

## CHAPTER 2    EDUCATION ATTAINMENT BETWEEN 1970 AND 1980

---

Three variables are employed to determine the social mobility of Sabahan Chinese from 1970 to 1980. These variables are educational attainment, occupational status and income. If these three variables show positive development, then the social mobility of the Sabahan Chinese is said to have moved upward. On the other hand, if these three variables show negative development, then the Sabahan Chinese is said to have experienced downward mobility.

Generally speaking, the Chinese place high value on education. This is attributed to their cultural and historical background. There is even one Chinese

saying that states "in life, nothing except scholarship is of utmost important" [ 萬般皆下品，唯有讀書高 ]. In ancient China, the upward social mobility of the commoners were largely dependent on formal education. The acquiring of a position of a civil service required distinct results from government examinations. Even the social structure of ancient China placed scholarship on top of the social hierarchy <sup>3</sup>. As a result of that social background, Chinese parents are very much aware the economic and status values of education. No matter how poor some Chinese parents are, they will try all means to send their children to schools.

The focus of this chapter will be on the educa-

-----

3. The social status structure of ancient China is *Shi, Long, Kong, Shang* 士農工商 which means the scholars are at the top of social strata, and followed by farmers, artisans, and merchants.

tional attainment of the Chinese in Sabah from 1970 to 1980. It will examine this issue from three aspects. Firstly, comparisons will be made of the Chinese educational attainment between 1970 and 1980. Then, the study will compare the educational attainment between Chinese men and women. Finally, the study will compare the educational attainment between the Sabahan Chinese and Bumiputras. Before discussing the above mentioned aspects, this chapter will briefly introduce the development of formal education system in relation with Sabahan Chinese.

### 2.1. Brief Historical Development Of Sabahan Chinese Formal Education

During the early Chinese settlement in Sabah at the turn of the 20th Century, the Chinese either entered Christian mission schools or Chinese schools. In the schools run by missionaries, both English and

Mandarin were taught, while in the schools run by the Chinese, Mandarin was the only medium of instruction. Before the formation of the Education Department in 1909, Sabah already had eight mission schools and nine Chinese schools with a total enrollment of 650 pupils. All these schools were located in Jesselton (now Kota Kinabalu) and Sandakan (Sarjit Singh & Mehmet, 1991, p.8). The early Chinese school curriculum was China-orientated and had teachers imported from China. Usually a board was set up to manage matters related to the school, particularly financial matters. The number of Chinese schools continued to increase. In 1946, there were 51 Chinese schools in Sabah and it continued to grow to 86 in 1952 and 116 in 1963 (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Number of Schools in Sabah from 1946 to 1963

Year	Government	Mission	Chinese	Others	Total
1946	48	43	51	2	144
1947	60	45	52	8	165
1948	66	56	63	8	193
1949	65	58	73	8	204
1950	70	59	77	12	218
1951	71	58	82	8	219
1952	73	62	86	7	228
1953	70	68	81	14	233
1954	80	67	81	21	249
1955	84#	69	79	30	262
1956	86#	69	81	46	282
1957	87#	70	82	49	288
1958	90	81	88	74	333
1959	92	87	89	86	354
1960	95	91	89	104	379
1961	98	118	86	130	432
1962	116	121	90	158	485
1963	146	121	116	136	519

Source: Data from 1940 to 1963 are adapted from George, K.M., 1981, p.490.

Note: # Including Kent College and The Trade School

After joining Malaysia, education in Sabah became the Federal Government's responsibility. The Sabah Education Department became part of the Federal Ministry of Education. Free primary education was implemented in 1966. In 1970, the National Education Policy was implemented in Sabah. Under this policy, the medium of instruction in schools was gradually changed from English to Bahasa Malaysia beginning with primary One in 1970. By 1980, all secondary classes up to Form V had Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction.

The nature of Chinese schools, especially at the secondary school level was greatly affected by National Education Policy after Sabah's Independence. They were given two options by the Education Ministry, i.e., either to be fully subsidized by the government by accepting the National Education Policy, or, to be self-financed by rejecting the National Education

Policy. It is found that all Chinese schools became national-type schools by accepting the National Education Policy. As a result of that, the medium of instruction of these Chinese secondary schools changed from Mandarin to English in 1970 and to Bahasa Malaysia in 1980. However, the medium of instruction for Chinese primary schools remain unchanged.

A fact worth noting is the setting up of Chinese secondary independent schools after independence in 1963 <sup>4</sup>. The Chinese independent schools were run by the

-----

4. The forming of Chinese independent secondary schools in Sabah is entirely different from that of West Malaysia. In West Malaysia, it was the result of the refusal of some Chinese schools to convert themselves into 'national-type' schools and therefore turned into Chinese independent schools. As a result of that, 14 out of 41 Chinese medium secondary schools became independent schools. The rest of the Chinese medium schools converted to English-medium 'national-type' schools (Kua, 1990,

Chinese themselves, without any financial aid from the Education Ministry of Malaysia. The purpose of setting up these schools was to enroll those Chinese students who failed or did badly in government Primary Six examination, or whose age were older than those permitted by the Education Ministry (Chou, 1987, p.155). To date, there are nine Chinese independent schools in Sabah (see Table 2.2).

Most of the curriculum of Chinese independent schools were adopted from national-type schools except that they retained the Mandarin as the medium of instruction. Thus English and Bahasa Malaysia were compulsory subjects in the Chinese secondary independent schools. Apart from the school examinations, these schools also prepared their students for the government

-----  
...Continued...



Table 2.2

The Chinese Independent Secondary School Establishment  
Information in Sabah (1980)

No.	School	Founded	No. of Student	No. Of Class- room
1.	Sabah Tshung Tsin Secondary School, Kota Kinabalu	1965	1,179	50
2.	Kian Kok Middle School, Kota Kinabalu	1963	473	20
3.	Papar Middle School, Papar	1966	67	8
4.	Beaufort Middle School, Beaufort	1966	109	8
5.	Tenom Tshung Tsin Secondary School, Tenom	1965	239	7
6.	Sabah Chinese High School, Tawau	1964	854	31
7.	Pei Tsin High School, Kudat	1969	183	13
8.	Lahad Datu Secondary School, Lahad Datu	1965	201	7
9.	Yu Yuan Secondary School, Sandakan	1962	847	21

Source: Chou, 1987, p.161

recognized examinations <sup>5</sup>. Many schools also introduced commercial and business subjects into the curriculum for the upper grades.

However, the government does not recognize UEC (Unified Examination Certification) issued by Chinese independent secondary schools. However, UEC is recognized by the local Chinese business community as a high school diploma (cited in Kua, 1985). A special board has also been set up to assist students from the Chinese secondary school system to gain admission into foreign universities and colleges. The UEC certificate is now accepted

-----

5. The government recognized examinations include Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (SRP) or the Lower Certificate of Education (LCE) at lower secondary level, Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or the Malaysia Certificate of Education (MCE) at upper secondary level, Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM) or the Higher School Certificate (HSC) at matriculation level.

by various universities in Taiwan, U.K, Australia, New Zealand, United States, and Canada.

## 2.2 Educational Attainment Of Sabahan Chinese From 1970 To 1980

The Sabahan Chinese educational attainment from 1970 to 1980 can be ascertained from three aspects: average educational level, school attendance, and literacy level.

Average educational level is the first indicator used to reflect the education attainment of Chinese in Sabah. Table 2.3 shows that more Chinese attained primary level and below in 1970 (75.75%) and lower secondary level and above in 1980 (38%). The measurement of MEA (mean of educational attainment) further confirms this fact by showing the MEA of Chinese in 1970, which is 2.03,

Table 2.3  
Educational Level of The Chinese in Sabah 1970 and 1980

Educational Level	Point	1970		1980	
		N	%	N	%
No Education	1	43,397	31.33	43,026	28.00
Primary or Less	2	62,217	44.92	52,270	34.00
Lower Secondary	3	21,493	15.52	34,067	22.16
Upper Secondary	4	8,287	5.98	20,208	13.14
Form Six and above	5	3,118	2.25	4,162	2.70
Total		138,512	100.00	153,733	100.00
MEA #			2.03		2.28

Source: Data of 1970 is adapted from Chander, 1972, p.149-152; data of 1980 is adapted from Khoo, 1984, p.256-259

Notes:

1. # MEA= Mean of Educational Attainment

MEA=  $\frac{\text{Total MEA point}}{\text{Total Persons}}$

MEA point= No education = 1  
 Primary or less = 2  
 Lower Secondary = 3  
 Upper Secondary = 4  
 Form Six and above = 5

[contd]

MEA of 1970=  $281,048/138,512=2.03$

MEA of 1980=  $351,409/153,733=2.28$

2. Persons who were still at school at the time of the census were classified according to their current level of schooling; it was assumed that they would complete that level by the end of the year. Persons who had not completed a full year at a given level were classified at the next lower level to that at which they left school.

lower than the MEA of Chinese in 1980, which is 2.28.

The above results show the increasing education level of Chinese from 1970 to 1980.

The main reason for the higher educational attainment of the Chinese in 1980 than 1970 is due to the substantial expansion in educational opportunities. Tables 2.4 and 2.5 show that the number of schools, teachers, students and money allocated for physical development had increased from 1970 to 1980.

Table 2.4

General Education Development Data from 1970 to 1980

	1970	1975	1980
<u>Primary School</u>			
No. Primary Sch.	695	780	840
No. Teachers	n.a	5012	5947
No. Pupils	110,607	125,592	141,292
<u>Secondary School</u>			
No. Sec. Sch.	85	91	103
No. Teachers	n.a	1823	2844
No. Pupils	30,603	45,873	63,085

Source: Sabah Education Department, 1989, p.293

Table 2.5

Physical Development and Allocations of Malaysia Development Plans [MDP] 1963-1988

	Total Allocation	Actual Expenditure	Approved Projects	Completed Projects
MDP I [1965/70]	\$27.13m	\$15.6m [58%]	n.a	n.a
MDP II [1970/75]	\$60.42m	\$44.20m [73%]	606	524 [86%]
MDP III [1976/80]	\$209.00m	\$147.79m [71%]	482	339 [70%]

Source: Sabah Education Department, 1989, p.291

### 2.3 Educational Attainment Of Sabahan Chinese Men And Women From 1970 to 1980

The educational attainment of Sabahan Chinese men and women will be compared at the year of 1970 and 1980. Table 2.6 indicates that in both 1970 and 1980, the education level of Sabahan Chinese men is higher than women. Both years show that the percentage of illiteracy is higher in Chinese women, while the percentage of literacy is higher in men. It is even clearer with the calculation of mean of educational attainment (MEA). Table 2.6 shows that the MEA of Chinese men is higher than women in both years, that is, 2.15 for men and 1.89 for women in 1970 ,and 2.38 for men and 2.17 for women in 1980.

Table 2.6  
Educational Attainment of Chinese Men and Women  
in Sabah 1970 and 1980

Educational Attainment	Point	Men		Women	
		N	%	N	%
<u>1970</u>					
No Education	1	18,467	25.44	24,990	37.88
Primary or Less	2	34,611	47.67	27,606	41.85
Lower Secondary	3	11,992	16.51	9,501	14.40
Upper Secondary	4	5,352	7.37	2,935	4.45
Form Six and above	5	2,185	3.00	933	1.41
Total		72,607	100.00	65,965	100.00
MEA		2.15		1.89	
<u>1980</u>					
No Education	1	19,191	23.97	23,835	32.45
Primary or Less	2	28,151	35.17	24,119	32.84
Lower Secondary	3	18,488	23.10	15,579	21.21
Upper Secondary	4	11,385	14.22	8,823	12.01
Form Six and above	5	2,837	3.54	1,098	1.49
Total		80,052	100.00	73,454	100.00
MEA		2.38		2.17	

Source: Data for 1970 are from Chander, 1972, p.149-152; data for 1980 are from Khoo, 1984, p.248-256.

[contd]



Note:

1. # MEA= Mean of Educational Attainment

MEA=  $\frac{\text{Total MEA point}}{\text{Total Persons}}$

MEA point= No education	= 1
Primary or less	= 2
Lower Secondary	= 3
Upper Secondary	= 4
Form Six and above	= 5

MEA of 1970

Chinese men =  $155,998/72,607 = 2.15$

Chinese women =  $125,110/65,965 = 1.89$

MEA of 1980

Chinese men =  $190,682/80,052 = 2.38$

Chinese women =  $159,592/73,454 = 2.17$

2. Differences of MEA between Chinese men and women

1970 =  $2.15 \text{ (Chinese men)} - 1.89 \text{ (Chinese women)}$   
= 0.26

1980 =  $2.38 \text{ (Chinese men)} - 2.17 \text{ (Chinese women)}$   
= 0.21

3. N = number

4. Persons who were still at school at the time of the census were classified according to their current level of schooling; it was assumed that they would complete that level by the end of the year. Persons who had not completed a full year at a given level were classified at the next lower level to that at which they left school.

It is noticed that the educational attainment gap between Chinese men and women is reduced from 0.26 in 1970 to 0.21 in 1980 (see Note 2 of Table 2.7). The reasons for being so are due to, first, free education policy implemented by the government; second, the economic value of formal education which allows women to get jobs; third, the changing perception of society, parents and women towards education and career.

#### 2.4 Educational Attainment Of Sabahan Chinese And Bumiputras From 1970 to 1980

Apart from comparing the educational attainment of Chinese gender, the following discussion compares the educational attainment of Chinese and Bumiputras from 1970 to 1980 in Sabah. The Bumiputras mentioned here include major ethnic groups such as Kadazan, Bajau, Murut, Malay, Indonesian, and minor ethnic groups such as , Kwijau, Illanu, Lotud and Rungus.

Comparing the educational attainment of Chinese and Bumiputras in Sabah (Table 2.7), it is found that the educational attainment of the Chinese is higher than Bumiputras in both 1970 and 1980. Except for the illiterate group (category of 'No education'), the proportion of Chinese in every education category is higher than the proportion of Bumiputras in both years. Take 1970 as an example, in every 100 Bumiputras, 67.6 persons are illiterate, 27.1 are primary educated, 3.6 persons are lower secondary educated, 1.1 person upper secondary educated and 0.6 persons are Form Six and above educated. However, for Chinese, only 31.3 of them are illiterate (36.3 percent lower than Bumiputras), 44.9 persons are primary educated (17.8 percent higher than Bumiputras), 15.5 persons are lower secondary educated (11.9 percent higher than Bumiputras), 6.0 persons are upper secondary educated (4.9 percent higher than Bumiputras) and 2.3 persons are Form Six and above educated (1.7 percent higher than

Bumiputras) . The calculation of MEA have also shown the same results. In 1970 and 1980, the MEA of Chinese is 0.64 and 0.62 higher than Bumiputra respectively.

Several reasons explain why the educational attainment among the Chinese are higher than Bumiputras. First, the Chinese values education highly, whether it is from a cultural or historical aspect, as mentioned earlier. This has spurred many parents to provide formal education for their children. The high regard of Chinese for education can be seen from their initiative to have their own schools in the early settlement days. Secondly, more Chinese are clustered around urban areas where schools are first built and with better facilities (Regis, 1989, p.418). It is therefore easier for the Chinese to send their children to schools. Thirdly, the higher income of Chinese has enabled them to provide good and high education for their children.

Table 2.7

Educational Attainment of Chinese and Bumiputras in Sabah 1970 And 1980

Educational	Point	Bumiputras (B)		Chinese (C)		Difference (C-B)(%)
		N	%	N	%	
<u>1970</u>						
No Education	1	321,801	67.6	43,397	31.3	-36.3
Primary or Less	2	129,186	27.1	62,271	44.9	17.8
Lower Secondary	3	17,181	3.6	21,493	15.5	11.9
Upper Secondary	4	5,032	1.1	8,287	6.0	4.9
Form Six and above	5	2,710	0.6	3,118	2.3	1.7
Total		475,910	100.0	138,512	100.0	
MEA		1.39		2.03		
<u>1980</u>						
No Education	1	435,638	55.3	43,026	28.0	- 27.3
Primary or Less	2	223,802	28.4	52,270	34.0	5.6
Lower Secondary	3	94,588	12.0	34,067	22.1	10.1
Upper Secondary	4	29,263	3.7	20,208	13.1	9.4
Form Six and above	5	4,952	0.6	4,162	2.7	2.1
Total		788,243	100.0	153,733	100.0	
MEA		1.66		2.28		

Source: Data for 1970 are from Chander, 1976, p.167-168; data for 1980 are from Khoo, 1984, p.244-247, & 256-259.

[contd]

Note:

1. # MEA = Mean of Educational Attainment

MEA =  $\frac{\text{Total MEA point}}{\text{Total Persons}}$

MEA point = No education = 1  
              Primary or less = 2  
              Lower Secondary = 3  
              Upper Secondary = 4  
              Form Six and above = 5

MEA of 1970

Bumiputras =  $665,394 / 475,910 = 1.39$

Chinese =  $281,162 / 36,882 = 2.03$

MEA of 1980

Bumiputras =  $1,308,818 / 788,243 = 1.66$

Chinese =  $351,409 / 153,733 = 2.28$

2. Differences of MEA between Chinese men and women

1970 =  $2.03 \text{ (Chinese)} - 1.39 \text{ (Bumiputras)} = 0.64$

1980 =  $2.28 \text{ (Chinese)} - 1.66 \text{ (Bumiputras)} = 0.62$

3. Persons who were still at school at the time of the census were classified according to their current level of schooling; it was assumed that they would complete that level by the end of the year. Persons who had not completed a full year at a given level were classified at the next lower level to that at which they left school.

Table 2.8

Growth rate of Education Level of Bumiputra and Chinese in Sabah from 1970 to 1980

	Bumiputra			Chinese		
	1970	1980	G.R	1970	1980	G.R
No Education	321,801	435,638	35.0	43,397	43,026	-10.0
Primary or Less	129,186	223,802	73.0	62,271	52,270	-16.0
Lower Sec.	17,181	94,588	450.0	21,493	34,067	58.0
Upper Sec.	5,032	29,263	481.0	8,287	20,208	143.0
Form Six and above	2,710	4,952	83.0	3,118	4,162	33.0

Source: Data of 1970 is adapted from Chander, 1976, p.167-168; data of 1980 is adapted from Khoo, 1984, p.244-247 & 256-259.

Note:

G.R = Growth rate

Growth rate:

$$\frac{\text{Persons in 1980} - \text{Persons in 1970}}{\text{Persons in 1970}} \times 100 \%$$

However, some changes have been taken place with the implementation of the New Economic Policy since 1970. It has greatly improved the educational attainment of Bumiputras. This explains why the growth rate of education level of the Bumiputras is higher than the Chinese in Sabah from 1970 to 1980 (see Table 2.8).

Several reasons contribute to the higher growth rate of educational attainment of Bumiputras than Chinese from 1970 to 1980. These include building more Bahasa Malaysia medium schools, providing more higher education opportunities, and giving out scholarships.

First, the government has built many Bahasa Malaysia medium schools. This enabled more Bumiputra students to obtain formal education. From 1963 to 1980, the number of primary schools have increased from 489 to 840 (Sabah Education Department, 1989, p.293). Among



the 840 schools, 749 are Bahasa Malaysia medium schools (Chou, 1987, p.160). Likewise, the number of secondary schools in Sabah has also increased from 30 in 1970 to 103 in 1980. Out of 103, 99 secondary schools are Bahasa Malaysia medium schools (Sabah Education Department, 1989, p.293).

Second, the government has been providing higher education opportunities since Independence. Priorities have been given to Bumiputras in local universities and some local colleges such as MARA by quota system. This is evident in the Malaysian government report (1985, p.552). The statistics in Table 2.9 shows that the percentage of Bumiputras in certificate, diploma and degree level in Malaysia is 61.1%, 93.5% and 62.0% respectively. While for the non-Bumiputras, it is 38.9%, 6.5% and 38.0%. The above statistic has revealed that the enrollment of Chinese is way below the enroll-

ment of Bumiputras. As a result of that, the percentage of Bumiputra graduate in total graduate population has increased from 25.4% in pre-1970 to 52.0% in 1980's, whereas the percentage of Chinese graduates has decreased from 62.7% in pre-1970 to 39.3% in 1980's (see Table 2.10).

Table 2.9  
Ethnic Composition of Students in Local Institution of Higher Learning, 1980, Sabah

Course	No. of Students	Bumiputra	Non-Bumiputra
Certificate	100.0 (2,603)	61.1	38.9
Diploma	100.0 (12,262)	93.5	6.5
Degree	100.0 (21,944)	62.0	38.0

Source: Malaysian government, 1986, p.552

Table 2.10

Percentage Distribution of Graduates by Year Degree Received and Ethnic Group in Sample of Sarjit Singh and Mehmet 1990 in Sabah

Time- Interval	Ethnic Groups				Total	
	Malay*	Indigenous*	Chinese	W.M'sia		
Pre-1970	3.4	22.0	62.7	11.9	100.0	(54)
1970- 1974	7.5	25.0	55.0	12.5	100.0	(80)
1975- 1979	15.2	25.8	42.7	16.4	100.0	(171)
1980's	13.9	38.1	39.3	8.6	100.0	(582)
Total	12.9	33.5	42.9	10.7	100.0	(892)

Source: Sarjit Singh & Mehmet, 1991, p.26

Note: \* Bumiputras= Malay and Indigenous.

Table 2.11

Percentage Distribution of Scholarships and Private Graduates in Sample of Sarjit Singh and Mehmet in Sabah, 1991 (before 1970 to 1986)

		Indigenous	Malay	Chinese	Total
Scholarship	(%)	65.9	18.2	15.9	100.0
	(N)	(112)	(31)	(27)	(170)
Private	(%)	25.7	5.0	70.3	100.0
	(N)	(11)	(70)	(192)	(273)

Source: Sarjit Singh and Mehmet, 1991, p.61-62

Third, the government provides many scholarships to Bumiputras. In primary and secondary school levels, most of the scholarship recipients are Bumiputras. The Federal government and other agencies such as Yayasan Sabah, Petronas, Bank Negara and Bank Bumiputra have provided scholarships to them (Sabah Education Department, 1989, p.299). In tertiary education level, a majority of the government scholarships are provided to Bumiputras as well. In the sample of Singh and Mehmet, 84.1% scholarships were awarded to Bumiputras and only 15.9% scholarships went to Chinese (Table 2.11).

## 2.5 Summary

It is evident that on the whole, the educational level attainment of the Chinese has improved from 1970 to 1980. The dedication of the Chinese in education could be seen from the setting up of the China oriented Chinese schools in Chinese early settlement and nine Chinese independence schools after the Independence of Sabah. Looking at the growth rate of the educational attainment from 1970 to 1980, it is found that the Chinese women achieved higher growth rates than men; and the Bumiputras achieved higher growth rates than Chinese.