitative methods in terms of answering questions of what and how. Hamilton et



al. (1977), Burgess (1985a, 1985b & 1985c), Silverman (1993) and Bryman (2001) also agree that experimental methods and statistical analysis in quantitative research cannot adequately answer some of the questions raised about experience of participants and the nature of the 'real' world.

In contrast with the quantitative research method, the basis of qualitative research lies in the interpretative approach to social reality. According to Hammersley (2000), most qualitative researchers have rejected functionalism and the kind of 'correctionalism' which treats the task of social science as to identify and remedy social problems. As pointed out by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), qualitative researchers are more concerned with context. The qualitative researcher feels that action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. Related to policy analysis, the policy process can best be understood in the historical context of policy development. Qualitative methods emphasise a wide range of strategies that involve field-work, field research, ethnography, participant observation, semi-structured interview, and interpretative procedures.

In policy research, qualitative methods can provide useful knowledge about the issues and problems involved in understanding policy processes, and can inform decisions about 'what works' (Hammerlsey, 2002, p. 85) and 'how it works' in order to enlighten the problem or issues which exist in policy processes and implementation. Finch (1985, p. 114)) argues that qualitative works are capable of producing account of 'what happens' which enable us to understand and describe the social process. Such data collection methods offer 'richly descriptive' information, views, and interpretations of issues, events, and things (Hakim, 1987, p.27). Rist (2000) has shown how some of the linkages of knowledge and action are formed in the policy process generated through qualitative research. According to him and as discussed in Chapter Four, the contribution of qualitative research in policy can best be understood in three phases of the policy cycle, so-called policy information, policy implementation and policy accountability or policy outcome or policy impact.

Whilst all these points of views opt for a strong tradition of qualitative method and at the same time reveal the limitations of quantitative method in dealing with social reality, all of them agree that that there is no fixed procedure for the production of



material and for analysis in qualitative research. In addition, I believe that the research method is more than a matter of choice; indeed, the researcher has to convince others that the research has good reasons for selecting the intellectual tools for the research. The process of justifying research is a process of persuasion (Tesch, 1990, p. 2), and as such requires recognition of the limitations in any research. In this sense, I believe that the research design should be tailored to match the special characteristic of the project, and fit with the research purpose based on the particular context of study.

### **5.3.2 Which Policy Research Method?**

The appropriate methodological approach that has been considered for collecting and analysing data is based on fundamental assumptions about social reality and the policy phenomenon being studied. The method chosen for this research is based on the fundamental assumptions as discussed in section 4.8, Chapter Four. Consequently, I have considered two qualitative methods as appropriate for data collection to answer the research questions framing this study: a quasi historical method drawn principally from relevant documents and relevant literature in relation to the issues of ethnicity in Malaysian education policy since 1970; secondly an interview method as a means of obtaining information and data from the relevant policy actors involving a numbers of categories of people, directly or indirectly involved in relevant policy formulation and implementation.

## **5.4 Quasi Historical Approach and Policy Interviews**

As mentioned, and derived from the conceptual framework developed in Chapter Four, two methods of gathering data were adopted in this research, quasi historical analysis involving document research, and semi-structured interviews. Document research includes reviewing relevant literature dealing with both theory and evidence, and locating existing sources of primary data. The choice of document materials depended on several aspects, including the research questions, my knowledge of the relevant materials, and the potentiality of the researcher to gain access to the relevant documents.

### **5.4.1 Policy Documents Analysis**

As mentioned in Chapter One (section 1.5 and as considered again in this Chapter in section 5.7), this research deals with quite sensitive issues in Malaysian education



policy: namely, ethnicity and policy. Therefore, it must always be borne in my mind that there are some limitations to gaining access to some official documents; access to some documents is actually legally prohibited. Under the Official Secrets Act 1972 (OSA), this does not allow disclosure to the public to certain documents; they are strictly protected under this Act. Hence, the official documents obtained for this research have been regarded as public documents such as parliamentary reports, the Education Policy Act and so on. Documents obtained from non-government institutions (henceforth NGOs) are not bound by this Act; however, some NGOs also do not disclose certain documents which they think are quite sensitive and that public disclosure would be considered to be unethical.

The documents used in this study have been divided into four general categories which provided relevant policy information which has been analysed. These four general categories included:

1. Government publications and official reports
2. Publications, reports, memorandum from interest groups and non-government institutions.
3. Journals, articles, books and dissertations.
4. Material in the popular press.

Much of this material is available in the public domain, but not all is publicly known or easily accessible. Indeed, my knowledge of and access to some of it was facilitated through contact with interviewees and other individuals who have information about the issues being studied. The exceptions to the public availability of documentation consulted in this research are the private materials supplied by particular individuals and organisations.

However, some interviewees and organisations were able to disclose to me as researcher without releasing to the public. Thus, sometimes during the interview, documents were shown to me as evidence but were not given to me. Interviewees were unable to disclose such a document as they regarded such disclosure as unethical and they also required confidentiality for their institution. For instance, some NGOs were not willing to provide letters, minutes from meetings with some political parties, and not willing to disclose letters received from the government. The process,

procedures and ethical considerations of gaining access to such documents are discussed later in this Chapter. This involves consideration of the procedures to access official government documents and to obtain documents from NGOs.

A number of documents from government and NGOs have been analysed to gain data for the purpose of this study. These documents can be categorised as primary and secondary sources of the data for the research. Table 5.1 lists the type of documents that have been obtained in the field work phase of the study.

The intention of analysing such documents is to construct an account over time on the series of specific and general policies produced in respect of ethnic challenges in Malaysian education policy development and implementation. The analysis narrates the production and implementation of relevant policies from 1970. The starting point of 1970 is related to the changing scenario of government intention at enhancing national integration through the education system, following the tragic ethnic riots of 1969. Chronology frames the account of the issues of policy development, change, and production, and the issues of ethnic challenges surrounding the policy processes based on the analysis of the collected documents. This includes a significant temporal aspect to the policy development and subsequent policy formulation.

The analysis of documents within the period under study adopted Fairclough's (1992, 1993, 1995, 2001, 2003) critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) method of interpreting meanings from texts (this is discussed in section 5.5). The analysis drew on a range of documents and literature, particularly as these informed understanding of policy, education policy, issues of ethnicity in relation to the concept of nation building in multi ethnic societies (as discussed in Chapter 3 and 4). This literature itself was managed using a computer software package titled *EndNote 7* to the extent that it produced bibliographical references and listings throughout the writing of the thesis.



**Table 5.1: List of documents for analysing Malaysian Education Policy**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Resource</b>	<b>Type of Documents</b>	<b>Type of Data</b>	<b>Category</b>
1.	National Archive Malaysia	Education reports and records before independence until 1970 Education Act 1961 (Amendment 1971), official and non-official letter, official statements	Policy texts and regulation, Information about policy produced	Primary sources
2.	Ministry of Education, Malaysia and other governmental departments	Official reports and records about Education policies for national integration in Malaysia, Education Act, and administration letter, books and other related documents	Policy texts, official statements, figures, policy decisions, guidelines about education program/policies to enhance national integration in school system	Primary sources
3.	Malaysian Parliament	Parliament official reports (Parliamentary Hansard), Education Bill – selection in relation to legislation	Policy making/decision debates	Primary sources
4.	NGOs	Letters to government, memorandums, statements, minutes from meetings, letters from education ministry, articles concerning the education policy issues.	Opinion, policy debates, information about policy implementation, policy interpretation, books, articles.	Primary and secondary sources
5.	University Library	Theses, articles, books, magazines, newspapers cutting about education policy and ethnicity	Opinions, research findings, opinion and statement about significant issues	Secondary sources

#### **5.4.2 Policy Interviews**

Interview is a data collection method in qualitative research which has the capacity for providing insight and is an adaptable means and essential technique of collecting in-depth information for understanding the issues or phenomenon being studied (Cohen et al., 2000; Patton, 2002; Arksey and Knight, 1999; Taylor and Bogdan,

1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Dooley, 1990; Finch, 1986). Arksey and Knight (1999) suggest that interview is a 'conversation between people in which one person has the role of researcher' (p.2).

For collecting data about the issues concerning ethnicity in Malaysian education policy, interview is another major means of obtaining rich qualitative data about the opinions and perspectives of the key players within the policy community in relation to issues of ethnicity and those of national integration. In this research, I used semi-structured interviews to obtain opinions and information from the subject-informants, and to capture the different viewpoints towards this particular education policy. Mason (1996) refers to semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interview as qualitative interviewing. Such interviews can be recognised as 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984, p.102), being guided by topics or themes that were prepared in the interview guideline.

The semi-structured interview proposed within this study allowed me to ask questions 'in response to what are seen as significant replies' (Bryman, 2001, p.110) from the interviewees. Even though the structured interview can be directly linked with the research questions, a semi-structured interview in this study was deemed to be more appropriate for dealing with the significant people that have a lot of knowledge about Malaysia education policy. This interview approach also provided an opportunity for me to find information which I might not have realised to be significant to the issues under consideration and allowed me to 'follow up ideas, probe responses and ask for clarification or further elaboration' (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 7).

Moreover, this interview technique provides some structure so the interviewer can retain the focus in the research interview. This approach also gave me a chance to direct, but at the same time gave interviewees a chance to contribute. Since this study did not use 'highly structured interviews', the questions asked were not actually in the same order in each interview nor were the exact words used in each interview. This was appropriate for me to pursue the topic or argument and useful to adapt to the difference styles of interviewees.



#### **5.4.2.1 Looking for Subject-Informants**

Literature reviews often suggest that key people in the policy processes who need to be involved as participants in policy research. Raab (1994) suggests that the best places to find data about policy is in or through the words and reasoning of communities or networks of policy actors. Tierney and Dilley (2002) also have the same view when they claim that these people have traditionally been viewed as being 'in the know' (p.459).

The chosen individuals for research interview were based on the consideration that they had certain access to power in discourses on education policy, including language, curriculum, and other education policies. They have been identified as persons who have the ability and opportunity to access education policy discourses about the issues being studied. In other words, the chosen individuals for research interviews depended on the social power (their social position, status, role, institution, official role, and so on) in accessing education policy in Malaysia. In this sense, Van-Dijk (1993) suggests discourse access and social power are parallel, the more discourse genres, contexts, participants, audience, scope and text characteristics that individuals, social groups and institutions can actively control, the more powerful individuals, social groups, institutions and elites are. In other words, power and powerlessness go with access and lack of access to certain discourses, in this research case, within education policy discourse.

Consequently, a numbers of specific policy actors have been chosen for the interviews in this study, which consist of various types of policy actors within the policy community who have a significant involvement with the phenomena under study. Some of them have been recognised as individuals who have been involved directly in policy formulation, policy decision-making and policy implementation processes of education policies in Malaysia. In this regard, all the interviewees have been considered 'as a subject and informant', with whom I had the opportunity to discuss and obtain first hand information about the issues being investigated.

The term 'subject-informants' used in this research is in a context of the research design, which utilised the purposive sample technique derived from the researcher targeting a particular group (Cohen et al., 2000). The intention is to get relevant and

significant subjects and informants who are able to provide rich and useful information on the issues being studied. This is different from the tradition of experimental research design or for objectifying the people taking part in the research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001). Specifically, this term refers to the person, as an 'informant' and 'meaning-maker' in relation to ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy; which is the interviewees are involved in meaning-making work (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) in such interviews. The selection of individuals for interview is based on the premises that the subject-informants:

- a) have a knowledge and information on education policy and programmes in Malaysia at enhancing national integration related to the issue being studied;
- b) may have their own meaning-frame on the questions been raised;
- c) are independent and have power to the discourse in the interview process;
- d) are located in different contexts, have different backgrounds, experiences in relation to the interview questions and to the discourse of the education policy issue.

This study involves a relatively small number of selected interviewees who have credibility for providing useful and valuable information and data. All interviewees that have been selected were recognised as key informants, with knowledge and understanding of the policies being researched. They are also informed about the issues and topic under investigation. Thus, the interview type in this research can be regarded as key-informant interviews (Borg and Gall, 1989). Three categories of interviewee have been recognised:

- 1) The Academicians
- 2) Education administrators
- 3) Individuals from the relevant interest/ethnic groups.

From fifteen potential individuals that have been invited for interview, eleven individuals agreed to be interviewed. Amongst individuals who did not agree to be involved in policy interviews were high level administrators, one of whom was recently a secretary of parliament, deputy minister and the other was an important person in a political ruling party who dealt with education affairs. Hence, a total of eleven individuals were interviewed, including three individuals from the category of



relevant interest groups, four lecturers under the category of academician and four high level administrators in the Ministry of Education Malaysia.

The selection of these three categories of subject-informants for the interviews was based on various reasons and underlying principles in relation to the purpose of the study, the conceptual framework, and type of data that needed to be obtained. Since this study attempted to understand and analyse ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy framed by a conceptual basis of critical policy sociology, the subject-informants in the interview processes were recognised as significant individuals who could provide relevant information and knowledge about the issues being studied. The interviews provided data about perspectives and points of view on ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy that needed to be critically analysed.

In this study, amongst the academician, were two professors who have relevant knowledge and who have been involved and done much research about ethnicity and education policy in Malaysia, including issues of language, and Chinese and Indian schools. I was informed that these academicians were also involved in the process of education policy production, particularly regarding language policy and curriculum development in Malaysian education. Thus, it was considered that these respondents could provide significant and reliable sources of data for the study.

Several significant organisations were included in this study, categorised as relevant interest groups from whom relevant and important information about the issues being investigated could be obtained. Individuals from the significant NGOs were recognised as important informants, especially in respect of issues of language and minority education. They were the leaders amongst the organisations that have been involved actively regarding issues in Chinese and Indian education, particularly those which related to the education policy and programmes on language, schools and the curriculum.

In the education administrator group, three of the informants are former Directors and a Deputy Director at the ministry and state level, and one of them was a former Minister of Education and a former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, all of whom have enormous experience, knowledge and information about the development and



implementation of Malaysian education policies. Amongst them were policy makers, policy deciders and policy implementers in Malaysian education policy. Table 5.2 shows the category of participants involved in the interview.

All the participants in the category of education administrator are retired persons. The selection of retired administration officers for interview was to get rich and transparent data about the issues being investigated in this study. According to Weiner and Vining (1999), retired employees are often a valuable source and offer several advantages for the interview processes. Walford (1994) also suggests that such persons are much easier to obtain access. Specifically, the advantages of retired employees for research interviews include:

- a) They usually have time to interview.
- b) They have had some time to reflect on their experiences and observations during the period they held the position.
- c) They no longer have to worry about agency politics and retribution.
- d) They may well be more forthright and more analytic.

Table 5.2: The Number of Interview Participants Based On Group Categories and Ethnic Background

Ethnic	Category		
	Education Administrator	Relevant Interest Group	Academician
Malay	4		2
Chinese		2	1
Indian		1	1

In terms of ethnic differences, the selected informants reflect the existing situation in Malaysia which is a multiethnic society, and were appropriate to the research questions underpinning the study. An appropriate selection of informants that could represent differing opinions and points of view from individuals of different ethnic groups was considered when choosing the purposive sample. This is also reflected in my position in this study which is try to take a macro perspective across the ethnic groups in relation to the issues of ethnicity in education policy in Malaysia. However,



since the majority of education administrators in Malaysia, especially in the higher level administration are Malay, it was difficult to get non-Malays in this category. This group of informants also reflects Malay hegemony and domination in administration and executive power in the Malaysian government.

#### **5.4.2.2 Approaching and Dealing With the Interviewees**

Approaching, dealing and negotiating the interviewees in this study involved various tasks and was time consuming. Negotiating interview access required the provision of relevant information about the research. This included providing a covering letter of invitation to participate, an information sheet about the research, evidence of supervisor, ethical support and ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee, School of Education, University of Sheffield, and an interview consent form (Appendix B1 & B2, C, D, E and F). This initial approach was followed by several telephone calls, e-mail contact to confirm the interviewees' agreements and consent, and provided more opportunity for them to ask further questions or request further explanations about the research.

Three months before the fieldwork, I started contacting the interviewees. The preparations to get information regarding the interviewees' background and experiences in Malaysian education policy were made early before I started to contact the interviewees personally, via e-mail, letters and phone calls. Such information was gained through utilising the 'snow ball' technique. In other words, I gained information on these individual from other relevant informants who knew that all these individuals had been dealing with government policies in education, particularly those related to ethnicity and language issues. This was also supported by investigation from the literatures related to the issues being studied.

Discussions and arrangements to fix a tentative date for the interview were conducted several times, via telephone and e-mail to arrange interview date, time, and location; this was followed by sending other necessary documents through mail and e-mail. All of this was done during the term I was in Sheffield, United Kingdom and the potential interviewees were in Malaysia. When the field work began, I again contacted all interviewees as the means to established contact and agreement re interviews.



All interviews, except one, were conducted face to face or in-person, or according to Powney and Watts (1987) as a one to one interview. Even though, as pointed out by Dooley (1990), the face to face interview involves much time, is prohibitively expensive and requires dealing with busy informants, this interview technique allows me to get together personally with important individuals in the policy community and have direct conversation with them and establish rapport so as to build confidentiality with the informants.

Secondly, as Shuy (2002) notes, in-person interviews are better for research involving sensitive questions. Powney and Watts (1987) also agree that this kind of interview has a number of advantages, including it is easier to manage, issues can be kept relatively confidential and analysis is more straightforward in that only one person's set of responses are gathered at any one time. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) conclude that face-to-face interviewing has become the most common type of qualitative research method used in order to elicit information and answers from respondents. Indeed, using in-person interviews in this study provided a calm environment for the interviewees for answering questions on topics which related to quite sensitive issues about ethnicity and policy in the Malaysian education arena.

The interviews varied in length from more than one hour and most of the sessions lasted for about two hours. The interviews were carried out in the location proposed by the interviewees. Some of the interviews were carried out at the interviewees' office and some others were at places proposed by the interviewees, including public and private spaces. At all times, I tried to accommodate the needs of the interviewees to ensure that the interviewees would feel at ease in the interviewing process. Three interviews were conducted in Malay as requested by the interviewees (all of them are Malay), as they mentioned that they were more comfortable and would be appreciative if the interview was carried out in Malay, even though they are able to communicate in English. I also believe that, since I am Malay in ethnic background, these interviewees felt that it would be easier to raise their thoughts and opinions in a language which both of us understand very well.

Before the interview started, I gave an explanation based on the information sheet given to informants earlier, about the objectives and focus of the research and the



ethical considerations in the interview; i.e. to investigate and seek to understand ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policies aimed at achieving national integration. The interviewees were also informed that they were free to decide to take part or not in the interview and free to answer or not answer the questions raised by the interviewer.

The permission to tape record the interview was obtained from the interviewees as the interviewees had been informed earlier in the consent form. A small battery operated portable tape recorder was used for this purpose and it was always placed at the centre between me and interviewee. Audio-tape recording the interviews assisted me to obtain an accurate textual record and in focusing attention on the conversation to be an interested and active listener, 'showing understanding, and sympathetically engaging in the ideas and issues that were raised' (Gale, 1997, p.119).

The conversations began broadly, centred on questions and discussions about the interviewees' background and their general views on Malaysian education policy aimed at fostering national integration. Discussion about changing the general ideas on the situation of Malaysian education nowadays was also touched on at the beginning of the interview. This initial conversation included interviewees' views on and involvement in what they regarded as the concepts of national integration and education policy in Malaysia. This early approach in the interview was to build rapport and a reciprocal relation between the researcher and the interviewee. According to Andersen (1993), with qualitative research methods such as interview, good rapport is important to establishing good research relationships.

As noted in section 5.4.2.1, I considered interviewees as subjects and informants in this policy research. Most of them are skilled interviewees. Borg and Gall (1989) say of this type of interviewees that they 'are often non-typical in that they have more knowledge, better communication skills, or perspectives different from other group member' (p.389). Moreover, Ball (1994b) suggests that such interviewees also have particular reasons for being careful about what and how they say things in interview. In recognising the distinctive researcher-researched relationship in this particular type of interviewees, Hakim notes that:

...such interviews often require the interviewer to demonstrate a good deal of prior knowledge of the subject, to treat the interviewee as an informant as well as a respondent, to display sensitivity to the fact that views offered by organizational and other role-holders may not be coterminous with their private opinions, and to recognise that the discussion takes place on a basis of equality (or even of researcher inferiority) (Hakim, 1987, p. 73-74).

Some of the interviewees did not simply answer the questions being raised. There was some discrepancy with my intentions, goals, and meanings to be pursued in the process of interviewing; they sometimes tried to divert the conversation to follow their own interests and meanings, and usually tended to control the event. Some of them were reluctant to explain or disclose information which had not previously been made public and which was related to the interests of their organisation. The following example excerpt indicates such avoidance, which was also indicated in the facial expressions of the interviewee.

Researcher : How do you regard this?

Interviewee : But I don't like to mention the name.

Researcher : No need to mention the name. How they tried to bring this issue for their political interest?

Interviewee : Yes...yes...

Interviewee 05 (NGOs/Chinese)

There was also an issue with some interviewees concerning my ethnic background when they spoke about something that they thought was sensitive to me. For instance, when talking about the religion aspect, one interviewee commented:

Mr. Hazri, this might be very sensitive...I'm a non-Muslim, I shouldn't talk about this. But in fact, I think that is one of the reasons.

Interviewee 02 (NGOs/Indian)

After two interviews had been done, I had gained insight into how to narrow the scope of data collecting. Although, mostly, the standard questions were asked from interviewee to interviewee, later interviews also took account of information gained from earlier interviews. This technique offers an attempt to gain rich data from the process of interviewing. Discussion concerning the construction of interview questions is taken up in section 5.4.2.6 in this Chapter.

According to Briggs (1986), an interview is a communicative event. Finch (1986) concurs that interviewer impartiality is crucial and that there should be scrupulous



avoidance of leading questions and cautious probing for clarification of ambiguous responses and further explanation. In addition, she reminds us that the meanings of interviewees' responses should never be assumed, and freedom for the informant to express their points of view fully, their own opinions and arguments should be freely granted. Thus, I was more flexible in the process of interviewing, and 'allowed room' (Bryman, 2001, p.314) for interviewees to pursue additional topics, arguments and points of view. In order to get good interview data, I tried to adapt to the different style of the interviewees. This strategy enabled me to ask more challenging and controversial questions in relation to ethnicity and Malaysian education policy.

I also realised that 'relations in the field cannot simply be technical issue to be resolved by technical means' (Silverman, 2005, p.254), and the harmony between interviewer impartiality and the desirability of empathising with interviewees is vital in order to understand their points of views (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). Accordingly, the good relationship and trust between the interviewees from different ethnic groups and me was built at the earliest stage, from the giving of information and conducting conversations via telephone and e-mail between both parties. I always tried to build good rapport and elicit rich information from the interaction with the interviewees (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992).

I found that most of the interviewees were very willing to answer such questions 'as one person to another rather than as an insider to the outsider' (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p.166). This has been achieved by developing a good rapport between me (the researcher) and them (the subject-informants). During the interview processes, I usually brought the interviewees to the common issues across ethnic groups, informed them about confidentiality of the information given and built rapport based on shared discourse and knowledge. I considered that the dimensions of insider and outsider in the process of interviewing might include knowledge and understanding of Malaysian society and politics, knowledge and understanding of education policy, yet all had an abiding interest in issues to do with ethnic integration in Malaysia.

Furthermore, this study also included common issues that everybody can share and have an interest in, such as human rights issues in education policy. In relation to insiders and outsiders, I and the interviewees were insiders with respect to knowledge

of Malaysian education policies and politics. However, in respect of ethnic politics in some interviews, there was an insider to insider relationship, while in other interviews this was not the case, for example, when I as a Malay interviewed a Chinese or Indian person.

#### **5.4.2.3 Interview Questions via E-Mail**

One of the interviewees is a very influential person who was involved directly in the process of policy making and policy decisions, including education policy in Malaysia. Because this person is very busy, dealing with domestic and international networking, it was not possible to get him to do an in-person interview, although several appointments had been made earlier. Thus, to sort out this problem and to ensure that I could access this valuable subject-informant, an alternative way was used to obtain information, which was interviewing by e-mail.

The interview questions were submitted via e-mail to get his response. The questions for the subject developed from the information and issues that had been obtained from the interviews before or raised from the previous interviewees. This is a strategy to pursue opinions and points of view and to get responses from this particular person in policy making and policy decision in relation to the issues of Malaysian education policy aimed to unite the nation.

#### **5.4.2.4 The Instruments: Interview Guide**

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) and Brenner (1985) advocate the use of an interview guide to ensure that all points, which the researcher considers should be raised, are actually raised in the research interview. Patton (2002) also emphasizes that an interview guide can ensure that some basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed, as he notes that 'the interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject' (p.343). Accordingly, an interview guide (see Appendix G) was prepared as a means to ensure that the questions covered the issues to be investigated. However, the interview guide was not rigid, but flexible and opportunities were provided for the interviewees to address issues of concern to them personally and offer scope to say things freely both within and outside of the interview guide strictures.



Three main types of questions were formulated, framed by Burgess's typology of type of interview questions (Burgess, 1984, p.111-12), which are named as descriptive questions, structural questions and contrast questions. The first type of questions was to allow interviewees to provide statements and general views about their background and general opinion in relation to the issues being investigated. This is an attempt to develop rapport, interest and the 'meeting of mind' between me (the researcher) and the interviewees (subject-informants) in the early stage of the interview processes. According to Holloway (1997), in the semi-structured interview, such questions can be understood as broad or open-ended question within the topic area.

Secondly, more specific questions in relation to the specific issues such as language and specific policy were raised to find out the interviewees' perspectives on the specific issues of Malaysian education policy, ethnicity and national integration. This was to obtain information and knowledge from the interviewees about the topic and issues being studied. Thirdly, contrast questions were to assist me and the interviewees to discuss and make an argument on such issues in order to produce deep analytical and rich data about education policy and ethnic issues in Malaysian education policy. The construction of this type of question was done after one interview to another interview, and constructed during the interview processes.

In order to formulate questions, I composed the statements about education for national integration in Malaysia from the relevant documents and literature that can capture the research focus in the interviewing processes. The interview questions were informed by my knowledge about the issues being studied, based on the review of the relevant academic literature, newspaper articles, relevant documents, and issues that are always being raised by the public in relation to education policy aimed at achieving national integration in the education system.

However, as has been noted above, other questions raised in the interview processes were also pursued with the interviewees, which produced relevant and significant information, ideas and issues in relation to the focus of this study. This means that, the *aide mémoire* for the interviews were continuously being amended based on new information, knowledge, ideas and issues gained from the previous interviewees that had not been realised or not captured in the literature, or were beyond my knowledge.

Furthermore, this approach of gaining information during the interview processes shows that the analysis of data has started from the beginning of data collection and was continuous from one interview to the next interview, which involved reflective processing of the data after each interview has done.

#### **5.4.2.5 Transcribing the Interviews**

Transcribing interviews from the spoken texts to written texts is not a straightforward process. This involves a lot of time as each interview was conducted for a lengthy period. The transcribing of the interview was done by me and a number of transcribers (all of them are research assistants who have experiences and knowledge of transcribing interviews).

As noted above, the transcription process was not done in a linear or straightforward way; the transcribers and I have repeatedly checked the interview transcripts to ensure all words and thoughts were included. After this process was completed, I sent the interview transcripts to the interviewees by e-mail to verify the accuracy of the contents, words and to allow them to make changes if they thought they were not appropriately represented.

The interviews which were conducted in Malay were transcribed initially in their original language. After this transcribing process in Malay, the researcher translated them into English. The process of making this translation also considered the issue of translation to ensure the agreement on the translation (Temple and Young, 2004) of the interview transcripts. Accordingly, a numbers of techniques have been used to ensure agreement on an accurate version of a text. These involve back translation by someone with the language expertise and verification from a second reader (conformation letter from such institution has been provided. See Appendix H). In addition, both transcript versions (Malay and English) were sent to the particular interviewees for their verification.



#### 5.4.2.6 Interview Data Analysis

...in the analysis and interpretation of interview data, researchers routinely neglect the significance and the analytical possibilities of difference, and that we tend to focus too much on the content and too little on the form of our interviews. Transcripts are typically processed as a transparent medium of another world or culture. (Ball, 1994b, p.97)

What has been raised by Ball in this quotation has proved meaningful to me in the processes of analysing interview data. In line with this view, I believe that such analysis of interview data also needs to consider and reflect on the form of interview and the way the data or information have been produced. Similar points of view have been expressed by Hollway and Jefferson (2000), who consider that the quality of the data analysis also depends crucially on the quality of data produced. Accordingly, I have given attention to the process and approaches of gaining data and information from the interviews. This includes the construction of an interview guideline (as discussed in section 5.4.2.4) and the process of interviewing.

In the interview process, the tension between me (the researcher) and interviewees (the subject-informants) during the interviews processes produced two types of interview data which can be considered as an 'interviewer-interviewees data co-constructions' which involved the 'processes of meaning-making' (Fairclough, 2003, p.10), and secondly 'finding out' data or information from the interviewees. The former data constructed was based on the discussions and debates between the interviewer and the interviewees regarding some issues, which both the interviewer and interviewees had knowledge and information about or as an expert witnesses regarding ethnicity, politics and education policy in Malaysia. This includes an 'interchange of views' (Kvale, 1996) between me (as the researcher) and the interviewees (as the subject and informants) on a topic of common interest.

In this sense, the interviewees and I were creating or constituting data and knowledge about the issues or things together through the conversation, debate, and discussion in relation to the issues of ethnicity and education policy in Malaysia. As Cohen et al. (2000) have pointed out, 'knowledge should be seen as constructed between participants, generating data rather than *'capta'* (p.267). The examples below show

the conversation event that involved discussion between me and the interviewees in constructing and producing data in the interview processes.

- Researcher : Did you mean the assimilation process happened?  
Interviewee : More or less, willingly.  
Researcher : What do you mean by willingly?  
Interviewee : They accepted the local culture as their own culture.....  
Researcher : But there has to be a point of similarity that makes it easier for the assimilation process or ethnic culturalisation to happen. How about those who are of different religion or those who are not Islamic? Won't it be difficult for them to accept and be acculturated?  
Interviewee : This factor that makes it easier for those .....

INTERVIEW 10 (A/Malay)

- Researcher: But in the context of this policy, global challenges seem to make the government realise the importance of English in preparing the younger generations to face the challenges.  
Interviewee: I feel that we are easily attracted to new things.....

INTERVIEW 10 (A/Malay)

- Researcher: There are certain ethnic communities who feel that the government's policies deny their rights to their mother tongue.  
Interviewee: I consider this is a chauvinistic view.....

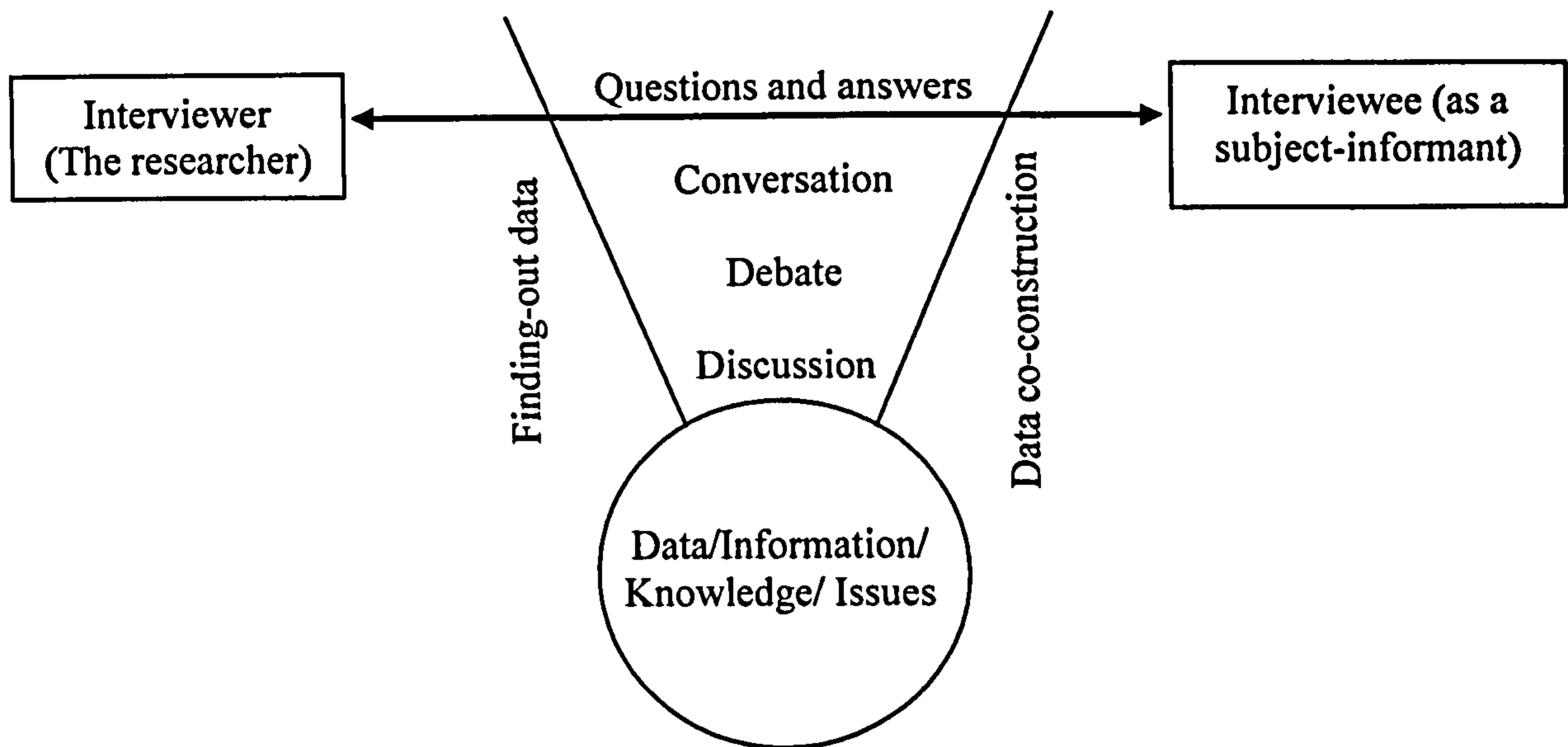
INTERVIEW 6 (A/Malay)

- Researcher: Based on Education Act 1996, the Minister of Education has responsibility to allow the Chinese community to open Chinese schools. I think this policy is a promise for the future development of Chinese schools.  
Interviewee: Well, the fact speaks themselves.....

INTERVIEW 4 (NGOs/Chinese)

I found out data or information by asking specific questions of the interviewees. In this sense, the interviewees were giving me information, telling me something; the interview process entails a 'social relation between someone who knows and someone who doesn't know, the relation between someone who has knowledge and opinions and someone who is eliciting them' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 27). This was a straightforward example of data gathering from the interviewees through the specific questions and answers in the interview process. In other words, this was information or knowledge gathering from the interviewees, who had more knowledge about some issues on ethnicity and education policy than I had. The process of gaining data from the interview processes is exemplified in Figure 5.1:





*Figure 5.1: Interview data gathering processes*

According to Silverman (2005), data analysis should not only happen after all data have been safely gathered. As he noted: 'If you only have one interview or recording or set of field notes, go to it! Where appropriate, start transcribing. In all cases, start reviewing your data in the light of research questions' (p.152). Consequently, the process of data analysis takes place from the beginning of data collection or the moment the researcher starts doing the interview. This means the analysis of data is concurrent with data collection, while the formal analyses are delayed until most of the data are in (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Analysis was done not only after collecting the data, but also carried out in the process of collecting data. The data analysis begins at the moment of actually even thinking of what questions I wanted to ask the next interviewees, and as I was adding more questions based on the new issues and information which came from the previous interviews (as has been noted in section 5.4.2.4).

The procedures of interview data analysis followed in this study were adapted from the data analysis approaches discussed by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10-11) and Holloway (1997), and the 'framework' analytic approach proposed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). In the formal analysis stage, the analysis of data in this study worked through processes of concentrating, recasting, and dealing with data. In this study, data analysis is essentially about the tasks of defining, analysing, exploring, coding, categorising, interpreting, and explaining the data. Concepts or themes were identified

and named during the analysis. Data were transformed and reduced to build categories.

The interview data in this study were text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews or discussions, which provided utterances or words and reasoning and ideological statements about ethnicity issues in education policy in Malaysia. This interview data were about opinions, perspectives, and thoughts of the individuals within the policy community towards the policy issues that had been investigated, which was in text form. This is an interpretation of the Malaysia education policy by the interviewees and can be understood as 'pre-interpreted' (Thompson, 1984) in respect of the policy issues in relation to ethnicity in Malaysian education policy aimed at enhancing national integration.

Analysis was done on the texts resulting from the interviews, including consideration of what the interviewees thought about the policy, their opinions and perspectives as raised by the spoken text. Thus, analysis of data within this critical framework in this study is understood by the researcher as an 'interpretation of an interpretation' (Thompson, 1984, p. 133) and not simply as an exercise of 'telling it like it is' (Troyna, 1994a), but real care has been taken to ensure the interpretation of the data does not involve over interpretation to avoid misinterpretation of the meaning of texts (Frosh and Emerson, 2005). The method of analysis included processes of 'internal dialogue' or 'thinking aloud' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1989, p.165) in order that an analysis of data will be more 'reflexive' in respect of the issues being studied. In doing in-depth, analytical and critical interpretation of the data, care has been taken to ensure that the interpretation being made is precise and provides 'accurate meanings' as raised by the interviewees. In particular, the analysis was directed towards identifying the issues and discourses on ethnicity, education policy and the nation of Malaysia.



### 5.4.2.7 Protocol for Analysing Interview Data

Imagine a large gymnasium in which thousands of toys are spread out on the floor. You are given the task of sorting them into piles according to the scheme that you are to develop. There are many ways to form piles. They could be sorted according to size, colour, country of origin, date manufactured... (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998, p.170).

Interview data are unwieldy and invariably semi or unstructured. The data for the research are text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews or discussion. To provide some coherence and structure to this cumbersome interview data set, I developed a protocol of interview data analysis, as mentioned earlier, which was tailored within the 'framework' analytic approach proposed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) and the form of data analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Holloway (1997). This is to ensure that the analysis of data is more systematic and disciplined, whilst realising the importance of the ability of creative, critical, and conceptual analysis to determine meaning, salience, and connections between aspects of the data. Figure 5.2 shows the protocol of analysis data developed for the interviews.

The figure charts the process of interview data analysis. The initial stage of data analysis involves the process of familiarisation of the data to the end process in order to obtain themes and issues from the data which involve the meta-analysis of the data as a whole. However, these processes are not linear, at some stages I have to go backwards in order to re-familiarise, re-code and re-contextualise the data. Explanation of the figure 5.2 is provided below:

#### a. Data display

- *Familiarisation of the transcription*

This process is an endeavour to become familiar with the interview transcripts. In this stage, I spent much time listening to the tape recorded interviews and read and re-read each transcript and marked or highlighted the relevant words and phrases that I saw as raising important issues, concepts, or themes. In doing this, I had the research questions in the back of my mind.



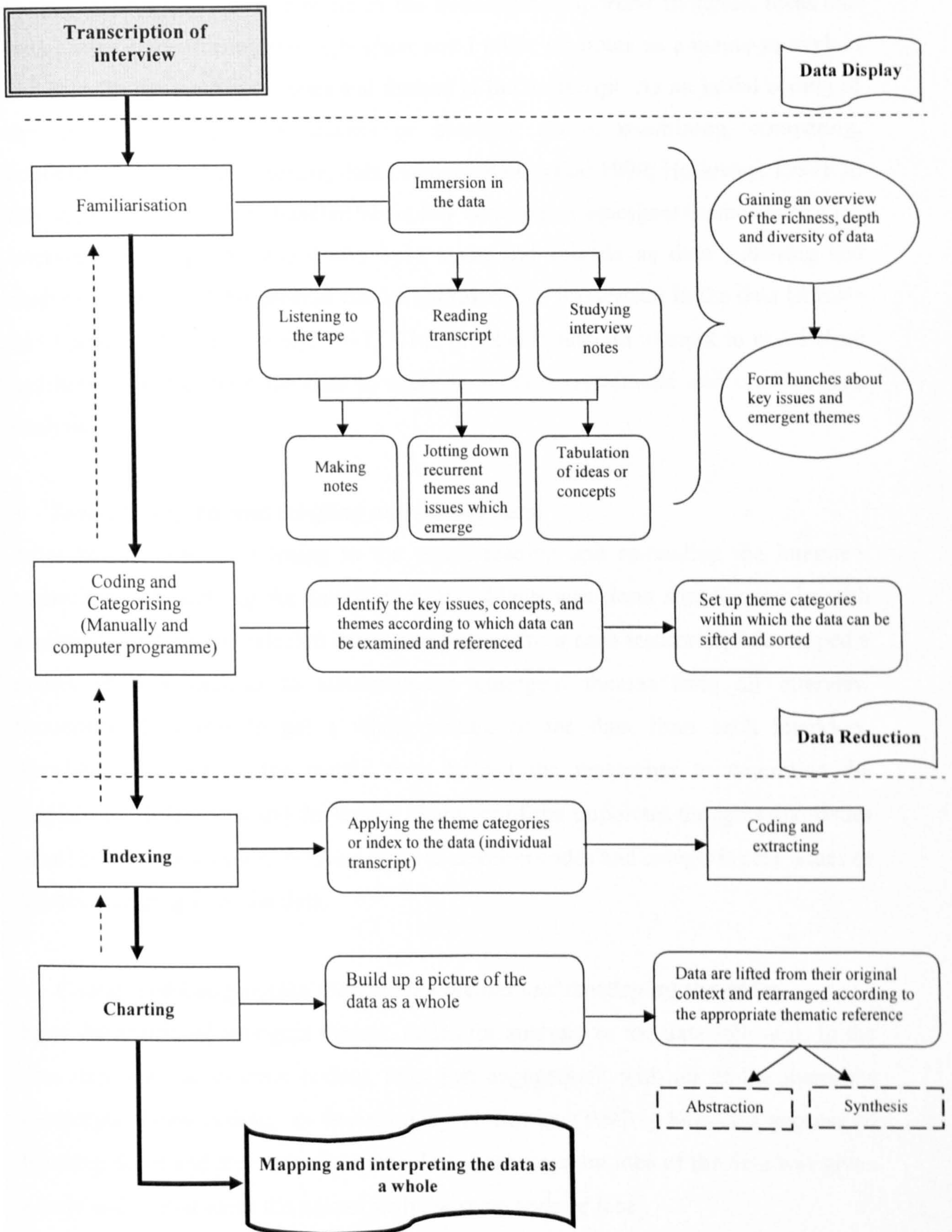


Figure 5.2: Protocol of Analysis Interview Data (Adapted from Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ritchie and Spencer, 1994; Holloway, 1997)



During this reading and re-reading of the transcripts, important thoughts, ideas and issues were marked using the highlighter and I made jot notes as a memo to explain and describe the emergent issues and themes in the transcript. As an initial coding of the data, this involves a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Holloway, 1997). In this stage, I began to form hunches about key concepts or emergent themes from each interview transcript. Several drafts were made and remade as data gathering and analysis proceeded. This process can be considered as immersion in the data (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994; Holloway, 1997). This process is also an attempt to make close and honest contact with the data in order to produce systematic and credible data analysis.

- ***Tabulation of Themes (shifting and sorting data)***

After having finished listening to the tapes, reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and studying the interview notes, which was done simultaneously with analysis to pull out the relevant issues and themes from each transcript, I developed a matrix of data analysis to tabularise the emergent themes from all interview transcripts. This was to get a whole picture of the data from each interview. Tabulation of data in the matrix form helped the researcher to determine the similarities, differences and the unique character of the important thoughts and issues raised by the interviewees, and as a basis to develop codes and categories for issues or themes emerging from the data.

- ***Coding and Categorising (Sorting the themes and developing the codes)***

From the matrix of emergent themes, codes for analysis of the data followed. In the first step, I made an open coding, after just engagement with all of the interview transcripts. Open coding, as described by Holloway (1997, p.84), is a process of breaking down and conceptualising the data. Each separate idea of the data was given a code and similar ideas are named with the same code or label.

According to Holloway (1997), using the words or phrases used by the interviewee to make codes can give life and interest to the study and can be immediately recognised as reflecting the reality of the interviewee. Thus, in this research most of the codes

were built from the interviewees' words and phrases to describe the issues or a phenomenon and others were derived from the literature review or using my own concepts in respect of the interviewees' words or phrases.

After the first step of coding the data, I condensed codes or concepts into groups with similar traits. These became categories of concepts or themes within the data. Eight categories of themes have been constructed under two main categories. The two main categories were used as headings for Chapters Seven and Eight in the thesis. Each category has sub-categories, embodying the important issues or themes that emerged from the data. Table 5.3 shows the categories of the emergent themes and issues that have been obtained from the analysis:

**Table 5.3: Themes Category of Interview Data Analysis**

Main Category	Sub-category	
(1) Education Policy and Policy Processes (EduPol&PolPro)	(1 1) Concept of education for national integration (ConNatInt)	(1 1 1) National ideology (NatIdeo) (1 1 2) Level of integration (LevInt) (1 1 3) Education system (EduSys) (1 1 4) Process and approaches (Pro&App)
	(1 2) School System (SchSys)	(1 2 1) Ethnic polarisation (EthPola) (1 2 2) Ethnicity and rational choice (Eth&Rat) (1 2 3) School image (SchIma) (1 2 4) School and ethnicity (Sch&Eth)
	(1 3) Policy orientation (PolOri)	(1 3 1) Policy concept and idea (PolCon&Idea) (1 3 2) Bad policy (BadPol)
	(1 4) Policy implementation (PolImp)	(1 4 1) Policy strategy (PolStr) (1 4 2) Social responses (SocRes) (1 4 3) Policy idea and practices (PolIdea&Prac)

*Continue to next page*



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(2) Cultural Identities, Global and National Challenges (CulIdenGlo&NatCha)	(2 1) Language issues (LangIssue)	(2 1 1) Mother tongue (MotTounge) (2 1 2) English language in education system (Eng&EduSys) (2 1 3) Language and culture identity (Lang&CulIden) (2 1 4) Language and economic interest (Lang&Econ) (2 1 5) Language and group's advantage (Lang&GrouAdv) (2.1.6) Language and human rights (Lang&HumRig) (2 1 7) Language for unity (Lang4Uni) (2 1 8) National language status (NatLangSta)
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(2 2) Ethnicity challenges (EthChal)	(2 2 1) Feeling of belonging (FeelBelong) (2 2 2) The contestation of ideology (ContIdeo) (2 2 3) Pragmatic society (PragSoc) (2 2 4) Notion of othering (NotOth) (2 2 5) Ethnicity and resources division (Eth&Res) (2 2 6) Malay hegemony (MalHeg) (2 2 7) School and cultural identity (Sch&CulIden) (2 2 8) Ethnic prejudice (EthPre) (2 2 9) Majority-minority (Maj-Min) (2 2 10) Tactic and technique (Tac&Tech)
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(2 3) Concept of Malaysian nation (ConMalNat)	(2 3 1) One world view (Worldview) (2 3 2) Multiculturalism versus acculturation/assimilation (Multi/Accultural) (2 3 3) Equal opportunity (EquOpp) (2 3 4) Nation and ethnic identity (Nat&EthIden) (2 3 5) Social contract (2 3 6) Malay and Islamic values (Mal&Islam)
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(2 4) The tension between Global and National (TenGlo&Nat)	(2 4 1) Language and national identity (lang&NatIden) (2 4 2) Global demand and national identity (Glo&Nat) (2 4 3) Policy nature (PolNat) (2 4 4) Ethnic identity construction (EthIdenConst)
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## b. Data reduction

### • *Indexing the transcription*

In this stage, theme categories or an index was applied to the data or individual transcripts. The code or concept categories were developed in the coding and categorising stage and systematically applied to the data in its textual form. The

phrase or words extracted from the interview transcript were coded, based on the themes and categories that had been developed. All interview transcripts have gone through this process.

- ***Charting the themes***

After applying the themes categories and extracting the relevant words and phrases from the interview transcripts, the analysis continued with the process of charting the data to build up a whole picture or a pattern of data for each interview transcript. From the core themes and sub-themes in the categories, a chart table was developed to analyse the pattern on the issues or concepts between different interviewees, based on group category and ethnic background. Cross-sectional analysis, between group and ethnic background, followed for each specific theme or concept. This is to get the pattern of perspectives amongst different interviewees towards the issues and concepts in Malaysian education policy related to national integration.

- ***Mapping and interpreting data***

CDA (Fairclough, 1992, 1993 & 1995) is the method of interpretation of the data in this research. This will be discussed in the subsequent section. Thus, the interpretation of the data as a whole involved a strategy for interpreting and conceptualising the data identified and for explaining the ideas and thoughts of the interviewees in relation to the research questions being addressed. Based on the data charted, I mapped the data to search for patterns and links within the data. The interpretation of this data followed to produce an explanation of meaning of texts, discourse, thoughts, and the perspectives towards the issues of ethnicity and nation building in Malaysia education policy being studied.

#### **5.4.2.8 Forward and Backward Data Analysis Processes: Manual and Computer Generated**

The data analysis process involved two types of tools of analysis, which were manual and computer generated. In the early stage of analysis of the data, I manually analysed the data from interview transcriptions. I read, re-read these as well as jotting notes on the hard copy of interview transcripts. This process was gone through many times in order to gain information and develop themes from the data.



After having finished this manual process, the management of such analysis was engaged with a computer program called *N-VIVO version 2.0*. This software allowed me to electronically code, store, retrieve, and manage the data in way that is more systematic. The advantages of using this software was not only efficiency and effectiveness in terms of systematically managing the process of data analysis, but it was also useful for me to freely modify and replace such codes and index when theoretical understanding of research has been developed or changed and applied to the data. Indeed, the initial stages of data analysis produced categories which were predominantly descriptive, but over time these became more analytical, depth interpreted, and the software enabled me to make adjustments to deal with this relatively complex and difficult task.

However, reorganisation and reduction of data relating to the development of themes and categories were not only achieved through computer analysis. This is obvious when I want to be closer to the data and to see the similar or different ideas between the interviewees. This attempt involved the process of meta-analysis of the coding report from *N-VIVO* data analysis. In this stage, I felt more convenient and efficient using the pen and paper. In this situation also, the software was not be able to choose between portions of text which had similar meanings and this could only be done manually, following the protocol of data analysis that had been developed.

The manual analysis of the interview data generated a number of themes and related hunches about the data. This initial analysis was then used to assist in the computer generated analysis of the data. *N-VIVO* is most helpful in managing large amounts of written, transcribed texts and as such is useful as a second stage of data analysis building on the initial manual work. *N-VIVO* is very useful as well for locating important repeated words and concepts, which also assists in the data analysis. The used of both processes of data analysis, analysis and re-analysis of the data got me to the view that the data analysis is better done in layers to get deep and meaningful understanding of the data. The analysis conducted for this research has been on-going and repeated in a critically reflective way, rather than working through a one-off analysis.

## **5.5 A Framework For Interpreting Data**

I will now proceed to outline the method of interpretation of data obtained from the field work in this study. CDA of the type supported by Fairclough (1992, 1993, 1995, 2003) has been adopted as the method of interpretation for both document and interview data. This method of analysis is to bring to the surface the thinking, interpretation, perspectives and ideological aspects on Malaysian education policy which is underlying in the texts, in documents and interviews.

Fairclough (2003) asserts that interpretation is a matter of understanding, which includes what the writers or speakers mean, and as a matter of judgment and evaluation regarding the meaning and the truth made by the speaker or writer. Related, Thompson (1984, p. 133) asserts that 'the link between language and ideology provides the touchstone for the elaboration of a systematic methodology of interpretation', thus it provides a 'framework for a systematic analysis and interpretation' (Taylor, 2004, p.436) of the texts as data obtained from the field work.

CDA sees discourse as language use in a social practice or social event, including speech and writing (Fairclough, 2003; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). The discourse presents the ideas, opinion and ideology on a topic, or issues in social processes such as education policy. Discourse as social practice involves a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the social structure which frames it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, and also shapes them (Fairclough, 1993). As Titscher et al. (2000) point out, there is a reciprocal influence of language and social structure, or expressed another way, and society and language shape each other (Habermas, 1984). In other words, discourse as a social practice is both constitutive and constituted (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002) and requires looking at how text is shaping as well as reflecting societal relations.

CDA is a method of analysis in this research, however not solely 'textually oriented discourse analysis' that only focuses in detailed analysis of text or as linguistic analysis of texts. In contrast, it includes Fairclough's approach to analysis which is to engage text and discourse (Fairclough, 2003). This type of CDA helps analyse the ideology, thinking, and ideas from the creation of texts in the communicative event



such as policy documents and interviews, that is, the engagement between social, institutional, political, and ideological contexts and language use (written and spoken) in a social practice, such as education policy in relation to ethnicity issues.

This approach, in a sense tries to transcend the division between work inspired by social theory which tends not to analyse texts, and work which focuses upon the language of texts, but tends not to engage with social theoretical issues (Fairclough, 2003, p.2-3). The focus here is text and context. Hence, the analysis does not concern itself with detailed analysis of the texts; in contrast, the intention is more to analyse in the context the meanings, ideas, perspectives produced by the texts from the related documents and from the particular interviews on the ethnicity issues in Malaysian education policy aimed at enhancing national integration.

Barbara Johnstone (2002) indicates that the use of “*discourse analysis*” rather than “*language analysis*” emphasises the fact that the analysis is not centrally focused on language. According to van Dijk (1993), CDA is primarily interested and motivated by pressing social issues, which it hopes to better understand through discourse analysis. This is to recognise that CDA is interdisciplinary, concerned with social problems, and not concerned with language or language use only (Fairclough; 2003; Titscher et al., 2002; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). Discourse says something about something (Thompson, 1984) and speaks of what is disclosed and what is not disclosed. Here, silences also can be as important as a voiced matter.

Analysis is based on the belief that text is heterogeneous data, which aligns with Fairclough’s view on the concept of text, which includes both written texts and transcripts of spoken interactions (Fairclough, 1993). In addition, Fairclough (2003) asserts that texts are as part of social events; the ways people act and interact involve a course of social events, which they speak or write. In this sense, documents and interviews related to the policy issues studied are regarded as social events, which have a highly textual character, and also exist as a genre of discourse (Fairclough, 1995) to represent the ideas, meaning, ideologies, and the interpretation of the ethnicity issues in education policy aimed at achieving national integration in Malaysia.

Djik (1993) argues that the goal of CDA is often explicitly political. It is intended to generate critical social research (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). In this sense, CDA does not understand discourse as politically neutral, but as a critical approach which is politically committed to social change. According to Djik (1993), the goal of CDA is to uncover the ways in which discourse and ideology are intertwined. It is an analytical framework for studying connections between language, power and ideology. Taylor (2004) argues that CDA is 'particularly appropriate for critical policy analysis because it allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes' (p.436). In this research, education policy production in relation to ethnicity in Malaysian education was considered as a social process.

According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), this approach of CDA is a most sophisticated framework of analysis of the relationships between language and social practice compared to other CDA approaches. However, I believe the adoption of this approach can be the means to make in-depth interpretations of the data obtained from the field work. This is also to consider that CDA is aligned with the critical and interpretive perspective in this research. In this sense, this research seeks to critically analyse the meaning of the text and discourse in relation to the specific topic being researched.

### **5.5.1 CDA model of Interpreting Data**

Analysis of the documents and interview transcripts followed Fairclough's approach of CDA. In particular, the analysis was directed towards investigating and understanding Malaysian education policies which aimed at enhancing national integration, specifically in respect of the ethnic challenges in the policies that have been formulated and implemented. The analysis involves interpretation of 'why' and 'how' in respect of the development and implementation of education policies for ethnic integration and the challenges to them.

As mentioned in 5.5 above, Fairclough's approach is based on a broader conception of the meaning of text, which considered text as represented by various genres of discourse, including policy documents, other written texts and interviews related to



the study. Foucault used the term text in very broad sense: written and printed texts including the transcription of conversations and interviews (Fairclough, 2003).

This research model has been utilised to interpret both data from documents and interviews. As Fairclough (1995, 2003) suggests, the texts from the discursive event (including interview transcripts and related documents) can be critically analysed along three dimensions of discourses: texts, discourse practice, and social practice. In this analysis, discourse is regarded as language used in the policy field, involving two genres of discourse which are document and interview. In concrete and specific usage, it is an analysis of both written (document) and spoken (interview) texts from the perspective of various policy actors (government and policy actors, interest groups) across ethnic and institutional backgrounds. The interview data involve a hybrid discourse that combines discourse on such a policy from different individuals who have different practices, backgrounds, perspectives and social, political and ideological contexts.

Fairclough's model for CDA (as shown in Figure 5.3) is conducted according to three components, *description*, *interpretation* and *explanation* (Fairclough, 1995). This includes description of the meaning and content of the text, interpretation of the relationships between the (productive and interpretative) discursive processes and the text, and explanation of the relationship between the discursive processes and social processes (Fairclough, 1995).

In this study, the analysis combined all of these three dimensions, and did not analyse them separately. The analysis seeks to interpret the meaning of text, the perspective, opinions and arguments of the policy as an 'interpretation of interpretation' (Thompson, 1984) of the policy, and the ideology, power and ethnicity dimensions which influenced the education policy development and implementation. Accordingly, the discussion presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight on the data from documents and interviews are structured based on this approach to analysis which combines these dimensions of discourse as a whole entity.

Communicative events on education policy aimed at enhancing national integration – analyse on related document and interview transcripts

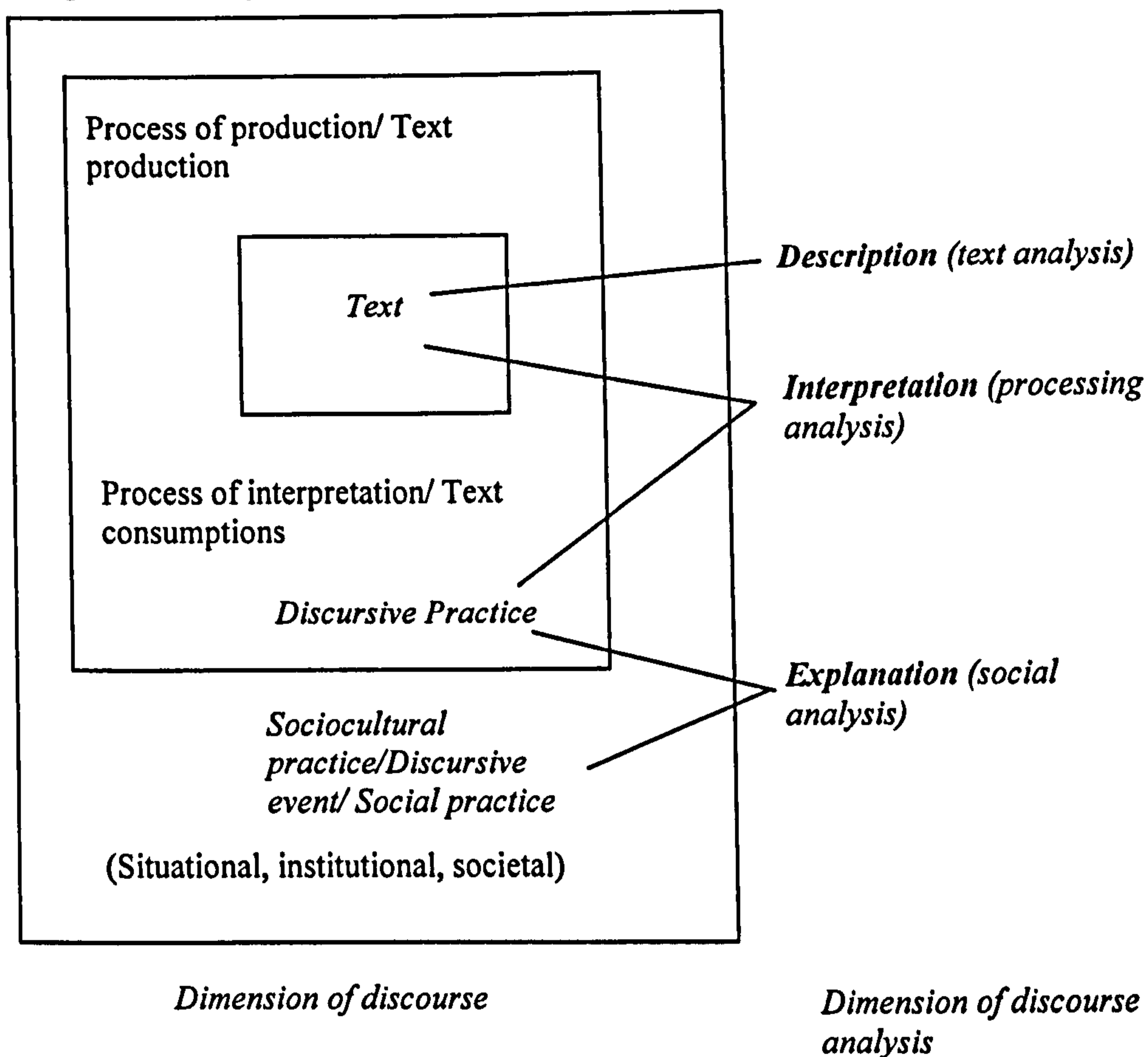


Figure 5.3: Model for CDA (Adapted from Fairclough, 1992, 1993 & 1995)

The three dimensions of the discourse analysis approach provide an analytical framework for analysing both documents and interviews data in this study. The analysis was based on the principle that texts from both sources of data can only be understood in relation to the social context, and can never be analysed in isolation (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002) from other contexts of the social, the economy and the political dimensions in the education system in Malaysia, such as ethnicity, national ideology, national and global contexts. The analysis of the data is just not a linguistic analysis; in contrast the approach is very much about locating the analysis in the context of the issues being studied.

## 5.6 Research Ethics

Schwandt (1989) and Flinders (1992), amongst others, suggest that ethical concerns are often a forgotten part of qualitative research design. Wellington (2000, p.54) asserts that the most important criterion for education research processes is that it should be ethical. This notion of ethical consideration is also noted by Soltis (1989) as



an important element in qualitative research. Soltis argues that in qualitative social research there is a 'moral obligation to see not only that it does good, but also that it is ethically done' (p. 129). In addition, Burgess (1989) suggests that a review of ethical problems and dilemmas should be an important element of reflexive practice in fieldwork.

Consequently, I have considered ethical concerns in all stages of the fieldwork. The research ethics underpinning this study were based on the British Education Research Association (BERA) ethical guideline for education research (British Education Research Association, 2004) and as required by the University of Sheffield ethical procedures.

### **5.6.1 Ethical Framework**

Based on Flinders's (1992) relational ethics framework, this research emphasises issues of autonomy, rapport, sensitivity, and respect for the participants in order to ensure the willingness of interviewees to provide honest and objective information.

#### **5.6.1.1 Ethics in Obtaining the Documents**

There is a regulation of the Malaysian government that requires every research project done from overseas to obtain approval from the Prime Minister's Department for collecting data in Malaysia. The regulation covers all foreign researchers and Malaysian nationals domiciled overseas. I have considered this as an ethical treatment of gaining the official documents, particularly from government departments and institutions. Based on this consideration, I followed the official government procedures to obtain authorisation for doing field work in Malaysia, especially for collecting data from government departments. Thus, the steps taken to fulfil the requirement for getting approval for doing fieldwork in Malaysia included:

- Submitting an application form enclosed with a letter (Appendix I) that explained clearly the research topic and objectives of the research, including the significance of the study for the benefit of the country.
- Obtaining an approval letter from the Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department Malaysia (Appendix J)

- Obtaining Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department Malaysia to have an authority to access the government institution for gaining the relevant official documents (Appendix K).

For documents obtained from NGOs and other non-government institutions, application for getting permission was made earlier during the interview arrangements. With good rapport and networking with the individuals in some organisations or institutions, it was quite easy and less time consuming for me to access and gain relevant documents necessary for this study.

#### **5.6.1.2 Ethics and Tactics in Interviewing the Respondents**

In this study, I have applied the principles of protecting the participants who are involved in the interviews from harm and risk, and followed ethical guidelines and legal rules. In respect to autonomy, the participants in the interview were free from threat and granted informed choice to participate without coercion. This was achieved through the provision of an information sheet and an informed consent document.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a practical view of ethics has to address the recruitment of interviewee via informed consent, conduct fieldwork so as to avoid harm to others, and extend this stance through confidentiality in written research reports. The principle of informed consent in this study is based on the principles that arise from the interviewees' right to freedom and self-determination (Cohen et al. 2000). Therefore, informed consent and voluntary participation in the interviews were obtained from the potential participants. In addition, I tried to be as clear as possible in stating the demands on the time of the participants and about the purpose and objectives of this study so that the participants could agree or refuse to take part, based on informed information about the study and related demands upon them. An information sheet (Appendix C) was provided describing in 'lay terms' the purposes of the study.

Since this study is dealing with quite a sensitive issue in the context of Malaysian education policy, all participants in this study were ensured of confidentiality and anonymity. All information collected was treated as confidential. The audio tapes and



transcripts have been stored securely and the individual participants cannot be identified in the thesis report.

I protected the anonymity and confidentiality of participants through the following means:

1. I have taken care that the participants cannot be identified by name, gender, or age unless the interviewee permitted the researcher to do this. As the feature of this study relates to ethnicity issues in education policy, it discloses the ethnicity of the interviewees, but care has been taken that participants cannot be recognised.
2. I respected participants' wishes for the confidentiality of disclosures they did not wish to make public.
3. I assured the participants that only they, me and my supervisor would have access to tapes and transcripts.

I also gave attention to practical considerations within ethical treatment of the participants. For that reason, the consent form (Appendix F) was given to participants for signature as an ethical and legal stipulation for the research. The form provided an outline of the research objectives and described briefly the implications of the participant's involvement in this research.

Another issue of research ethics that has been taken into account in this research concerns dissemination of the research 'findings'. Hughes (1994) argues that, even theoretically, this issue is relatively unproblematic, but in practice, it is not simple, as we can straightforwardly present the findings in an appropriate form to the audience being addressed. Therefore, public *quid pro quo* of giving the time and having to do this research, I will inform the interviewees when the thesis is completed and let them know how to access and read the research report. The dissemination of research findings in articles, in professional and academic journals or conferences was informed by the agreement and consent from the interviewees to the extent that the confidentiality is maintained.

## **5.7 Methodological Reflection: Dilemmas of the Researcher's Background, Bias and Self-Description**

According to Smyth and Shacklock (1998), doing reflection in the research process is part of being honest and ethically mature in research practice. Andersen (1993) says that a self-reflective method of constructing knowledge is more compelling and reliable than standard approaches. In this sense, I believe it is important to reflect on the research process and the role I play in shaping the outcomes of the research. I also consider that the need to reflect on the research methodology is crucial for any research using any approach and wanting to provide credible presentation of the research method and findings.

As an attempt to research critically ethnicity policies in Malaysian education, I was concerned in doing reflection on a numbers of issues related to my position and methodology in this study. I believe, as a researcher, I embraced the notion that the researcher is always positioned within a certain framework of understanding, and needs to make explicit those frameworks (Scott, 2000). These frameworks, according to Scott (2000, p.56), may be autobiographical concerning the researcher, that is the researcher's ethnicity, sex, education, class of experiences in life coalesce to produce a particular way of looking at the world, which act to structure the act of doing research.

As a researcher who is a Malay in ethnic background, in this research I have interacted with different individuals across different ethnic backgrounds and with different interests in relation to Malaysian educational policy. This social relation in the research process formed my position as insider and outsider in dealing with the individuals and data obtained from the fieldwork. The issue of insider and outsider in the interviews process has been briefly touched on in section 5.4.2.2 in this Chapter. However, the need to reflect on this aspect is also related to the issue of how to deal with individuals and data in the research.

Accordingly, I feel the need to consider self-examination of my own ethnic position as a Malay within the policy research framework in this study. This process of self-examination includes making self- reflection about me as the researcher relating to my



ethnic background. However, this does not mean that I accepted the notion of a neutral stance. Self-examination or reflection in this regard is my endeavour in reflecting on my feelings of ethnicity in the research process and reflecting on my ethnic position when engaging with the individuals and data in the research. This was facilitated in the research interviews and data analysis, 'allowing me to challenge the arrogance' (Andersen, 1993, p.50) as a Malay, who has a privileged status in policy production in Malaysian education policy.

I had realised that the non-Malay participants in the interviews process probably did not report the same things to me as they would have to an interviewer of same ethnic background. This can be seen when they want to discuss such policy that touched on the privilege of Malays in respect of policy. Thus, sensitive comments on sensitive issues related to the position of Malay were not raised, which I assume might have been the case with a researcher who had the same ethnic background as the interviewee. However, this does not make their accounts any less valid on these topics discussed in the research interview. In addition, issue of ethnicity bias also influenced my mind when I was dealt with such documents and data obtained from different sources of different ethnic groups' organisations. I considered such documents as representing the interests, values, or ideologies of particular ethnic groups. This led me to reflect on my interpretations of documents obtained from these different sources.

In respect of the methodology of this research, a number of issues have also been considered through reflection. These included issues of bias in the research processes and the issue of subjectivity. In this sense, Kanpol (1998) argues that 'no research is innocent or devoid of a political agenda, whether overt or covert!' (p. 191). In view of this, in this research it has not been possible to exclude the interference of my own subjectivity, personal biases, or political agenda. This research is biased in another way; the researcher paid more attention to bottom-up relations of challenges, resistance, acceptance and compliance to education policy aimed at enhancing national integration in Malaysia, rather than to top down relations of dominance or to consideration of the government which produced the policy.

Finally, grappling with the methodological and epistemological issues in my research as outlined in this Chapter, has forced me to consider in some details the question of what voice I should write the thesis in. I have come to the considered view that it is best for me to write in the first person, using I, rather than to write the thesis in an implied or directly third person style, using for example a self-descriptor as ‘the researcher’. I have come to this decision for a number of reasons as I briefly outline them here.

Bourdieu (1999), in a methodological reflection on his interview study of the impact of neo-liberalism on various aspects of life in contemporary France, has noted how good social science actually in a self reflexive way understands that it is a social construction. As such, he suggests, it rejects the ‘positivist dream of an epistemological state of perfect innocence’ (Bourdieu, 1999, p.608). In recognising the involvement of the researcher in what is researched, how it is done and reported, Bourdieu argues that an awareness of such involvements and such construction allows some move *towards* epistemological innocence or data reflective of the social world. In one of his last publications, *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (2004), Bourdieu stated in respect of methodological issues and reflexivity in sociology that: ‘Casting an ironic gaze on the social world, a gaze which unveils, unmask, brings to light what is hidden, it cannot avoid casting this gaze on itself – with the intention not of destroying sociology but rather of serving it, using the sociology of sociology in order to make a better sociology’ (Bourdieu, 2004, p.4).

In agreeing with Bourdieu’s position here, it seems that usage of ‘I’ in this thesis recognises these processes and thus attempts to limit their effects through an ongoing reflexivity, but also allows for a more transparent reading of the data and analysis provided in the research. Further, in articulating my own position as a Malay, that is, a member of the dominant ethnic group in Malaysia, I have tried to honestly position myself within the research and in so doing make my own positioning transparent. If instead of using ‘I’, I had instead written in the third person, this might have been read as my occupying a neutral or objective stance in respect of the topic, which is the focus of this research. Rather, in using the first person, I have attempted to be honest and transparent about my position as a Malay insider. Writing in the third person



might also have implied that my epistemological methodological stances were positivist in orientation.

These reflections have been difficult for me because they have challenged the way I have hitherto conducted research and written about it, which was largely survey research using statistical analyses. The use of 'I' in this thesis research is more symbiotic with the methodological approach taken. However, I should note that as a neophyte researcher, particularly of the qualitative kind, I have also found it a little daunting to use 'I', as in some ways it seems too self-assured and too assertive. On balance, though, and for the reasons listed above, I have made the decision to write in the first person.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

In this Chapter, I have attempted to discuss, illustrate, and make explicit explanations of the research methodology adopted in this study. These are based on relevant literature and my experiences in fieldwork.

The explanation of research methodology in this Chapter was concerned with the issue of transparency of the research method so as to make this research more credible in collecting and producing data derived from the research questions. In this sense, I believe that the need to explain how the research findings have been obtained is an important aspect of this research. Accordingly, discussion in this Chapter has been aimed at making the research methods more explicit to bring greater confidence regarding the methodology of the study.

Grounded by the policy research orientation of research *of* policy, I seek to critically analyse the issues being studied, and aim to provide knowledge, information and discussion about the production of education policy in Malaysia related to ethnicity issues. Thus, in-depth analysis of this policy research employs two qualitative methods which are quasi-historical analysis of policy documents and semi-structured interviews. As mentioned, the analysis and interpretation of data informed by the systematic and intellectual processes are aimed to illuminate the complex issues of ethnicity in Malaysian education policy. This accords with the enlightenment model

of policy research, that the findings are useful to directly or indirectly influence (Bulmer, 1982) future policy processes in Malaysian education

In the next three Chapters, I represent the research finding based on analysis of data informed by these methodological limits. In Chapter Six, I provide the research findings from the analysis of policy and other related documents that informed the chronological frame of policy for achieving national integration in the Malaysian education system. In this Chapter, I describe state policy development and implementation since 1970 related to ethnicity issues and challenges. Chapters Seven and Eight respectively represent the finding of interviews on the issues being investigated. In these two Chapters, the account is focused on two main themes from the interview data, namely the structure and processes of Malaysian education policy in relation to achieving national integration; and secondly, the challenges in the production of policy for national integration in the Malaysian education system. It is to these accounts that the thesis now turns.