Because of the growing numbers of private overseas students especially from Southeast Asia, and predominantly Chinese from Malaysia, there are a variety of sensitive socio-cultural, racial/ethnic, as well as developmental factors involved, apart from those of a more directly educational and training nature. The increasing financial stringency experienced in recent years by the tertiary education sector, the growing competition for places and the imposition of foreign student quotas in certain selected faculties (such as medicine, dentistry, architecture, engineering and science) have all contributed to the government's dilemma in determining suitable admission policies relevant for the 1980s.

Tertiary education has been virtually tuition free since 1973, and it is not until recently that overseas students have been asked to pay a partial contribution to their education in Australia. Since 1980, private overseas students have had to pay an annual fee which theoretically covers about one-third of the direct educational costs incurred on their behalf by the Australian taxpayer. For many less well-off families in Southeast Asia, the cost of finding each place to be funded each year by students would not exceed by overseas applicants. For example, Malaysian students coming to Australia under Malaysian government sponsorships would normally be funded by or of Malayan taxpayers whereas few ethnic Chinese or Indians would normally be involved in such government schemes. Hence the OBE figure for 1982 of 2425 'Malaysian' tertiary students in Australia would involve predominantly private Chinese students, i.e. between 90-95% of the total. A smaller number of Malay or bumiputras who are predominantly Malaysian government sponsored. However, for the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DEYA) and for accounting purposes, both groups are classified as 'private' students when they choose Australia if the government plays no direct part in financing or overseeing their studies.

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Nearly 4% of all students currently enrolled in various forms of tertiary education are specifically and directly from 'overseas' in the sense that they have purposefully and officially come to Australia for training or education. If one includes the organisational number of students who have been born abroad and/or those whose parents have immigrated to Australia in the past two decades, however, more than a third of all tertiary students would have to be designated as having a significant 'overseas', if not multicultural connection. Perhaps indeed this situation is the basis at times for some of the confusion, vagueness, indifference and even difficulties which often attend Australian academic attitudes to 'foreign', 'international', 'overseas', or even 'ethnic originated' students with whom they are involved as teachers and/or researchers.

Australia has nearly 12000 overseas students in 1983 studying at tertiary institutions and over 4000 studying at secondary institutions. Nearly 100% of these students come from Southeast Asia, and those private overseas students in the tertiary sector in Australia prior to entering a university or college of advanced education, and

Nomenclature: Private Overseas Students

The international education student exchange nomenclature is, for Australia, dominated essentially by two broad and uneven, certainly unbalanced categories of students. The first, the majority group, is the private overseas student programme (POSF) and a minor group consisting of (i.e. Australian sponsored) overseas students.

Private students include all those students from overseas who are not in receipt of Australian government awards or training grants, and are so classified for purposes of adjusting priorities in Australian government or official departmental nomenclature, particularly by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA), Foreign Affairs, Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB), and the Department of Education and Youth Affairs (DEYA). For example, Malaysian students coming to Australia under Malaysian government sponsorships would normally be funded either by Malaysian taxpayers or of Malayan taxpayers whereas few ethnic Chinese or Indians would normally be involved in such government schemes. Hence the OBE figure for 1982 of 2425 'Malaysian' tertiary students in Australia would involve predominantly private Chinese students, i.e. between 90-95% of the total. A smaller number of Malay or bumiputras who are predominantly Malaysian government sponsored. However, for the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DEYA) and for accounting purposes, both groups are classified as 'private' students when they choose Australia if the government plays no direct part in financing or overseeing their studies.

Statistical and verification problems

It is often difficult to obtain an up-to-date and accurate accounting for all overseas students in Australia because of varying complex, definitional and classification procedures used by different governmental departments. Cross national studies and comparisons of international education or training programmes are activities which, while perhaps of general interest to a variety of Australian academics, in practice involve but few researchers. In spite of the fact that currently nearly 7½% of all university students come from overseas, there is no unified non-governmental education or professional academic or research body interested in or procuring on a continuing basis the activities of this considerable group of students.

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He also noted that among students from Malaysia, as many as two-thirds (86%) of pre-university students (home government) compared with less than a tenth (4%) of the Chinese... This suggests that the Ministry of Education, acting as a strong incentive to encourage the Malays to go abroad for their tertiary education, and a high level of individual initiative and educational achievement on the part of the Chinese.

And moreover he has noted, apropos the 1973 data, that among private students from Malaysia 90% are Chinese while only 5% are Malay. Among those sponsored (home government) slightly more than a quarter (26%) are Chinese while two-thirds (60%) are Malay. This distribution suggests that while the Chinese have the initiative, drive and capability to obtain scholarships and financial support from within the family to go abroad for tertiary education, they do not have the opportunity to go to Australia without government support.

A decade later in 1983, the situation would remain substantially the same.

The Australian-Malaysian Educational Link

In 1982, 57% of all private overseas students in tertiary training in Australia were from Malaysia and nearly all were of Chinese ethnic origin. Malaysian tertiary students in Australia increased by 5% in number from 1980 to 1982 (in addition to 15% of all private overseas students are also from Malaysia and predominately of Chinese origin).

This fact may to some extent influence the Australian government’s attitude towards these overseas students especially if it believes that many of their families are sufficiently off on education to allow them to send their children to Australia. It is considerably less expensive for them to come to Australia than to enter for tertiary studies in the USA, or in the UK, where charges have been imposed since 1980 ranging from approximately $45,000 for an arts-humanities based course to $7,500 for a science based course and $10,000 for a medical course. By coming to countries such as Australia they avoid the severe educational quotas imposed by the Malaysian government on many Chinese students who have been unable to enter tertiary institutions in their own country. The bumiputra policy, or positive discrimination in favour of Malays seeking higher education, acts as a strong incentive to encourage (and to some extent Indians) to go abroad. Obviously Australia, and to a lesser extent Britain, America and Canada, all play an important role as a political and a pedagogical safety valve for the Malayan government, which in 1982 refused to allow the establishment of a private university pre-dominantly for Chinese which would have catered to the needs of those students who are being forced to go abroad for their post-secondary training.

Hence the current Australian government enquiry into the role that private overseas students play in Australian tertiary institutions therefore raises a number of long standing ethnic or racial problems and poses questions of sensitive political importance regarding many countries in the Asian-Pacific region with which Australia has long standing commercial, economic, political and defence involvements.

Malaysian Higher Education Policy

There are five universities in Malaysia, of which four were established after 1969. They cater to a population which today numbers nearly 15 million with an ethnic-racial composition of approximately 65% Malay, 39% Chinese and 10% Indian. A population survey conducted in 1980 indicated that, in socio-economic terms, about 30% of all Malaysia’s people lived in poverty of whom nearly three-quarters were Malays, about 17% Chinese and 8% Indian.

As Sharom Ahmad, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Sains, Malaysia has noted:

Ocupations have also tended to be highly stratified according to race. While the Chinese are dominant in private and commercial employment, and Indians in the professions, the Malays are likely in the civil service, police and armed forces, small holding agriculture and fishing.

The New Economic Policy initiated in the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-75, gave first priority to the eradication of poverty as well as to the structural reorganisation of society to overcome the dysfunctional interaction of ‘racial origins and economic inequalities’. Education has had a decisive role to play in restructuring Malaysian society particularly in regard to university entrance and training for the professions. The exclusive use of the Malay language, targeted for all first year university courses by 1983, a reversal in the current ratio of 60:40 arts-humanities bias in favour of science-technological subjects, the Malays are largely in the civil service, police and armed forces, small holding agriculture and fishing.

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Thus the Malaysian government's internal educational policies during the 1970s had had external ramifications indirectly transmitted to overseas institutions. During the 1980s countries such as Australia have contributed unwittingly to the solution of a local problem now made regional which contains within it both racial and international connotations. The imposition of quotas, increasingly since 1978 in some Australian universities, and in certain key faculties perhaps also reflects an indirect response to Malaysian government policy. The deliberate maintenance in Malaysia of discriminatory quotas favouring Malays in universities and especially in particular faculties such as those involving science and technology has led to a recruitment drive amongst Malays to the detriment of non-Malays. Thus the two-fold pressure to keep recruitment overall of Malays high, and to continue remediating measures countering the arts-humanities bias in favour of science and technology, has forced non-Malay students to study abroad not only in highly preferred fields such as medicine, architecture and engineering, but also now to seek places in art-humanities, commerce, economics and business studies.

To cater to the needs of non-Malay students locally the establishment of a private university was proposed in 1986. Such an institution had been discussed as early as 1963 but the project was abandoned until more recently.

The government's public relations English language news sheet Malaysia of February 1986 noted the government's attempt to establish a private Chinese university which was to be called Merdeka University Berhad and the High Court rejection of the company's application. The government, it also noted the subsequent establishment of a new Chinese university which was to be known as the Merdeka University, to be run by a board of representatives of the international Islamic community as well as leading educationists, is expected to be fully operational in 1995.

The journey has been hard. Let us maintain it, for us our motto says: Unity is Strength.

Private Overseas Student Program (POSP): Australia

The Private Overseas Student Program (POSP) is under the general policy and administrative responsibility of the DIAE, but it shares (consults) on an inter-departmental committee with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the DEYA on general policy issues. The DIAE in effectively managing the POSP, aims at what it describes as:

- establishing and putting into effect a system of Guaranteed Student Allocations (GSA) which is aimed at ensuring access to overseas students to places within the formal education system for students from specified countries without significant displacement of Australian students.

Because there is disproportionate or grossly uneven 'demand for entry', from some countries such as Malaysia, the application of a fair and equitable GSA system by DIAE is jeopardised due to the division of power (authority) and responsibility for policy making and final programme implementation between the various government departments concerned with foreign affairs, education and immigration. The Department of Foreign Affairs lists on a priority basis which countries are first chosen, and then favour to send foreign students. Its criteria are two-fold, foreign policy interests and economic development considerations with a primary focus on regional countries in the South Pacific Area. The DIAE is expected to manage the GSA system in terms of both regional priorities and the educational capacity of Australian institutions, particularly those at the tertiary level. The priority countries, as defined by Foreign Affairs, are in order (1) Malaysia, (2) Other ASEA Countries, (3) Middle East countries, (4) PNG and South Pacific countries.

Private Overseas Student Program (POSP): Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 21: Australian Universities Overseas Undergraduate Students 1982</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 22: Australian Universities Overseas Postgraduate Students 1982**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Faculty</strong></th>
<th><strong>China</strong></th>
<th><strong>Australia</strong></th>
<th><strong>UK</strong></th>
<th><strong>USA</strong></th>
<th><strong>Europe</strong></th>
<th><strong>Israel</strong></th>
<th><strong>Middle East</strong></th>
<th><strong>Others</strong></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>120.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Australian Universities in Overseas Student Study: 1982. (Expressed as numbers and as proportion of total postgraduate enrolments).*
country will come under careful scrutiny in terms of political, economic and even racial grounds. The relatively insignificant numbers of students of Chinese racial origin coming to Australia may be the result of negative general public sentiment (7) or of modest financial means, at least comparatively and regionally speaking. The extreme Australian critic, the provision of low-cost tertiary education, and to some extent secondary education, to an ever-increasing foreign population represents a special racial group from a supposedly well-to-do social and business class within a developing society, still receiving economic aid from a country such as Australia, would be anathema. The educational responsibility is that which falls predominantly on the shoulders of the Malaysian government, which recently in its political expediency'. The ramifications of this political, economic and even racial grounds. The policy are now society, still receiving economic aid from a country such as Australia, would be anathema. The educational responsibility is that which falls predominantly on the shoulders of the Malaysian government, which recently in its political expediency'. The ramifications of this political, economic and even racial grounds. The policy are now society, still receiving economic aid from a country such as Australia, would be anathema. The educational responsibility is that which falls predominantly on the shoulders of the Malaysian government, which recently in its political expediency'. The ramifications of this political, economic and even racial grounds. The policy are now society, still receiving economic aid from a country such as Australia, would be anathema. The educational responsibility is that which falls predominantly on the shoulders of the Malaysian government, which recently in its political expediency'. The ramifications of this political, economic and even racial grounds. The policy are now...