CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia

Malaysia is an independent nation in South-East Asia covering an area of about 329,758 square kilometres. The country consists of two regions, Peninsular Malaysia with 11 states, and the states of Sabah and Sarawak and the Federal Territory of Labuan on the island of Borneo. The two regions are separated by approximately 540 kilometres of the South China Sea. Peninsular Malaysia, which covers 131,598 square kilometres, has its frontiers with Thailand in the north and Singapore in the south, while Sabah with an area of 73,620 square kilometres, and Sarawak with about 124,449 square kilometres, border the territory of Indonesia's Kalimatan. (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 1995)

The population of Malaysia was estimated at 19.65 million for the year 1994 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 1995). The Malaysian society is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural with three large races comprising the Malays, Chinese and the Indians. The multi-ethnic composition of the population has resulted in an education system that uses Bahasa Malaysia (the national language) as the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools, and Chinese and Tamil as the languages of instruction in approximately 30% of the primary schools.

Malaysia has been independent for 39 years, but its history started more than 400 years ago. The first known kingdom in the Malay peninsula (as Malaysia was known then) was the Sultanate of Melaka which arose in the early 15th century. Melaka was a
centre of entrepot trade, lying on the trade route between China and India. Due to its strategic position, it became a natural target for subsequent European colonial powers.

In 1511, the Portuguese overthrew the Sultanate of Melaka and seized control of the port of Melaka. In 1641, the Portuguese were defeated by the Dutch who then took control of Melaka.

The British era began in 1771 when Francis Light arrived at the court of the ruler of Kedah. The British subsequently occupied Penang, Province Wellesley and Singapore after a treaty with the Sultan of Johor. In 1826, Penang, Singapore and Melaka were combined into the Straits Settlements, and were administered by the East India Company from India. The British continued their rule over the territories of Malaya until the Japanese overran Malaya during World War II.

In 1946, the Malayan Union was formed, comprising Penang, Melaka, and the Malay States. In 1948, the Federation of Malaya was formed out of the states in the Malayan Union.

Independence was finally granted to the Federation of Malaya in 1957. In September 1963, Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak joined together to form Malaysia. However, on August 9th, 1965, Singapore withdrew from the union and became an independent country (Gaudart 1992).

**Education in Malaysia**

The formal education system in Malaysia follows a 6-3-2-2 structure (Chart 1), which represents the number of years at the primary, lower secondary, upper secondary
Chart 1

The Structure of the Education System in Malaysia

1 = Polytechnics, Colleges and Universities (diploma courses)
2 = Teachers Training Colleges

Secondary Education

Higher Education

Primary Education

Special Schools

Pre-School

Kindergartens

Lower Secondary Schools

Upper Secondary Schools (Academic) (Vocational)

Sixth Forms

Universities (3-6 years 1st degree)

Graduate Schools

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and pre-university levels respectively. At present education is free, but not compulsory, and is based on automatic promotion for the first nine years.

The provision of education remains the responsibility of the federal government. All primary and secondary schools follow a common curriculum formulated by the Ministry of Education.

Apart from the very comprehensive system of state education run by the Ministry of Education, there also exists a widespread and expanding system of private schools and institutions ranging from kindergarten level up to and including university level.

During the British colonial period, schools using English as the medium of instruction existed alongside the vernacular Malay, Chinese and Tamil schools. However, after the country’s independence in 1957, the English-medium schools and some of the Chinese-medium schools were converted in stages into national schools where Bahasa Malaysia, the national language, is used as the medium of instruction.

At present, there still are the government-aided National Type Chinese Primary Schools and National Type Tamil Primary Schools besides the National schools at the primary level. At the secondary school level, all government and government-aided schools use Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction (Wong 1980). However, there are also independent Chinese schools which use Mandarin as the medium of instruction. The title “Independent Chinese Schools” has been used since 1962, when the Chinese Secondary Schools refused to convert to “National-Type schools.” The Independent Chinese secondary school are not under the government education system of Malaysia.
They are presently 60 Independent Chinese secondary schools in Malaysia (Jiao Zong 1992).

A major development in the Malaysian education system was the introduction of the New Primary School Curriculum or *Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah* (KBSR) and the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum or *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* (KBSM) in 1983 and 1989 respectively (Vias 1992).

The teaching-learning approaches under KBSR and KBSM emphasize pedagogical principles which include child-centred, activity-oriented and resource-based methods of education. This shift in emphasis has brought about significant changes in the school library system.

**History of Chinese Schools in Malaysia**

The earliest record of Chinese schools in Malaya and Singapore dates back to 1815 when the London Missionary Society started a Chinese school in Malacca. By 1819, there were three old-style Chinese schools in Singapore. In these early Chinese schools, the medium of instruction was usually in the local dialect, mostly Cantonese and Hokkein. In 1839, the Raffles Institution in Singapore also provided Chinese instruction (Kua 1990).

The impetus to the development of Chinese education in Malaya really began during the 1880's educational reforms in China. Kang You Wei (康有为) and Liang Qui Chao (梁启超), both members of Emperor Guang Xu's (光绪) Cabinet, had to flee to the
South Seas, or Nanyang. While in Malaya, they exhorted the local Chinese to promote education amongst the Chinese masses (Kua 1990).

In 1904, the first Chinese school built along modern lines was the Yiu Sin Chinese School in Singapore. It was founded by Cheng Soon Leong (陈楚楠), an old boy of Raffles Institution. Lessons were conducted in Chinese and English. In the same year, the Chung Hwa Confucian School in Penang was founded by Chang Pai-Si (张弼士), the Ching Vice-Consul in Penang. In 1906, three more schools were founded: the Confucian School in Kuala Lumpur, Yuk Choy in Ipoh, and the Khoo(Chiu) Family School of Penang. By 1920, there were 181 Chinese schools in the Federated Malay States and 313 in the Straits Settlements (Kua 1990).

By the eve of the Second World War, the foundation of the Chinese education system up to secondary level had been laid. Mandarin was only then recognised by the Chinese schools. After the war, the colonial government went about to forge a "unified system of education" and to do away with non-Malay vernacular education (Kua 1990).

The Chinese are well known throughout the world for their deep-rooted devotion to education. This is due to the Confucian structure of their traditional society which places the scholar at the pinnacle. The tales of the Chinese enduring incredible hardship and deprivation to obtain scholastic excellence are legendary in Chinese folklore. Similarly their willingness to sacrifice to ensure a good education for their children has been engrained in their psyche throughout the millennia of the Chinese civilisation (Tan 1982).
School Resource Centre Development in Malaysia

School Resource Centres (SRCs) or school libraries, as they were known then, have existed in Malaysian Schools since the pre-independence years. However, the earliest post-independence call for SRC development, the training for librarianship and the need for a national library system can be traced to an unpublished paper by W. J. Plumbe, a former University of Malaya Librarian. However, Plumbe’s proposals appear “to have been ill-timed and .... did not receive immediate official attention” (Winslade 1979).

The early 1960’s record some ad hoc attempts at school library development. The Persatuan Perpustakaan Tanah Melayu (PPTM), the predecessor of Persatuan Perpustakaan Malaysia (The Library Association of Malaysia), prepared and published a set of minimum standards for secondary school libraries in its journal (1963) and assisted school libraries through its preparation and publication of selected titles of books suitable for schools (Abdul Rashid Ismail 1961).

In 1962, the Ministry of Education introduced a one-year full-time training course in school librarianship for 13 selected teachers at the Specialist Teacher’s Training Institute in Kuala Lumpur. The course was designed primarily to enable the participants to acquire sufficient skills and knowledge so that they could organize libraries and help to train other teacher-librarians (McCalla 1962).

Much of the development in the 1960’s was effected through the efforts of the professional library association and a number of dedicated individuals, including the three American school library specialists, Nella McCalla, Margaret L. Walker and Marion
B. Weiss, whose services were made available to the Ministry of Education under the U. S. International Exchange Program (Wong 1991).

In 1964, the Ministry of Education obtained the services of Margaret L. Walker under the Fulbright-Hays programme. Her *School Library Manual*, as well as her *Final Report, School Library Development in Perspective* (March 1964), provided useful guidelines for development. A School Library Advisory Committee (SLAC) was set up following the report, and although much was expected of this committee, few significant improvements came about in the overall position (Wijasuriya 1975).

The creation of the Textbook Bureau in the Ministry of Education in 1969 brought further developments. Although school libraries were part of the responsibilities of the bureau, a higher priority had to be placed on textbook provision (Wijasuriya 1975).

In the 1970's the school library program began to gain increasing support and acceptance. Among the significant developments during this period was the provision by the government of an annual grant, beginning in 1974, to all primary and secondary schools for the purchase of library books. Another significant development was the formation in 1973 of the School Library Unit in the Schools Division of the Ministry of Education. This unit was responsible for planning, coordinating and supervising the school library development program in the country (Wong 1991).

A few official documents also firmly emphasised the vital role of school libraries in ensuring quality education. For instance, the Report of the Committee of Officials (1973) stated “We are of the view that school library plays a vital role in upgrading the standards of education......achievement and further democratization” (Malaysia.
Kementerian Pelajaran 1973). The school library was seen as an integral component of a school system which could contribute immensely to the achievement of educational objectives (Oli Mohamed 1980).

A more comprehensive document on this matter was the **Blueprint for School Library Development in Malaysia** (1979), produced by the Persatuan Perpustakaan Malaysia, with the assistance of a British Consultant, Mr. B.A.Windslade. The Blueprint made an exhaustive analysis of the existing conditions of school libraries, and made detailed recommendations for their progressive development (Oli Mohamed 1980).

Since the early eighties, the concept of the school library as a resource centre providing both book and nonbook materials, has been generally accepted and increasingly practiced among the primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. Since 1982, in line with this new trend, the library organizers and the educational media officers in every state education department were placed under a single unit, known as the Educational Technology Unit. This new organizational setup provided better coordination between the library book services and the educational media services. To reflect this integration, schools were advised to use the new term *Pusat Sumber Sekolah* (School Resource Centre). The terms *Penyelaras Pusat Sumber Sekolah* (School Resource Centre Coordinator) and *Guru Pusat Sumber Sekolah* (School Resource Centre Teacher) were also recommended (Wong 1991).

The 1980’s also saw the formation of four State Educational Resource Centres, one each in the states of Pahang, Trengganu, Kelantan and Kedah. To provide effective educational support services to schools within designated areas or districts, about 365
District Educational Resource Centres were also established (George 1988), which were later renamed as *Pusat Kegiatan Guru* (Teachers’ Activity Centres).

**The Need for Management Data**

Managing the SRCs involves a number of specific, interrelated responsibilities, including planning and evaluating, organizing and supervising, budgeting, staffing, and promoting all aspects of the services. Planning is the basis for all other management functions and, if it is to be effective, must include evaluation as an integral part of the process (American Library Association 1988).

With the increased significance of school library resource centres and the current emphasis on effective schools, the evaluation of the school library resource centre program assumes new importance and serves several purposes. In general, such an evaluation is a means of measuring the degree to which objectives have been achieved and of setting further goals (Rafuse and Law 1993).

Evaluation is also a management tool. It takes fundamental questions and examines the assumptions that underpin the philosophy and practice, including the aims, rationale, priorities, alternatives and how they might be improved. One of the best way to evaluate libraries is through statistics (Ryan 1994).

Statistics are thus needed for good management. Statistics provide data that can be used for assessing the current status, before any planning for development takes place.
The Need for a Study on the Current Status of Chinese School Resource Centres

Chinese schools have been in existence in Malaysia since the early 19th century, but so far no study on the Chinese SRCs has been done. In 1991, *The World of Education* (教育天地) made a brief report by interviewing the principals and teacher-librarians on the status of SRCs in two National-type (Chinese) primary school, and four Independent Chinese secondary schools (教总 1991) [Jiao Zong 1991]. Only brief communications were reported.

When the author of this study visited the United Independent Chinese School Association’s office in Kajang, Selangor, the association’s staff mentioned they had sent a questionnaire on SRCs to all the 60 independent secondary schools at the beginning of 1996 and the total number of responses received were 42. However, the questionnaires that were returned had not been analysed. Therefore, the condition and status of the independent secondary schools’ resource centres is still not known to the public.

The reading habits of the Chinese school children have also been emphasised, especially by the two larger Chinese presses in Malaysia by sponsoring newspapers to some Chinese schools for their morning reading. This is an encouraging move in promoting reading habits among Chinese school children, but little is known about the collections in the SRC. There is also little, if any, publicly available information on how schools are promoting or encouraging the use of their own collections in the library. These questions suggested a need to study the Chinese school resource centres.

To date, the Ministry of Education, in Malaysia has not conducted a study specifically of Chinese SRCs. This was based on discussions with Ministry officials and a review of their annual reports.
Statement of the Problem

School libraries are a vital agency contributing to the learning processes that takes place in schools. School libraries have evolved and have changed to reflect the environment in which they are expected to function. In Malaysia, however, they are least studied.

The immense expansion in the amount of information that is being integrated with learning is causing a total transformation in the character and role of the school library. It is no longer a repository of books but a setting for learning and applying advanced knowledge tools of many kinds (Dede 1985). In this age of information, the role of school libraries has changed, which brings greater demands and pressures in their management. However, from the beginning of the school libraries till now, we do not have a clear picture of their development, especially of Chinese school libraries in Malaysia.

The scarcity of basic information on the current status of Chinese school libraries in Malaysia makes it difficult for further and more detailed studies. This study was conducted to provide baseline information which would hopefully facilitate further studies.

In order to study the Chinese school libraries, it is important for a researcher to be literate in Chinese as most of the literature on Chinese education and history of Chinese schools is in the Chinese language. The author was in a very favourable position to undertake this study, having had a significant portion of her education, including
university level, in Chinese. She also has a personal interest and enthusiasm for Chinese schools libraries.

Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to assess the current status of the SRCs in the Chinese schools in Malaysia. This study hopes to make a contribution to the knowledge on Chinese SRCs in Malaysia, as there is a serious lack of information on the subject.

This study studied the ways in which the resource centres in Chinese schools were being administered, characteristics of their collections, relationships between size and development, and some of the problems faced.

Research Questions

This study examined the following questions:

1. How are the SRCs in the Chinese schools in Malaysia administered, in terms of:

   a. Personnel and staffing
   b. Budget
   c. Physical facilities
   d. Technology
   e. Usage
   f. Services
2. What are some of the characteristics of the collections in the SRCs in Malaysian Chinese schools?

3. Is there any relationship between the population of pupils and the size of SRC?

4. What, if any, are the main problems faced in SRCs?

Importance of the Study

The primary importance of this study is that it will provide an overview on the current status of SRCs in the Chinese schools. This, as has been earlier mentioned, is not available. Even with the limitations of the study, the information gathered on the administration, collections, usage and problems can be used to better plan, organise and better develop these SRCs in the future.

It is hoped that the findings will draw the attention of participating schools and other educational institutions to examine closely the current status in order to catalyze action towards planning and further development of the SRCs.

Finally, this study will provide baseline information to researchers for future studies on developments in Chinese SRCs and also act as a guide to study the current status of other types of libraries.
Definitions

The following definitions apply to this study:

A Chinese school is an educational institution where Chinese is used as the medium of instruction and examination for all subjects, except for Bahasa Malaysia and English Language.

The School Resource Centre (SRC) is a systematically organized collection of carefully and purposefully selected book and non-book teaching-learning materials in particular, and information carrying materials in general, that are used to provide appropriate and timely information, programs and services to pupils and teachers of the school, and also to promote a centre for life-long learning (Vias 1992). It is also known as the school library, media centre, learning resource centre or reading room.

A librarian or teacher-librarian refers to a person who is in charge or helps to run a school library, whether full time or part-time.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used to this study:

ICS: Independent Chinese School

KBSM: Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (Integrated Secondary School Curriculum)

KBSR: Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah (New Primary School Curriculum)

NTPS(C): National-Type Primary School (Chinese)
Limitations of the Study

This is an exploratory study of the Chinese school resource centres as very little related literature could be found. The findings of this study are based on the information provided by the schools themselves. The Chinese school administrators, especially in the 60 independent schools, may have felt uneasy to provide the information which they feel is sensitive, as the existence of Chinese education is a controversial issue. Attempts were made, when possible, to verify the information provided and respondents were assured of anonymity. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are based primarily on the information provided by the schools.

This study did not include the National-Type Secondary Schools. After the Education Act was passed in 1961, 54 out of 71 Chinese schools were converted to National-type secondary schools. The converted secondary schools are not considered as Chinese schools, even though the Chinese language is being taught as a subject.

Due to the large number of National-type primary schools, a stratified random sample of 10% out of 1,285 Chinese schools were studied.

This study thus provides a picture of the Chinese schools’ resource centres primarily based on the information provided by the respondents.
The next chapter provides a background to the study through a review of the existing literature.