The influence of Western models of service delivery on the development of services for young children in Malaysia

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The Influence of Western Models of Service Delivery on the Development of Services for Young Children in Malaysia.

By

Teresa Hutchins B.A.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of

Master of Social Science (Human Services) at the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences, Edith Cowan University

Date of submission December 1995
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
Acknowledgments

There are many people who made this study possible. Firstly my very deep and sincere thanks go to Rogayah, Roliza, Rizlan, Rolinah and Rizman who welcomed me into their home and taught me the many delights of Malaysia. It is true indeed, that without their generous hospitality this study would never have happened! I would also like to thank the Malaysian authorities for their patience and understanding in allowing me to complete this study and to my 'off shore' supervisor Dr. Putri Zabariah and the University Pertanian, Malaysia. Sincere thanks also to my two 'on shore' supervisors Dr. Anne Atkinson whose courage, patience and rigour are an inspiration to all her students and Dr. Margaret Sims whose immense faith and enthusiasm never fail to lift the beleaguered spirit. My thanks to fellow students Paul Howrie and Ruth Marquis for their support and friendship over the last four years and to Alan Wilson who saved the day by drawing boxes while I spoke! Finally, I would like thank my many friends and colleagues who have suffered my endless deliberations with such good humour.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

In the last fifty years, many developing and newly industrialising countries have experienced a rapid expansion of care and education programme for young children. The rapid expansion of these programmes which are often modelled on those from the west, together with new understandings about the nature of children's development, has led to concern that these programmes do not meet the needs of children living in very different social and cultural environments. The 1989 UNESCO review of early childhood care and education programmes in the Asia-Pacific region highlights the need for integrated early childhood care and education programmes and reports that programmes in the region still suffer from the slow acceptance of indigenous models, preference for imported models and a lack of awareness and emphasis on non-formal approaches to the meeting of needs.

This study utilises qualitative methods of data collection and analysis within a critical framework to analyse the evolution of programmes for young children in Malaysia. Data sources include key informant interviews, informal interviews with teachers and parents, observations in the field and documentary sources. The conceptual framework for the study enables examination of contextual influences as well as the experience of colonisation, western imperialism and diffusion on the development of
programmes for young children in Malaysia. The framework enables an analysis of the processes at work as well as the role of various agents in the development of programmes. It also provides the means to examine the power relationships inherent in the development of particular policies and programmes and the consequences of those programmes for young children.

The study illustrates how the experience of colonisation and the importation of western models of service delivery together with ethnocentric theories of child development result in a form of hegemony where policy makers, service providers and parents become, not only convinced that their own child rearing methods are deficient, but that the middle class methods of western countries are inherently superior. Thus, the study provides some possible reasons for the reluctance of policy makers and service providers to adopt integrated early childhood care and education programmes that are based on indigenous models which encompass other aspects of community development. The study also raises questions about the morality of exporting from the west, what amount to be ethno-specific early childhood training courses for personnel working with young children in developing countries.
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Chapter one

Introduction

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries changes to family life brought about by the industrial revolution led to the development of early childhood care and education programmes in Europe and North America. Over the last two hundred years, the form and content of these programmes has been shaped by various social, political and economic factors, together with an international exchange of ideas and methods espoused by particular philosophers and educationalists. The influence of Friederich Froebel, Maria Montessori, and Margaret McMillan, for example, are well documented, as are the ways in which their teachings were disseminated throughout the western world (Maxim, 1993, Lawrence, 1952, Hammond, 1984, Knudsen Linduauer, 1993). What is not well documented, however, is the relationship between the development of programmes for young children in the west and the evolution of similar programmes in many developing countries1.

In the last fifty years, there has been a rapid expansion of care and education programmes for young children in many developing and newly industrialising countries. In Malaysia, for example, the number of children attending kindergartens increased by 115.3% over a period of four years between 1979 and 1983 (EPRD, 1985, p.5). The rapid expansion of

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1 The author of this study acknowledges the difficulties inherent in using the terms 'Third World' and 'developing countries' but has been unable to find any other descriptors apart from North and South that would adequately assist the discussion.
programmes in developing countries together with new understandings about
the nature of children's development has led to concern that these
programmes, which are often very similar to those found in the west, do not
meet the needs of children living in very different social and cultural
environments (Myers, 1992).

The assumption is often made that the similarities between programmes in
developing countries and those found in the west are simply due to a common
response to similar social and environmental conditions. The
industrialisation-convergence hypothesis, for example, proposes that because
industrialisation weakens traditional responses to need, statutory provisions
are required to maintain and protect the needy (MacPherson & Midgley,
1987, p.6). This hypothesis, however, is based upon the experience of
western industrialised countries and not those of the Third World. Closer
examination may demonstrate that the similarities between programmes in
developing countries and those found in the west are not due to common
responses to similar circumstances, but rather to other factors unique to those
countries (MacPherson and Midgley, 1987, p.6). Such factors may include
the experience of colonisation, post-colonial dependency relationships and
western imperialism shared by many developing countries. The following
case study examines the influence of western theories and models of service
delivery on the evolution of care and education programmes for young
children in Malaysia. The purpose of the study is to better understand how
and why programmes for young children in Malaysia have evolved rather
than to evaluate their effectiveness.

Although British involvement in the Malay states extends back to the
eighteenth century, the signing of the Pankor treaty in 1874 is generally used
to demarcate the beginning of the colonial administration of British Malaya
(Andaya & Andaya 1982, p.155). Under the British, the Malay States were organised into three different administrative units; The Straits Settlements, the Federated States and the Unfederated States. These administrative units were combined in 1945 to form the Federation of British Malaya. The Federation of British Malaya gained independence from Britain in 1957 and Malaysia, as it exists today, was formally constituted in 1963.

Malaysia consists of eleven states situated on the Southeast Asian mainland and two states on the Island of Borneo. The population of Malaysia reflects three distinct ethnic groups, the Malays constitute approximately 53% of the population, the Chinese 35% and the Indians 10% (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.2). In 1969, Malaysia experienced social and political upheaval which has been described by Malaysian social analyst, Khoo Kay Jin, as a crisis of decolonisation, nation building and development (1992, p.49). The extent of this crisis became manifest in ethnic rioting on the streets of Kuala Lumpur following the May election results. The strength of ill feeling and civil unrest among the different ethnic groups prompted a new era of authoritarian government and the formulation of a twenty five year plan to bring about the re-structuring of Malaysian society (Crouch 1992, p.23). Part of the restructuring, and partly as a result of that process, early childhood education and care programmes expanded rapidly throughout Malaysia during the 1970s and 1980s. As in many other countries, these programmes were characterised by an array of delivery models that reflected administrative fragmentation and ideological division. Each model was premised upon

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2 The straits settlements comprising the states of Singapore, Melaka, Penang and Province Wesley became a single administrative unit under the control of the British administration in 1826. The states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang were also joined into a single administrative unit under British administration in 1896, and thus formed the Federated Malay States. The northern states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu and the southern state of Johore became known as the Unfederated Malay states.
particular philosophical and ideological beliefs about who should provide the programme, who the target population should be, what the programme should provide, and how it should be delivered.

Such ideological division and administrative fragmentation can also be found in Australia, Britain and North America where the dominant models of service delivery represent what has been described as a 'false dichotomy' between 'care' and 'education' (Petrie, 1988, p.26). Full-day child care programmes, for example, have traditionally come under the auspices of government departments responsible for the delivery of residual services to families in need. These programmes have provided alternatives to parental care for targeted sections of the population. Pre-school or kindergarten programmes, on the other hand, have traditionally been the responsibility of Departments of Education and have provided non-targeted half-day educational opportunities to children prior to formal schooling (Brennan, 1995, p.124).

The dichotomy between 'care' and 'education' is also found in developing countries where welfare programmes, with a focus on care and protection, are provided for children in poor rural areas, while preschool enrichment programmes are provided for middle-class children in the urban centres (Myers, 1992, p.17). Increasingly, there is acknowledgment that such a bifurcated approach to the provision of services does not meet the real and pressing needs of young children and their families. Current debates about programmes for young children in the western world include calls for greater collaboration between professionals, policy makers and services providers (Kagan, 1991). Similarly, discussions regarding programmes for children in the Third World appeal for a new approach to thinking about the care and education of young children (Myers, 1992).
The development of programmes for young children in Australia, Britain and North America

In the United Kingdom, North America and Australia, the origins of the dichotomy between programmes which focus on the 'care' of young children and those that give emphasis to their 'education', can be traced back to particular sets of social, political and ideological factors that influenced the parallel yet separate development of these programmes (Kagan, 1991, Brennan, 1994, Ferri, 1981, Cox, 1983, Spearritt, 1979). The first day nurseries in all three countries were opened during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by charitable organisations concerned about the physical well-being of young children left to tend for themselves while their mothers worked (Lamb, Sternberg, Hwang & Broberg, 1992). These nurseries provided custodial care to children below school age from early in the morning until late in the evening, five days a week.

The first nursery schools were established during the early 1900s in Britain and North America by Margaret McMillan and her followers and like the day nurseries, were open for five full-days each week (Maxim, 1993, p.38). The nursery schools were distinguished from the day nurseries by their emphasis on children's social, emotional and educational growth as well as their physical well-being (Maxim, 1993, p.38). The concept of the nursery school proved popular among middle class philanthropists who believed that the children of poor, working class families needed to be rescued from the physical and moral dangers of the urban industrial movement (Kagan, 1991, Ferri, 1981, Brennan & O'Donnel, 1986). 'Educating' these children, it was believed, would result in a better society by eradicating the behaviour which prevented the social improvement of the poor (Cox, 1983, Spearritt, 1979). In line with the dominant capitalist, industrial ideologies of the time,
responsibility for poverty and deprivation lay firmly with the individual. Educating children of the working classes was perceived, therefore, to be an important step in achieving social reform.

At the same time that the nursery school movement grew in England and North America, Maria Montessori, an Italian physician established 'children's houses' in the slums of San Lorenz, Italy (Knudsen, 1993, p.243). The 'children's houses' provided educational programmes aimed at compensating the children for the impoverished environments in which they lived. Montessori based her work in the 'children's houses' on her experience with 'mentally deficient' children in the hospitals (Knudsen, 1993, p.243). Her philosophy of early education was based on the belief that children were active participants in their own development. In order to reach their full potential children needed to be exposed to environments that offered opportunities for exploration, discovery and manipulation (Knudsen, 1993, p.244). The success of the 'children's houses' in Italy brought Maria Montessori many invitations to undertake lecture tours throughout the world. Thus, the Montessori method became an internationally recognised approach to early childhood education.

Fifty years before Maria Montessori established her 'children's houses' and Margaret McMillan opened her nursery schools, Friederich Froebel had already established himself as an authority on the education of young children in Germany (Lawrence, 1969, p.23). Froebel's philosophy was strongly religious and aimed at teaching children about the sources of evil and ways of eradicating it from civilisation. He believed that it was possible to bring about social change through changing the nature of education available to young children and opened his kindergartens or 'children's gardens' for
children between one and seven years of age from affluent middle-class families (Brennan, 1994, p.14).

In 1851, the kindergartens were banned in the German states because of their association with political activities undertaken by Froebel’s nephew who was charged with promoting socialist ideals (Lawrence, 1969, p.24). The suppression of Liberalism following the failure of the Prussian revolution in 1948 led to the widespread emigration of liberal minded Germans to America and Western Europe. Many of these migrants were teachers from Froebel’s kindergartens and training colleges migrated to North America and Britain (Lawrence, 1969, p.24). Once in their new countries, these teachers set up their own private kindergartens and went about spreading Froebel’s teachings with missionary zeal. Thus, the kindergarten movement spread to North America, Britain and later to Australia.

In Britain, North America and Australia, the need to assist working parents with alternative forms of child care was mostly left to the separate development of day nurseries. Unlike the nursery school and kindergartens, day nurseries were considered 'a necessary evil', to be endured by children of mothers who had no alternative but to take part in the paid work force (Robinson, 1979, p.32). Since their inception, day nurseries in Britain and North America have carried with them the stigma attached to welfare and charitable organisations and tended to focus on the health and welfare needs of the children with 'educational' activities receiving less emphasis. Even so, the North American day nurseries also offered a variety of other services to families. These included counselling parents, providing job placements, training, health and nutritional services (Kagan, 1991, p.29). Thus, it can be argued that day nurseries attempted to provide a holistic service to children.
and parents which was more responsive to their needs than the kindergarten programmes which simply focused on the education of the young child.

The separate development of kindergarten and day nurseries has continued, be it at different rates, in all three countries resulting in the characteristic ideological division and administrative fragmentation of service delivery present today (Brennan & O'Donnel, 1986, Ferri, 1983. Kagan, 1991, Petrie, 1988).Ideological differences between kindergartens and day nurseries were reinforced in the 1950s and 1960s by the work of Dr. John Bowlby (1953). His maternal deprivation theory, combined with ideologies of economic restraint resulted in the closure of many day nurseries set up in Britain during the Second World War (Ferri, 1983, p.5). In Australia, Bowlby’s writings were used to justify the New South Wales Child Welfare Department’s reluctance to provide day care services as it argued, ‘children reared apart from their mothers were an impediment to the government’s goal of building a “mentally healthy, virile and law abiding community”’ (Child Welfare Department of New South Wales, 1955-56:24 cited in Brennan & O’Donnell, 1986, p.21). Thus, the day nurseries were regarded as a threat to family life and the well-being of the country, whereas the kindergartens were regarded as necessary enrichment programmes that supplemented rather than disturbed family life.

In Australia, the image of day nurseries changed significantly during the 1970's and 1980's when working women demanded greater access to alternative forms of child care (Brennan, 1994, p.75). Government policy shifted from providing day nurseries for poor and 'needy' children, to providing child care places for children of working parents in child care centres and family day care schemes (Brennan, 1994, p.164). Even so, the administration of child care and early education programmes in Australia
remain the responsibility of different government departments and continues to reflect the ideological divisions and administrative fragmentation found in many other countries.

**Children's services in developing countries**

While the separate development of day nurseries, nursery schools, and kindergartens in Britain, North America and Australia can be explained by different philanthropic responses to changes in values, family structure and patterns of work brought about by industrialisation, the dichotomy between 'care' and 'education' in many developing countries has its origins in the colonial experience. In Indonesia, for example, kindergartens were set up under Dutch colonial rule for the children of Dutch and Eurasian families (Thomas, 1992, p.97). These kindergartens were established by expatriates and were based on Froebel's philosophy of early education. Children attending the kindergartens were primarily from Dutch or Eurasian families. However, a few Indonesian children whose families had titles or worked in the colonial service were also allowed to attend. Although few in number, these early kindergartens were to set the pattern for the subsequent development of preschool education in Indonesia (Thomas, 1992, p.96).

Colonial influences continued to guide the development of pre-school programmes in Indonesia until 1963, when the Ministry of Education together with private preschool organisations launched a new programme called Gaya Baru or New Departure. This new programme was also modelled on early childhood education programmes found in the west (Thomas, 1992, p.109).

Similarly, services for young children in the Philippines have their origins in the Spanish and American administrations (Chattergy, 1992, p.141). Available to children aged five and six years old, the Philippine pre-schools were based on principles espoused by Montessori, Froebel, and Piaget and
were originally established to provide private tutoring for the children of the middle-classes (Chattergy, 1992, p.141). In the 1960’s, the government established separate kindergartens and full-day child care programmes. The state assisted kindergartens were for children whose parents could not afford the fees charged by the private kindergartens and the full-day child care programmes were for working mothers (Chattergy, 1992, p.154).

The beginnings of Korean programmes for young children can also be traced back to the colonial administration. Kindergartens were first established for the children of Japanese civil servants but were also attended by the children of Choson aristocracy (Lee, 1992, p.73). Both the Japanese programmes and those established by American missionaries were based on the Frobelian philosophy, theory and methods. In 1981, the Korean government set up new programmes for disadvantaged children and children of working parents. To this day the kindergarten programmes are administered by the Ministry of Education and the day care programmes by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Lee, 1992). Thus, the dichotomy between care and education was formalised in Korea.

Children’s services in Korea, Indonesia and the Philippines indicate that economic privilege played an important part in the way services for young children developed in many colonised countries. It seems that economic privilege was an essential component of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised which, according to Albert Memmi, was characterised by implacable dependence with economic privilege at its heart, and racism ingrained in action, institutions and methods of production and exchange (Sartre, 1965, p.xxiv). The experience of racism described by Memmi (1965), in his classic work The Colonizer and the Colonized, is also reflected in many programmes for young children which assumed the superiority of
methods developed in the west and failed to reflect the importance of the child’s home and culture in their activities (Veda, 1983, p.11).

The ethnocentric nature of such programmes was highlighted in the 1983 UNESCO report on the Quality and Quantity of early childhood services in developing countries which pointed out that the operational deficiencies of the colonial models are glaringly obvious when in complete disregard of the local situation these were imposed, as happened in countries like Kenya and other East African nations, in the rural areas (Veda, 1983, p.11).

These problems are perpetuated when western trained professionals continue to impose methods based on western values and ideologies on the programmes in developing countries. Unfortunately, the focus on universal western style kindergarten and pre-school services in many developing countries has denied the poorest and most needy children access to programmes designed to meet their specific needs (MacPherson, 1987, p.129).

Where services have been set up to meet indigenous needs, alternative models have been developed that include a community development perspective as well as catering for the educational and welfare needs of young children. Typically these programmes involve co-ordination of various government departments which combine to provide integrated care, health and educational services (Makagiansar, 1989, p.225). Examples of cooperative ventures in the Southeast Asian and Pacific region are particularly visible in integrated rural development programmes which combine early childhood care and education, women’s development and overall socio-economic development of rural areas (Makagiansar, 1989, p.225). In Northern Thailand, for example, an early education development centre is linked to a
system of local loans for small income-earning projects (Myers, 1992, p.138). In the communities taking part in the project, community centres offering child care and education were set up as community projects funded by a community loan fund. Over a period of seven years the loan fund earned enough money to fully subsidise the care and education programme for young children (Myers, 1992, p.138).

The need for integrated early childhood care and education programmes that embrace other aspects of community development was highlighted in the UNESCO review of early childhood care and education in the Asia-Pacific region in 1989 (Makagiansar, 1989, p.237). According to this review, early childhood care and education programmes in the region still suffer from the slow acceptance of indigenous models, preference for imported models from developed countries, and a lack of awareness of and emphasis on non-formal approaches to the meeting of needs. Among a number of recommendations made in the review is the need for programmes throughout the region to experiment with more diversified and flexible forms of preschool education and care, including evolving low-cost, context-specific models, and the use of the home and cultural practices as a base for child development. The review also recommends the expansion of health and nutrition services provided by early childhood programmes (Makagiansar, 1989, p.237).

The Anganwadi and Mobile Creche programmes in India are examples of alternative models that may well have greater benefits to developing countries than the traditional western models. The strength of the Anganwadi programmes is their ability to link health, social welfare and educational services (MacPherson, 1989, Herron, 1979) The Anganwadi provides a focus for the community and a place where families can bring their children, regardless of their particular problem, and know that the Anganwadi worker
will either be able to help them herself or call upon others who can help. Similarly the Mobile Creche programmes provide a wide range of activities with the emphasis on the involvement of parents and local communities in the provision of services relevant to their children’s needs. This programme grew out of the informal establishment of a small project to provide day care facilities on one construction site. From its original purpose it quickly broadened its scope to provide intensive integrated child care encompassing coordinated services in health, nutrition, recreation, non-formal education, pre-school and adult education, family planning and community services. It also extended its services to adolescents as well as young children (MacPherson, 1987, p.129).

Many programmes, however, continue to be designed by outsiders without reference to local needs, child rearing practices, traditions and customs (Myers, 1992, p.342). According to Robert Myers, a consultant for UNESCO, programme planning and design still 'tends to reflect a “scientific” way of approaching problems, based on knowledge assumed to be universally applicable' (1992, p.342). This knowledge, derived from a western conceptual base, displaces traditional wisdom that may well be more suited to the particular needs of the community to be served by the programme. The assumption is automatically made that 'when middle-class scientific approach conflicts with a folkway, the folkway must be harmful and should be corrected' (Myers, 1992, p.342).

Indeed, policy makers and planners who import models from the west to the rural regions of the Third World seem unaware that these models were developed in the west in an effort to compensate urban children for the loss of naturally stimulating rural environments (Myers, 1992, p.17). Either that, or they simply believe in the inherent superiority of models emanating from
the west. Whatever the reason, western urban trained professionals and bureaucrats are slow to give up western-models as they plan programmes for rural areas and thus, 'fail to recognise and build upon the rich cultural base and the time honoured practices that are known to work well' (Myers, 1992, p.18).

**Child development: Ontology and epistemology**

While the ethnocentric nature of imported models has been recognised for sometime, little attention has been paid to the influence of ethnocentric theories of early childhood education and development that accompanied those models. The ontological and epistemological assumptions that guide this study reflect an orientation to theories of early education and development which has been articulated particularly clearly by Jaan Valsiner, in his work *Human Development and Culture* (1989). Valsiner argues that middle class views of child development are 'culturally and historically specific and are open to change over time in their own social contexts' (1989, p.383). For example, prior to the ascent of psychology as a powerful discipline, understandings of early childhood education in Europe, North America and Britain were based on the philosophies of Robert Owen, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Friederich Froebel, and others who developed their ideas based on experience with children in Europe and North America. More recent understandings of early childhood education and development have been heavily influenced by the discipline of psychology and the sub-disciplines of developmental and educational psychology.

The discipline of psychology as a product of western history is inherently ethnocentric (Valsiner, 1989, p.xvii). Likewise, the sub-disciplines of developmental and educational psychology have, to a large extent, based their theories of child development and learning on the study of white middle class
children living in Europe and North America. This bias has been reinforced by the assumption of genetic determinism inherent in the discipline and the notion that child rearing in western industrialised middle class communities is the 'norm' for the rest of the world to follow (Valsiner, 1989, p.xv). These ideas are then exported to different societies as the 'latest in scientific knowledge' and, thus, undermine important local understandings and insights (Valsiner, 1987, p.383). What this amounts to in many instances is a form of hegemony where the non-middle class populations and non-western populations are not only convinced that their own child rearing methods are faulty, but that the middle class methods of western industrialised countries are inherently superior.

Approaches to child development less likely to result in this particular form of hegemony are approaches that acknowledge the dialectic between individual and society in human development and reject the unidirectional perspectives found in more orthodox developmental psychology (Valsiner, 1989, p.44). The unidirectional perspective is based upon the assumption that genetically pre-programmed behavioural and cognitive functions unfold over time independent of the environment. According to Valsiner, even Jean Piaget, who broke with this tradition by focusing on the child's active construction of reality, reduces the effect of culture to that which merely accelerates or delays the unfolding of the sequence (Valsiner, 1987, p.xvi).

While firmly entrenched within the discipline of psychology, the cultural-historical school of human development, most well known through the work of Lev Vygotsky, was among the first to reject the unidirectional view of human development (Valsiner, 1987, p.62). Cultural-historical thinking emphasises the active role that human beings play in their own development. According to this school of thinking, 'the instrumental function of the person,
who is acting upon his or her environment with the help of tools or signs, changes his or her own development' (Valsiner, 1987, p.60).

Bronfenbrenner’s *Ecology of Human Development* (1979), also deviates from conventional approaches to developmental psychology by focusing on ways in which the social and political climate of any given society, its social and political institutions and the child’s local community and family all interact and influence the developing child who is viewed as an active participant in those interactions. Thus, development is viewed as a progressive mutual accommodation between the growing child and the ever changing environment in which he or she lives (Myers, 1992, p.64). According to Bronfenbrenner, the ecology of human development contrasts with what he describes as Piaget’s “de-contextualised” organism by emphasising the emerging and evolving nature of the child’s perception of reality as he or she interacts with the social and physical environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.9). While the ecology of human development, according to Bronfenbrenner, lies at the point of convergence among the disciplines of the psychological, biological and social sciences, this framework does not give serious consideration to the importance of the cultural organisation of children’s environments (Valsiner, 1989, p.xvi)

The concept of a ‘developmental niche’ (Super & Harkness, 1987) places emphasis on the cultural organisation of children’s environments in their development and builds upon the ecological approach by providing a framework from which to analyse the cultural regulation of the child’s micro-environment (Myers, 1992, p.69). This framework highlights the influence of culture, the physical and social setting, the beliefs and attitudes of caregivers and the customs and practices of child care and child rearing on the development of the young child. The child is viewed as an active
participant in his or her own development who acts upon and contributes to the environment in which he or she lives. The child abstracts the social, affective, and cognitive rule of the culture from his or her interactions with the various 'niches' of childhood in the wider environment (Super & Harkness, 1987 cited in Myers 1992, p.69).

Both the ecology of human development, and the developmental niche frameworks have been criticised by Robert Myers for presenting a homeostatic model of human development in which there is a search for equilibrium (1992, p.68). According to Myers, in times of rapid social change children often have to accommodate two or more opposing ideological and cultural 'blue prints'. For example, in rural areas in developing countries, where the culture and values of the school represent a different ideological and cultural blue print from that of the home, children are often caught between different and sometimes opposing sets of values and beliefs (1992, p.68). Both the ecological and developmental niche frameworks propose a mutual adjustment between different and conflicting blue prints regulating the different spheres of a child's life. Myers argues, however, that in times of rapid social change the process of mutual accommodation will not work in the same way as suggested by these frameworks, 'the adjustments required are too big; they are, in fact, fundamental changes requiring major leaps rather than small adjustments' (Myers, 1992, p.75).

Even so, the developmental niche framework does, at least, enable examination of the disequilibrium caused by rapid social change at the level of the micro-environment (Myers, 1992, p.69). An examination of the three sub-systems, that is, the physical and social setting, the beliefs and attitudes of the caregivers and the customs and practices of child care and child rearing provides a way of understanding why some important child care practices are
lost and why others, introduced by 'outsiders', are not as useful as once thought (Myers, 1992, p.70). The importance of acknowledging the cultural organisation of the micro-environment lies in its ability to position traditional child rearing practices as the base from which to build upon in times of rapid social change. Thus, this approach rejects the notion of a universal child for whom a universal programme should be directed (Myers, 1992, p.68). It is from this same position that the present study of the development of early childhood care and education programmes in Malaysia was first conceptualised.

**A personal perspective**

Twenty years of working in and teaching about programmes for young children in a variety of social and cultural contexts had convinced me that assumptions made about the superiority of western theories and methods of child rearing are indeed spurious. From my own experience, programmes that acknowledge the multitude of ways of achieving the same results, that respect children's families, cultures and ways of doing things, are more successful than those that impose prescriptions developed in another world. It was not, however, until the middle of the 1980s that my interest in the provision of programmes responsive to the different cultural and social contexts in which children live extended to include programmes delivered to children in developing countries.

This interest first emerged from reading the feminist critiques of development policies and institutions during the early 1980s (Rogers, 1980, Boserup, 1970). According to Barbara Rogers, a leading feminist writer, Third World development policies and institutions were embedded with western perceptions and ideologies regarding the role of women (Rogers, 1980, p.52). Following the second world war 'maternal deprivation' ideology, emanating
from the work of Dr. John Bowlby (1953), was a powerful force in legitimising the domestication of women and became a potent element of male ideology in the west (Rogers, 1980, p.91). The resulting gender bias led to the failure of western trained development planners to acknowledge the important economic role played by women in Southeast Asia. Programmes designed for women by male planners were often tailored to suit the social role assigned to them by the planners rather than to meet the real needs of the women concerned (Rogers, 1980, p.91).

Whilst the feminist literature was concerned with the needs of women, the associated but separate needs of children were, to a large extent, overlooked. Rogers maintained that well known child welfare agencies were the most active advocates of special projects for women which focussed on 'the mothering role' and consequently assumed that the needs of young children should be met in the home by their mothers (1980, p.91). My own interest stemmed from the question that, if the programmes for women were based on ethnocentric conceptions of the role of women, to what degree were the programmes for young children sensitive to the cultural and social community in which they lived?

In 1990, my interest in this question was renewed when I was asked to teach a unit called Family and Society as part of a Malaysian Fellowship Programme run by one of the local colleges in Perth. The unit was part of a specially designed condensed six month course in child care for three Malaysian home economics teachers. The purpose of this course was to enable the three teachers to return to Malaysia and develop early childhood training courses in vocational schools throughout Malaysia. During the semester, the question of the appropriateness of what is taught in Australia to the Malaysian context became a source of continual debate between the
students and myself. I became concerned with what appeared to me to be the uncritical acceptance of Australian models and practices by the students who, in turn, assured me they were able to adapt whatever they learned in Australia to the local Malaysian environment. However, I remained unconvinced, of my own ability to avoid charges of cultural and professional imperialism in my attempts to ‘Malaysianise’ the unit content.

In 1992, the ethical and moral questions surrounding the enrolment of overseas students in what amounts to ethno-specific vocational courses arose once again when the university announced its decision to deliver an ‘off shore’ certificate programme in early childhood studies to Southeast Asia. The programme was designed by Australian service providers and taught by Australian child care personnel travelling to Malaysia. The 'off shore' delivery of this course without consideration for the local context worried me greatly. However, I found myself in a perplexing position. If I took the stance that it was inappropriate to run such a course in Southeast Asia I could be accused of paternalism in believing I had the authority to decide what was 'good' for another party. On the other hand, if I condoned the delivery of the course, I could also be charged with contributing to what has been described as a western hegemony of lifestyle and perception which is produced and reinforced through education and literature (MacPherson & Midgley, 1987, p. 141).

This study then, is an attempt to come to grips with these questions and to properly understand the processes at work in the adoption and adaptation of western theories and models and to tease out the consequences for children and their development. The study is as much about the relationship between the developed industrialised world of the north and the developing and newly
industrialising world of the south as it is about the development of child care and education programmes in Malaysia.

**Review of literature**

Most of the research regarding children’s services in developing countries is largely descriptive (Bettelheim & Takanishi, 1975, Feeney, 1992) or normative (Herron, 1979, Veda 1983). Bettelheim and Takanishi (1975) provide one of the earliest comprehensive descriptive accounts of early schooling in Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand and India. In this study, Bettleheim and Takanishi (1975) highlight the need for consistent frameworks to be applied to descriptive studies so that useful comparisons can be made. They also emphasise the need for interpretive studies that do not assume that similar events or objects have similar meaning for individuals, both across and within cultures. According to Bettleheim and Takanishi, consideration of social contexts in which children’s services are located is an untapped area within the early schooling field. What is needed, they argue, is an in-depth examination of small numbers of programs in each country that will provide a better understanding of early schooling as it actually operates, than studies which attempt to provide a ‘global’ overall picture which may not characterise any single program in the country (Bettelheim & Takanishi 1976, p.169).

Such an in-depth study is provided by Elizabeth Wilson’s (1987) doctoral thesis which examines the adoption of the Montessori method of early education in India. Wilson’s thesis rests largely on drawing analogies between the Montessori method, Ghandian principles and the growth of the Indian nationalist movement. She argues, quite convincingly, that the Montessori educational philosophy was well matched to the political climate of the time and, thus, explains why Montessori managed to sustain its
popularity in India despite the strength of the nationalist movement. The thesis, however, lacks serious analysis of the power relationships inherent in the adoption of Montessori by what was an essentially middle class elite, and the 'watered down' version common amongst the rural poor. While Wilson acknowledges the existence of the 'colonial native' she does not really examine the 'mentality' of the colonised which may have made them susceptible to the influence of western educational philosophy. She also does not seem to think that Ghandi's eventual stance against the Montessori method was an important indicator of its role in perpetuating cultural imperialism. Nevertheless, this study does provide important information regarding the development of Montessori kindergartens in India.

In recent years, cross national studies of early childhood care and education programmes that examine the social and cultural context in which programmes develop, have become popular amongst researchers in Europe and North America. Much of this interest has been prompted by the need to provide solutions to sensitive public policy debates taking place in many western industrialised countries. For the first time, western policy makers, researchers and policy analysts are looking beyond the confines of their own experience in an effort to understand the complexities inherent in the provision of early child care and education programmes. Policy debates in many western industrialised countries are motivated by questions concerning the role of the family as a primary socialising agent, the quality of care provided outside the home environment, the role of early childhood education and the long term effects of non-parental care. Indeed this last issue, the long term effects of non-parental care, has been at the forefront of policy debates in North America and Australia since Belsky's controversial research findings regarding the negative effects of non-parental care in the late 1980's (Belsky & Rovine, 1988)
Much of the current interest in cross national research is motivated by the need to understand the incongruity of the widespread development of non-maternal child care programmes for young children in countries still deeply entrenched in the ideology of motherhood and notions of maternal deprivation. For example, Edward Melhuish and Peter Moss in their cross national examination of day care in five countries, argue that research which considers the long term effects of non-parental care must consider the social context in which that care takes place (1991, p.6). These authors maintain that many local or national studies take social context for granted and that the strength of cross-national studies is the ability to examine the social context of non-parental care in some detail.

Similarly, a cross-national study of child care involving eighteen countries edited by Lamb, Sternberg, Hwang and Broberg in 1992, uses non-parental care as its organising principle. Each case study considers the phenomena of non-parental care and the historical, economic, ideological and demographic factors that have influenced its shape and form. However, the focus on illustrating the widespread use of non-maternal care in countries all over the world inhibits discussion of the power relationships inherent in the interactions between western industrialised countries and developing or newly industrialising countries. This is particularly evident in the report on the development of child care and education programmes in East Africa which acknowledges the influence of western theories and models in the development of post-transition programmes which were based on western ideas of childhood and individual development (Harkness & Super, 1992, p. 457). There is, however, little analysis of how or why these models were adopted or the consequences of their adoption.
Similarly, the case study of children’s services in the Cameroon by Barne Nsamenang, provides a telling description of the influence of colonisation on traditional forms of child care. Nevertheless, the editors fail to place importance on such events and merely conclude with the statement that child care research will be able to guide policy making effectively only when researchers acknowledge that the effects of child care on children and families are, to a large extent, specific to a given culture (Broberg & Hwang, 1992, p.520).

Missing from this equation is the effect of imported theories and models on the development of children in different social and cultural contexts.

Stephanie Feeney’s publication, *Early Childhood Education in Asia and Pacific* (1992) also provides comprehensive descriptive accounts of the early childhood services in China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. In the final chapter of this collection of case studies, Feeney discusses the difficulty in attempting to compare programmes and services for children across such a diverse range of countries. She does, however, draw out some important issues and implications of the way programmes have developed in many of these countries. She notes, for example, that colonial administration and foreign contacts had a 'tremendous impact' on the development of programmes in many countries (1992, p.300). Feeney, also draws attention to the presence of western educational theories and philosophies which she maintains had an 'extensive and profound influence on early education in Asia'. Even so, there is no real examination of the consequences of either colonisation or the importation of western theories and models for these countries. The assumption seems to be that the adoption of western theories and models is inevitably positive, providing a 'common
base from which programs have evolved as well as a possible foundation for
dialogue and for mutual understanding' (1992, p. 313). Feeney points out in
her conclusion that administrative fragmentation, inadequate funding and gaps
in service provision are a recurring theme in many of the countries but does
not attempt to draw any connections between this situation and the experience
of colonisation and western imperialism

While the case studies provide an important insight into programmes in the
Asia-Pacific rim, they do not provide the interpretive analysis that Bettleheim
and Takanishi argue is necessary if any sense is to be made of the similarities
and differences in the programmes of various countries. According to
MacPherson and Midgley (1987), the entire field of comparative social policy
lacks interpretive and analytic accounts of the development of social
programmes in the Third World. This, they argue, is due to the ethnocentric
assumption that theories developed in the west are equally applicable to
developing countries.

Moncreiff Cochran, editor of the *International Handbook of Child Care
Policies and Programmes* (1993), provides a conceptual framework for
identifying the origins of the development of early childhood care and
education policy and programmes in countries throughout the world. The
framework is constructed from case study data from twenty-nine countries
and encompasses demographic, economic, cultural and social factors that
have influenced the form and content of various policies and programmes.
Cochran cites industrialisation, women's subordinate position to men, labour
shortage and supply, immigration and migration, poverty, inadequate
facilities for preparing children for school, changing birth rates, lack of

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3 It should be noted that only the early case study provided by Bettleheim & Takanishi, reports on
programmes in Malaysia, none of the more contemporary studies make mention of Malaysia.
health provision infrastructure, and political change and conflict as the major reasons for the development of public early childhood education and care programmes. While he considers political change and conflict, Cochran does not examine the unequal power relationships in the interactions between rich and poor and between developed and developing countries. This is despite graphic reports from Zimbabwe regarding the colonial administration's 'deliberate attempt to destroy or weaken the social fabric of Shona society' and the importation of western models of early childhood care and education which were 'not appropriate for the cultural and economic environment in Zimbabwe' (Chada, 1993, p.615). Similarly, the report from Peru included in this collection, explains how social policy in Peru has largely been dominated by external pressure and models imported from industrialised countries resulting in 'a motley collection of norms and institutions with poor mechanisms of coordination, monitoring, and evaluation' (Anderson, 1993, p.149).

Limiting the analysis to public sponsored child care programmes also overlooks the important role of the private sector in influencing both the form and content of public programmes in many developing countries. In Tanzania, for example, the growth of elite preschool programmes for the middle class in urban areas served to 'undermine the growth of development-orientated social service based day care centres' (MacPherson 1982, p.159). According to MacPherson, 'the “demonstration” effect of services used by a privileged minority gave a second-rate appearance to those provided for the majority' resulting in a lack of faith in the rural day care centres and pressure for more academic, formal programmes from parents (MacPherson, 1982, p.159).
Implicit in the analysis provided by Cochran (1993), is the application of the industrialisation - convergence hypothesis and the assumption that industrialisation rather than colonisation is the root cause of the development of child care and education programmes. However, industrialisation in itself does not account for the decimation of traditional child rearing practices that has occurred in so many developing countries. What is lacking in these accounts is a conceptual framework that enables a thorough analysis of the evolution of early childhood education and care programmes that takes into account the experience of colonisation and western imperialism shared by so many Third World countries. Conceptual frameworks based on the experience of western industrialised counties will inevitably fail to properly elucidate the causes and consequences of the import of western theories and models of service delivery to the developing world. Likewise, frameworks that attempt to include all the influential forces in every country will inevitably reduce the importance of unequal power relationships in the interaction between ‘First’ and Third World countries which become subsumed under the categories of politics and conflict.

A framework advocated by MacPherson and Midgley which draws on the experience of many developing countries, includes theories of western imperialism, colonisation, and diffusion. Diffusion is defined by these writers as the ‘transfer of welfare ideas and practices to the developing countries largely through the experience of colonialism and the perpetuation of dependency relationships in the post-colonial world’ (1987, p.108). Diffusion may be construed as the passive adoption or acculturation of western ideas. Understood within the colonial and post-colonial context, however, diffusion represents the insidious destruction of local values, norms and traditions by a powerful colonial presence that can only legitimise its existence by presenting a ‘mythical portrait of the colonised’ as lazy, inferior, backward
and wicked (Memmi, 1974, p.83). This mythical and degrading portrait is presented so powerfully that the colonised begins to accept it as true, and thus, denounces local ways and social institutions in order to adopt those of the coloniser. As Memmi explains,

the colonized seems condemned to lose his [sic] memory..... Now that the colonized's institutions are dead or petrified. He scarcely believes in those which continue to show some signs of life and daily confirms their ineffectiveness. He often becomes ashamed of these institutions, as of a ridiculous and over-aged monument (1965, p103).

The conceptual framework for this study includes an examination of the contextual influences identified by Cochrane (1993) as important factors in the development of programmes for young children. These are the social, demographic, economic, political and ideological influences and include government initiatives and bureaucratic functions. Added to this framework is the experience of colonisation and continued western presence in the form of development programmes, commercial enterprise, and education and training institutions. As Cochrane points out, the differences in both the meaning and form of programmes are not only the result of different causal factors, but also the result of different mediating factors (1993, p.628). Cochrane lists eleven possible mediating factors but does not consider the processes involved in both the adoption and possible adaptation of programmes to the local context. It is important to understand the processes involved in the adoption and adaptation of foreign programmes in order to understand the power relationships inherent in the interaction between developing countries and foreign influences.

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4 Mediating factors listed by Cochrane include cultural values, beliefs and norms, family and religion, socio-political and economic ideologies, public welfare approach, national wealth (GNP), Intra-societal variations, rate and timing of urbanisation, other family policies, advocacy, and institutional multiplexity or Unity.
For example, there has been much debate regarding the importance of Indian religions in the formation of cultural patterns in the Southeast Asian region (Osborne 1983, p.23). What seems clear from these debates is that some, but not all, foreign influences have been absorbed into Southeast Asian cultural traditions. One reason for the selective adoption of foreign influences is that facets of an alien culture that were particularly useful and could be accommodated by the host culture with ease, were often borrowed and adapted to the local context. Therefore, the process of ‘cultural borrowing’ may be described as a process of acculturation rather than a process of diffusion. Indeed, this is the central argument made in Wilson’s thesis regarding the success of Montessori programmes in India discussed earlier. The point being that, it cannot be taken for granted that the meanings of a particular configuration, theory or practice in the west will remain the same once they are adopted and adapted to a different context.

The conceptual framework used in this study enables an examination of the processes involved in the adoption of western theories and models as well as the role of various agents in the development of programmes for young children in Malaysia. The framework also provides the means by which the power relationships inherent in the development of particular policies and programmes can be examined. In the final analysis, the framework provides an opportunity to examine some of the possible consequences for young children’s development in Malaysia and may explain why indigenous models of service delivery are slow to take off in many developing countries. The following diagram provides an overview of the conceptual framework and research methodology. The research methodology is discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Contextual Influences
- Indigenous
- Colonial
- Western Development agencies
- Western Education
- Commercial
- Other?
- Ideology
- Meanings and Aspirations
- Malaysian Society
  - Demographic
  - Political
  - Cultural
  - Economic

Processes
- Cultural borrowing
- Diffusion
- Industrialisation
- Western
- Imperialism
- Other?

Agents
- Government officials
- Professionals
- Entrepreneurs
- Development planners
- Other?

Outcomes
- Models
  - a
  - b
  - c
  - d
- Service Delivery

Research design

Sources
- Documents
  - Conference papers
  - Government reports
  - Published works
  - Unpublished reports
  - Brochures and pamphlets

Data
- Key informants
  - Government officials
  - Parents
  - Teachers/caregivers

Field Work
- Visits to services
- Attending meetings

Data
- Descriptions of programmes and services including ideology, history, roles and expectations
In summary, during the last fifty years, many developing and newly industrialising countries have experienced a rapid expansion of care and education programmes for young children. The rapid expansion of these programmes, which are often modelled on those from the west, together with new understandings about the nature of children’s development, has led to concern that these programmes do not meet the needs of children living in very different social and cultural environments. In many developing countries there appears to be a reluctance to accept indigenous models of care and education that respond to local needs. A search of the literature indicates that, although there are many case studies which describe the evolution of programmes in developing and newly industrialising countries, none examines the unequal power relationships inherent in the interactions between the ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries or the consequences of those relationships for young children. Thus, they are not able to explain the apparent resistance to indigenous models and the predominance of western models of service delivery.

The following case study examines how and why western theories and models of service delivery have influenced the evolution of programmes for young children in Malaysia. The thesis is arranged in six chapters. Chapter one has provided an overview of the issues relevant to the study with regard to the expansion of programmes for young children in Malaysia and the influence of western theories and models of service delivery on the development of those programmes. This chapter has also outlined the conceptual framework for the study. Chapter two provides a discussion of the methodology used in the study and gives a detailed account of the research process and data analysis. Chapter three examines the colonial legacy and discusses the influence of colonial capitalism, colonial education policy, theories of cultural deprivation
and the ideology of individualism on the development of policies and programmes aimed at providing care and education for young children in Malaysia. Chapter four examines the development of state assisted programmes in the rural areas and urban squatter settlements. This chapter makes particular reference to specific government objectives under its New Economic Policy, and the way in which the form and content of these programmes was shaped by western theories and models of service delivery. Chapter five examines the expansion of the private sector in the provision of programmes for young children and discusses the role played by western trained professionals and opportunist entrepreneurs in the widespread adoption of programmes originating in the west. This chapter also discusses government responses to these programmes and the implications for young children in Malaysia. Chapter six provides an overview of the research findings and concludes that the industrialisation-convergence hypothesis is not an adequate explanation for the similarities between programmes for young children in Malaysia and those found in the west. Rather, the predominance of western models of service delivery in Malaysia is due to the pervasiveness of western hegemony that originated in the colonial experience and was perpetuated during the 1970s and 1980s by western trained advisers, policy makers, early childhood professionals and commercial entrepreneurs.
Chapter two

Methodology

Research methodologies abound in prescriptive, normative statements about how research should or should not be done. Indeed the function of most social science methods texts is to provide recipes for doing social research - and such texts are known in the trade as cookbooks. Yet all practising social researchers know that social research is not as it is presented and prescribed in those texts. It is infinitely more complex, messy various and much more interesting. These accounts do, of course, also expose the soft underbelly of social science - unprotected by the hard shell of quantitative science as normally presented to the world through those texts, books and monographs. That social science also takes place in a political context you would never guess from the methodology texts (Bell & Encil, 1978, p.4).

Written almost twenty years ago, the above discussion regarding the discrepancy between the reality of the research process and how it is presented in the methodology texts, provides a measure of how far the debates have progressed. No longer is there a pretence that social research is clear cut, or that it can be assigned an easily identifiable box which labels and defines it. Epistemological boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred; current perspectives such as pragmatism and critical theory have qualities of both interpretivism and postpositivism (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.4). Even so, it is still generally accepted that three separate paradigms, that is the positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms, predominate in the social sciences. There is less consensus, however, about what constitutes social science methodologies (Sarantakos, 1993). While there is little argument regarding the distinction between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the distinctions between qualitative methodology and what have been described as the 'emerging' more critical feminist and marxist methodologies are less clear (Sarantakos 1993, p.57).
Despite the continuing debate over what constitutes methodology many social science researchers are taking a more pragmatic approach to their work and refusing to be restricted by paradigmatic and methodological prescriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.5). In acknowledging that the research process rarely conforms exactly to a standard methodology, the onus is on the researcher to establish the credibility and trustworthiness of the research and ensure its accountability by making explicit both the research process and the procedures for data analysis.

This study, while it does not conform to an easily identifiable qualitative methodology, uses qualitative methods of data collection and analysis within a critical framework. Data collection comprised of informal interviews and observations in the field, key informant interviews and examination of documents relating to Malaysian development issues and early childhood care and education programmes in Malaysia. The data was analysed using a thematic approach with continual interaction between understandings emerging from the data, presentation of these understandings to the key informants who either confirmed or refuted them, and the examination and re-examination of the relevant literature.

The epistemological assumptions underlying the study include the social construction of reality through which individuals create their own meanings. These meanings are often influenced by dominant power relations and ideologies. Thus, hegemony can be an influential force in the way people understand the world. What is important to the research process is how people perceive their reality and the way in which their perceived realities are exploited by others. The researcher cannot experience the reality of the participants first hand. The only way of knowing how people perceive reality
is it to ask them. Thus, field work must be an essential part of the research process.

The decision to locate the study in Malaysia was pragmatic. The capital city of Kuala Lumpur lies just five hours from the city of Perth, in Western Australia, and has easier access by air than many other cities within Australia. In addition to the ease in which Malaysia can be visited undergraduate studies in Southeast Asian history and culture provided the researcher with a useful understanding of Malaysian society and most importantly, supplied some insight into the limitations of a foreign researcher in a foreign country. The purpose of this study was not, however, to study 'the other', but rather to better understand the moral and ethical implications of exporting educational materials and courses to developing and newly industrialising countries for commercial gain. Although English is still used widely in Malaysia, Bahasa Melayu is the National Language and the only language, other than English, that the researcher is able to speak. This together with previous studies relating to the region made Malaysia the logical choice as the 'case to be studied'.

While the decision to locate the study in Malaysia was primarily pragmatic there were sound methodological reasons for studying the development of programmes in Malaysia. Malaysia is a 'Third World' country on the brink of full industrialisation and shares a colonial heritage with many other developing and newly industrialising countries throughout the world. Over the last fifty years, Malaysia has also experienced the rapid expansion of programmes for young children common to many other countries. Thus, Malaysia may be described as 'a typical case' in that it shares many of its characteristics with other developing and newly industrialising countries.
Case study research examines social action as it occurs and as it is interpreted by respondents in the natural setting (Sarantakos 1993, p.261). The importance of events and processes being interpreted by the respondents is particularly important in a study conducted by a foreign researcher in a foreign country. An important element in this study was the need to understand how and why western theories and models of service provision influenced the development of early childhood education and care programmes in Malaysia. The strength of the case study method is that it enables the researcher to concentrate his or her efforts on a specific instance or situation in order to identify the various interactive processes at work (Bell 1993, p.8). Of particular interest in this study are the interactive processes at work between Malaysian policy makers and service providers, the process of industrialisation and the experience of colonisation and western imperialism. For these reasons, the case study method offers the most appropriate research model for this study.

**Establishing 'trustworthiness'**

Trustworthiness refers to the internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity of the study (Guba, 1981). Traditionally these terms have been used to describe the trustworthiness of studies belonging to the rationalistic or positivistic research paradigm and can be replaced in naturalistic or qualitative research by the terms credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba 1981, p.246). The credibility of the study, that is the internal validity, rests with the question 'do the data sources find the inquirer’s analysis, formulation and interpretations to be credible' (Guba 1981, p.247). In order to safeguard the credibility of this study multiple methods of data collection have been utilised throughout the research process with emerging understandings and hypotheses constantly presented to participants for verification.
The ability to transfer the findings to another context is a pertinent issue for this study as it is hoped that it will be able to contribute to some general understandings of the processes at work in the development of child care and preschool programmes in other newly industrialising countries. The classical view of external validity and generalisation is not helpful in trying to find ways in which the study can have relevance to situations beyond the one immediately studied (Schofield 1993, p.205). However, there are two ways in which a qualitative study can increase the possibility of transferring findings from one context to another. The first is to collect thick descriptive data and the second is to use theoretical sampling. The term 'thick description' was used by Denzin (1978) to refer to 'information about the context of an act, the intentions and meanings that organise action, and its subsequent evolution' (Dey, 1993, p.31). The description of the phenomena must then include information regarding the context of the action, the intentions of the actor and the processes in which action is embedded (Dey, 1993, p.31). Theoretical sampling is governed by emergent insights about what is important and relevant and is cumulative as concepts and their relationships amass during the continuing process of data collection and analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p.178). This study has endeavoured to employ both the collection of thick descriptive data and theoretical sampling to assist in the possibility of transferring its findings to another context.

In this study, the replication of results in the experimental tradition is replaced by the concept of dependability or the stability of the data and its analysis. Strategies that can be used to ensure dependable findings include: step wise replication, the use of overlap methods of data collection, establishing an audit trail and arranging for a 'dependability audit' by an independent auditor (Guba, 1981, p.86). In this study step wise replication
was not possible as the study was carried out by a single researcher. However, the overlap method of collecting data using documented sources and in depth interviews, and the development of an audit trail have been used to safeguard the stability of the data and interpretations in this study. In the overlap method of data collection, two or more methods are combined to compensate for any weaknesses in individual methods. When similar results are derived from the different methods the case for stability and dependability are strengthened (Guba, 1981, p.86) Instability of the data could have resulted from the frailty of human memory, however, documented sources were able to corroborate the sequence of particular events as they were relayed by the informants. Thus the stability of the data was established.

Confirmation of the data and its analysis in this study replaces the rationalistic pursuit of objectivity (Guba, 1981, p.87). Confirmation can be arrived at through triangulation and the practice of reflexivity by the researcher. Triangulation of the data in this study is achieved through the combination of key informant interviews, where informants from a variety of political and ideological perspectives were able to describe events and processes as they experienced them, and various documented sources which were written from different perspectives by different people for a range of different purposes. The epistemological assumptions of the researcher have been made clear and are both implicit and explicit in the conceptual framework adopted for this study.

**Ethics**

As with all research endeavours there were important ethical issues that needed to be taken into account during this study. Firstly, it was possible that information provided by participants may have been construed as sensitive by some parties. Thus, the issue of protecting participants, particularly the key
informants, from possible social injury needed to be addressed (Berg 1989, p.137). In the first instance, all key informants were asked to read and sign written consent forms before commencing the interviews. These consent forms outlined the purpose of the study, the participants right to withdraw at any time, the nature of the questions that would be asked and assurances regarding the confidentiality of the data. As anonymity is impossible to safeguard in qualitative studies such as this, where the researcher knows all the participants, confidentiality is a serious consideration. Confidentiality not only refers to ensuring that sources are not identified by name, but also, that they cannot be identified through occupation or setting. In this study, it was important to be able to identify different government programmes and private sector organisations, thus it was necessary to ensure that information collected about the different programmes and organisations was secured from many different sources so that no one informant could be identified with a particular organisation or government department.

The nature of field work also raises issues regarding informed consent. During field work much of the data is collected during informal interactions with people in the field. For these reasons, it was important to enter the field as an overt rather than covert investigator (Berg 1989, p.136). This required all introductions to include a description of the research project and the role of the researcher. On occasions where informal interactions with people in the field revealed information which was not public knowledge the participant was asked to take part in a formal taped interview. This occurred on four different occasions, three of the people agreed to take part in a formal interview and the fourth declined. None of the information gained from this fourth person has been used in the study. All the usual precautions were taken to secure the data, including the use of case numbers rather than names on all transcripts and the destruction of appointment lists made during field
work. All tapes and transcripts remained under lock and key while travelling and during data analysis. While a local 'confidant' made an important contribution to understanding the local context and assisted in interpreting different events during the course of the field work, great care was taken at all times to protect the confidentiality of all informants.

Scope of the study
Time constraints limited the scope of the study to federally based government sponsored programmes, services provided by the private sector, which were represented by two professional associations, and three individual early childhood services. Federally based programmes are those that have their main administrative headquarters in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and do not come under the auspices of state governments. Programmes beyond the scope of this study are those provided by religious organisations such as the TASKI (Islamic Kindergartens), large corporate organisations, the Bandaraya (City Hall), service organisations such as the army and police and the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (Felcra). An important omission in this study are the Sang Kecil kindergarten programmes that operate in some of the poor urban areas of Kuala Lumpur. Although small in number, these programmes are examples of integrated child development programmes that combine income generating activities, health and nutrition and kindergarten programmes (Low & Yusof, 1991).

Sources
An important source of data for this study were the informal observations and discussions with policy makers, teachers, caregivers and parents conducted during field work in Malaysia. Prolonged field work enables the researcher to overcome the distortions that may result due to the presence of the researcher and provides time to test for ethnocentrism, bias and faulty
perceptions of both the inquirer and the informant (Guba 1981, p.247). An extended period of field work also provides time for the researcher to develop theoretical sensitivity to the phenomenon under study. While a lengthy continuous period of field work in Malaysia was not possible, the field work component did consist of three distinct phases that extended over an eighteen month period. Each phase lasted between three and five weeks constituting three months field work in total. The field work was orientated towards establishing the research environment, building up contacts and interviewing informants (Sarantakos 1993, p.258).

The primary purpose for the first phase of the field work was to develop a greater theoretical sensitivity to the subject under study. The development of theoretical sensitivity to the phenomenon or event under study is an essential part of the research process. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the ability to give meaning to the data and to distinguish between what is relevant and what is not (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p.42). Theoretical sensitivity evolves through the examination of the appropriate literature, professional and personal experience and the analytic process (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p.43) In this instance, the researcher had a great deal of personal and professional experience regarding the development and provision of child care and preschool services in England and Australia but had no previous experience in Malaysia. Whilst there is much literature regarding the development of programmes in Britain and Australia there is relatively little available regarding the Malaysian context. Thus, it was important to read as much local material as could be found, to visit services and talk to policy makers and professionals in the field. Informal discussions were held with three policy makers responsible for state assisted early childhood programmes and fifteen services were visited during the first phase of the field work.
In total, nine preschool services and six child care services, one of which was a home based service, were visited. The pre-school services were sponsored either by government departments or by the private sector. The child care services were all sponsored by the private sector. While fifty percent of the services were located in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, three were located in a small town in the state of Selangor, three in a rural area of Selangor and one in Alor Setar, a town in the far north of Malaysia. The visits lasted from between one and three hours with two full days being spent in one preschool and one child care programme. During these visits the researcher was able to observe the children and to talk to caregivers and teachers.

On one occasion, the researcher was also invited to attend a management committee meeting of one of the professional associations involved in the children's services field. This meeting had been convened specifically to formulate a position statement regarding the introduction of new legislation for preschool education in Malaysia. For the most part, apart from the key informant interviews, interactions between the researcher and professionals in the field were informal and designed to gain a general understanding of why services existed and how they operated.

Interviews with key informants took place during phases' two and three of the fieldwork component of the study. In total the sample consisted of four government officials currently involved in the administration and policy development of child care and pre-school services and one representative from a semi-Government organisation, three operators of private child care and preschool services, three teacher/caregivers, one parent and two retired officials who have a long history of involvement in children's services in the area of administration and policy development. In total fourteen key
informants were interviewed and only one person approached to take part in the study refused.

The decision to make key informant interviews a major method of data collection in this study was based on the need to understand the policy-making process. Government policy documents rarely give comprehensive accounts of why a particular policy was adopted nor do they usually identify the source of policy ideas (Nesbit 1994, p.40). In order to understand how and why western theories and models of service delivery influenced the development of early childhood programmes in Malaysia, it was necessary to identify both the source and reasons for particular policy decisions. Thus, it was necessary to interview people who had both a direct and indirect role in shaping the policies that led to the development of particular programmes. Interviews with members of the 'policy elite' provided a detailed knowledge of the policy making process and helped make sense of the gaps in knowledge gained from analysing the available literature and policy documents (Nesbit 1994, p.39).

The task in interviewing an 'elite' group is not to take a random or representative sample but rather to persuade as many of its members to take part as is feasible (Nesbit 1994, p.41). As each informant played his or her own unique role in the policy making process there was no point in looking for a representative sample. Thus, the criterion for selection and the procedures used to make contact with the informants became an important part of the sampling process. The criterion used for the selection of informants in this study were the length of time they had been involved in children's services in Malaysia and their status within the field. All informants (with exception of the caregivers interviewed) had at least fifteen years experience in the field. Several had worked in the area for over thirty
years. Eight informants held, or had previously held, high ranking positions in relevant government departments or professional organisations recognised by the government. The remaining informants worked within child care or education services recognised by the government.

Snowball sampling was used to identify the informants. Snowball sampling refers to the process of starting the research with a few informants who are available to the researcher. These informants were asked to nominate other people who meet the criteria of the research (Sarantakos 1993, p.139). The nominated informants were then approached by letter to take part in the study. If they were willing, the information was collected from them and they, in turn, were asked to recommend other informants who met the criteria of the study. Usually this process continues until the sample is 'saturated', that is until no new participants are identified (Sarantakos 1993, p.139). The time constraints of this study did not enable saturation to be reached. Although all the key informants identified in phase one of the study were able to take part, there were two people identified towards the end of the study who were not contacted. While the study does not seem to be compromised in anyway by the absence of these informants some of the richness of the detail they would have been able to supply would, without doubt, have strengthened the study.

Interviews were arranged for alternate days which allowed time for each interview to be roughly transcribed and analysed before the following interview took place. Interviews lasted from one to two and a half hours with three of the initial key informants being reinterviewed towards the end of the study. Interviews were semi-standardised and tape recorded. This type of interview involves the use of a number of pre-selected questions or topics which are asked in a systematic and consistent order. Even so, the format
provides interviewers with the flexibility to follow up on points of interest and to probe beyond the answers first given by the informant (Berg 1989, p.17).

Interview schedules were drawn up before phase two of the study; one schedule for policy makers and service providers, one for teachers/caregivers, and one for parents. The interview schedule for policy makers and service providers consisted of twelve questions aimed at obtaining information about the development of services in Malaysia. The sequences in which questions are asked provide the formant for the interview and can effect the overall success of the interview. The specific ordering of, phrasing, language, and specific style of the questions depends on the ethnic and cultural traits of the respondent as well as the educational and social level of the subject (Berg 1990, p.20). This is particularly important in a study such as this, where the interviewer and interviewee do not share the same language, ethnic or cultural traits. For this reason the schedule was given to a key informant for comment before any interviews commenced. She was able to advise on word usage, the appropriateness of the questions and those that may be the most difficult for informants. The schedule was then reworded and re-structured so that the most difficult questions appeared towards the end of the interview. Thus, the format for the interview was based on a funnel sequence whereby the questions moved from simple to complex, from impersonal to personal and from general to specific issues (Sarantakos 1993, p.161).

The interview schedules for the teacher/caregivers and parents were translated from English to Malay with the help of Malaysian teacher during phase two of the study. She was able to provide colloquial terms that enabled the questions to be understood easily. The questions focused on the reasons
for working in/using the services, daily routines and activities, what they valued in the services and the relationship between the children, teacher/caregivers and parents.

All interviews were carried out in the place nominated by the informants. Sometimes this was in their own office, frequently accompanied by vast amounts of food, or over lunch in a local eating place and, in one instance, in the respondents own home. The use of a powerful micro tape recorder alleviated most of the effects of being tape recorded. Only one informant commented on her nervousness regarding the tape recorder and she seemed to have completely forgotten about it within five minutes of the interview starting. In all but two of the interviews, a friendly rapport developed during the interview with many of the respondents commenting on how they had enjoyed the opportunity to discuss these issues with someone.

While the initial questions provided the base for all interviews, the transcript from each interview underwent a preliminary analysis before the next interview was conducted. This process is important in the development of theoretical sensitivity during the data collection process. The increasing sensitivity to concepts, their meanings, and relationships, evolves as the researcher intersperses data collection with data analysis (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p.43). Insight and understanding about a phenomenon increase as the researcher interacts with the data. This comes from collecting and asking questions about the data, making comparisons, thinking about what is seen, making hypothesis and developing mini theoretical frameworks about concepts and relationships (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p.43). In this way each interview builds upon the last and provides the opportunity for propositions to be tested and added to during the data collection process.
This was very much evident in the interview with the last key informant at the end of the study which proved to be the longest single interview. Once the initial questions had been covered many tentative propositions emerging from the analysis of the interview data over the research period, were tested and verified. This was also the purpose of re-interviewing the first three respondents towards the end of the study. Re-interviewing enabled the clarification of emerging themes and the testing of propositions that were either verified or negated by the respondents.

Verification of the data from the key informant interviews was also achieved through analysis of the documented sources. Documented sources have been used in both qualitative and quantitative studies for many years, however, the critical paradigm has brought a different strand to the documentary tradition (Jupp & Norris 1993, p.39). Documented sources provide the critical researcher with a way of examining the relationship between the documents and social structure. The documents collected in this study not only provide a way of triangulating the data collected from key informant interviews but also provided information regarding class relations, social control, social order, ideology and power through the examination of the discourses they represented (Jupp & Norris 1993, p.39).

The strength of documented data is that it is produced independently rather than at the request of the researcher. One of the major characteristics of documented sources is that they represent the views of the authors or, as in this study, the views of the organisations for which they were written (Sarantakos 1993, p.209). In some studies this may be seen as a limitation but in a study such as this, where it was important to understand the ideological basis and rationale for particular policy decisions, it is not so much a limitation but a positive strength. In this study four types of
documents were used. Most were ‘official documents’ that is, they were originally written for a particular limited audience but were later made available in the public domain (Berg 1990, p.90). These documents consisted of descriptions of organisations and their missions and goals in the form of reports and brochures; proceedings of seminars and conferences relating to early childhood education and care held in Malaysia between 1970 and 1992; research reports prepared by the organisations represented in the study and, finally published works regarding development issues in Malaysia. Whilst most of these sources were published, one informant produced a suitcase full of unpublished reports and photographs from under her bed. Apart from the published works on Malaysian development issues, the documented sources provide primary data in that they give an account of child care and preschool services at the time of writing (Bell 1993, p.68).

Verification of the data was also assisted by the three different periods of field work which ensured there was ample time for reflection and reflexivity between each period. This was particularly important in phases’ two and three of the research where understandings and propositions gained from the previous field work periods were presented to local participants for verification. An important aspect of verifying understandings and propositions arising out of the data for a researcher undertaking research in a foreign context, is the involvement of a local ‘confidant’ with whom the researcher can discuss the study in depth (Moskos 1976, p.133). The background information such confidants are able to supply makes it easier to build isolated pieces of data into a coherent picture and prevents the researcher from misinterpreting findings. These confidants are usually, but not always, individuals whose ideological viewpoints are close to those of the researcher (Moskos 1976, p.133).
In this study the 'host' family for phase two and three of the fieldwork fulfilled the role of the 'confident'. The head of the family, a woman who had worked for many years in the Malaysian Public Service had a professional interest in child care and preschool education but was only indirectly involved in the field. This woman and her adult family were able to play the role of confidant easily and were instrumental in the success of the field work. They provided a constant source of support and advice as well as help with interpreting local customs and perceptions.

Data analysis

The focus for this study was the phenomena of the evolution of early childhood care and education programmes in Malaysia. However, before questions can be asked about how and why the phenomena exists and what the consequences of its existence are, the phenomena itself has to be fully described. Thus, in the absence of any literature on the development of programmes in Malaysia, the first task of analysis was to reconstruct the history of the development of programmes for young children in Malaysia from the memories of informants and whatever documented material was available. The process of reconstruction resembled that of putting together an enormous jigsaw puzzle without a copy of the original picture for a guide. The anchors of the puzzle, or the corners if the analogy is carried a little further, became the organisations and programmes that currently exist, the picture becoming clearer as each piece of the puzzle provided new information about how the services and programmes had evolved over time.

In the first instance, field work journals and notes from the visits to services in the first phase of field work provided the initial starting point from which to choose informants to be interviewed. After each interview a first level analysis was undertaken to identify emerging patterns, themes and gaps in the
informants own knowledge. During the interviews the informants often provided clues about where to find missing information or knowledge about a particular event or aspect and these were followed up after the interview. In subsequent interviews emerging patterns and themes were explored further and gradually the full picture began to appear. In this way a 'thick description' of the phenomena was constructed.

The conceptual framework outlined above provided the means by which data was categorised and interpreted. While the framework was constructed before data collection commenced it was also revised and modified as a result of the first level analysis of the data. For example, the category ‘Malaysian Society’ appeared in the original framework but was further refined to include sub-categories relating to the economic, demographic, cultural, and political influences once the first level analysis had been completed. Analysis of the discourse relating to government policy and the delivery of early childhood programmes contained in the interview tapes and documented sources provided further information regarding the influence of different power relationships and the role of prevailing ideologies in the way in which programmes and services were developed in Malaysia. An important part of the analytic process was the interaction between understandings emerging from the data and the constant examination and re-examination of the relevant literature.

Problems encountered in the research process

Some of the limitations of field work lay in the need to gain entry to the field under study. Entry is inevitably arranged through someone, and a bargain must be made to get in (Brownie 1976, p.72). Thus, gaining entry often involves a compromise as the researcher immediately becomes beholden to the person providing access to the field. In this study, entry was negotiated
through a small private company in Kuala Lumpur. This company had approached the university about a collaborative arrangement regarding training and consultancies in Malaysia. The director of the private company offered to provide accommodation for the researcher and to assist in gaining entree to the field. Initially this appeared to be a mutually beneficial arrangement. The company made appointments for the researcher to visit services and talk to key people in the field. This was good public relations for the company and enabled the company director to extend her networks and promote the interests of her company. The researcher was keen to establish equality and reciprocity in the relationships between researcher and participant and this seemed like a good way of establishing such a relationship. The company director was also able to provide an interpretation service to the researcher on the few occasions it was necessary.

While this arrangement worked well initially, after two weeks tensions in the arrangement became apparent. These tensions are illustrated by entries made in the personal field work journal which referred to frustrations stemming from a lack of control over arrangements and appointments, the feeling that access to informants was dependent on the degree to which the host found them useful and that the association of the researcher with this particular company caused suspicion and nervousness on the part of some potential informants. These frustrations were further compounded when the company director proceeded to advertise the services of her company during discussions with potential informants. In her own words, she simply 'piggybacked' the researcher who was accorded respect and hospitality on the basis of her association with an Australian university (Field notes 14.12.1993 - 3.1.94). Despite the frustrations inherent in this period of fieldwork, it proved invaluable in gaining knowledge and understanding of the
complexities of the local situation, not least of which, was understanding who was 'in' and who was 'out'.

Although different lodging arrangements were made for the rest of the field work problems of entry were to reappear in phase two and three of the study. The third informant contacted in phase two of the study agreed to take part in the study but indicated that a research pass from the Economic Planning Unit would need to be obtained. This was the first time this requirement had been raised in any of the discussions about the research project with influential government officials and academics in Malaysia. Even so, the failure of the researcher to check requirements with the Malaysian High Commission before the start of the project was an embarrassing error of judgement. The protocol for undertaking research in Malaysia is to submit the research proposal to the Malaysian authorities and to have a Malaysian counterpart or approved supervisor. If the authorities find the proposal acceptable they will issue a research pass. Some of the embarrassment felt by the researcher was allayed by two key informants, both of whom held influential positions and yet, were unaware of the requirement to submit the proposal to the Economic Planning Unit. At this point the study was suspended until a research pass was obtained from the Malaysian authorities and a Malaysian supervisor found.

By phase three of the field work the project was formally recognised by the Malaysian authorities. Even so, problems with entry were not over. Unfortunately, the association between the private company and the university was a complicating factor in gaining entry in phase three. In this phase of the project interviews were secured with two of the key informants only after the intervention on behalf of the researcher by her supervisor at the Malaysian university. These informants were suspicious of the study and
believed that it may be connected with the commercial venture between this company and the Australian university.

Although fault lay with the researcher in not checking the protocol for research in Malaysia in the first instance most of the difficulties surrounding entry and access to informants are symptomatic of the question being posed by the research endeavour itself. The particular sensitivities of government officials towards the research in question can only be understood fully in the light of the findings of the study as they are explicated in the following chapters.

In summary, this study utilises qualitative methods of data collection and analysis within a critical framework to analyse the evolution of programmes for young children in Malaysia. Data sources include key informant interviews, informal interviews with teachers and parents, observations in the field and documentary sources. Every effort has been made to secure the confidentiality of informants and to establish the trustworthiness of the research process.
Chapter three

The colonial legacy

The legacy left by the British colonial administration in Malaysia included widespread underdevelopment of the rural population, a dichotomy between Malay political power and non-Malay economic power, and a divisive education policy that discriminated on the grounds of ethnicity and geographic location. The ethnic tensions created by colonial social and economic policies resulted in civil unrest and ethnic rioting on the streets of Kuala Lumpur in 1969. In 1970, the Malaysian government formulated a New Economic Policy designed to establish social order through the promotion of national unity, employment opportunities and economic growth. The rationale for many of the government initiatives under the New Economic Policy reflect colonial beliefs and attitudes regarding 'the Malay character' which was deemed to be 'weak, lazy and indolent'. In particular, discussions regarding the provision of programmes for young children were informed by ideologies of individualism and theories of cultural deprivation which blamed individuals rather than structural inequalities for poverty and underdevelopment.

The influence of colonial capitalism

From the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese in 1511, until independence in 1957, The Malay states came under the control of various colonial administrations. The beginning of colonial capitalism in the Malay states, however, is marked by the signing of the Pankor treaty in 1884 between the Malay chiefs of Perak and the British administration (Maaruf, 1988, p.43). 'Colonial capitalism', as it is used here, refers to a social order created by the
domination of a self serving British government which controlled access to capital as well as the administration and economic life of the country (Maaruf, 1988, p.ix).

Colonial capitalism in the Malay states led to prosperity for the colonial elite and widespread underdevelopment of the rural population (Maaruf, 1988, p.51). This dualism was further complicated by the ethnic division represented in the dichotomy between the urban and rural areas. The Chinese, for example, were predominantly involved in tin mining. As the mines expanded, towns were established around the mine sites to accommodate the needs of the miners, thus the Chinese became principally an urban community (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.136). Although the Malays were known to be competent traders in their own right they were effectively displaced by the Chinese in the town economy. According to Andaya & Andaya, various arguments have been put forward for the displacement of the Malay traders by the Chinese. These arguments include beliefs about the Malays' unwillingness to work for wages, the superiority of Chinese business acumen and different cultural attitudes towards work (1982, p.136). There is no doubt however, that the British administration favoured the Chinese traders because they gave the government a ready source of revenue from the taxes on opium, pork, pawnbroking and the sale of spirits (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.136).

For the most part, Indian immigrants were confined to the plantations. Many of the European planters had previously worked in Ceylon and preferred Tamil labourers to Chinese labourers (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.179). The Tamils were considered to be more familiar with British rule, more accustomed to discipline than the Chinese and more willing to work for wages than the Malays. Consequently, Indian migration focused on providing
labour for the plantations. The Malays, who were discouraged from cultivating any of the new cash crops by British policy which applied a 'no rubber clause' to Malay agricultural lands, were confined to the agricultural areas and the production of rice (Maaruf, 1988, p.51).

This dualism between urban and rural economies created by colonial capitalism was further defined by a divisive education policy instituted by the British administration during the late nineteenth century. Described as *laissez faire* (Andaya and Andaya 1982, p.237), and as 'a deliberate attempt at safeguarding colonial and imperial interests' (Maaruf, 1988, p.237), colonial education policy was formulated in order to maintain social order and to prepare the different ethnic groups for the roles ascribed to them by the British administration. The aristocratic Malays were to assist the British in their administration of the country and, therefore, given access to elite English schools (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.237). The policy of maintaining a useful and prestigious role for the Malay elite had both practical and political implications. The stability of Malay social order required the continuation of a Malay peasantry controlled by a traditional Malay elite (Seng, 1975, p.7). The colonial government, therefore, had a deliberate policy of providing only very basic primary vernacular education to the rural Malays (Maaruf, 1988, p.57). The purpose of their education was simply to improve the bulk of the people, and to make the son of the fisherman or peasant a more intelligent fisherman or peasant than his father had been, and a man whose education will enable him to understand how his lot in life fits in with the schemes of life around him (British Director of Education 1920 cited in Maaruf, 1988, p.55).

Thus, the dualistic philosophy of the colonial government ensured that while it promoted capitalism on the one hand, it preserved the non-capitalist,
traditional and feudal world of the rural Malays on the other (Maaruf, 1988, p.55).

For the most part, the Indian and Chinese communities were left to their own devices regarding the education of their children with no long term educational policy formulated for them. Believing that they were transitory, the colonial administration held the view that it was 'not the proper policy for the Government to undertake the education of the alien, temporary population in their own language' (Annual report MFS, 1901 cited in Seng, 1975, p.45). Their purpose was solely to provide labour and commerce to the colony before eventually returning to their homelands. In short, colonial education policy was directed at serving the needs of colonial capitalism rather than the needs of the different ethnic groups.

In the absence of any state provision, the Chinese and Indian communities developed their own school systems. The Chinese established both primary and secondary vernacular schools that were run by district committees, clan associations, financial patrons and teachers who relied on student fees for their salaries (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.223). The Indian community developed primary schools but no secondary schools for their children. The majority of Indian schools were run by missions, estates, and in the rural areas by committees of local residents (Arasaratnam, 1979, p.185). These schools were poorly funded and suffered from inadequate facilities and untrained teachers. The only provision for secondary schooling for Indian children, apart from the elite English schools that were out of reach for the average rubber tapper, were the Christian missionary schools (Seng, 1975, p.51). These schools, while accessible to Indian and Chinese children in the urban areas were prevented by British colonial policy from setting up in the Muslim areas. The mission schools were, therefore, mostly confined to the
urban centres resulting in less than 30% of Tamil school children having access to secondary education between 1924 and 1937 (Seng, 1975, p.102).

In 1921, the colonial government in Malaya came under pressure from the British administration in India to improve the living and working conditions of Indian labourers on the Estates. Amendments to the Labour Code transferred the powers that had previously been held by the Controller of Labour in Malaysia to an Agent of the Indian Government Resident in Malaya (Seng, 1975, p.46). Under this amendment this Agent was given the power to direct the Estate owners to provide child care facilities for the labourers' infant children.

Little is known about the conditions of these early child care centres on the Estates. Reports of the schools built by the Estates indicate that they were makeshift, often little more than out-houses or sheds, and lacked facilities and trained teachers (Seng, 1975, p.45). It is probable that much the same conditions prevailed in the early child care facilities. Indeed, by the 1960s, the poor conditions of the child care centres on the Estates were acknowledged by the Malaysian government which imposed minimum standards for their construction and maintenance under the Workers (Minimum Standard of Housing) Act of 1966 (Yusof, nd, p.4).

The lack of concern for anything other than the children's physical well-being on the part of the plantation owners and the British administration has been described as a deliberate attempt to reproduce a placid and subservient work force (Navamukundan, 1993, p.247). There is little doubt that colonial conditions in the Estates were perpetuated long after independence, and in some cases continued throughout the 1980's. According to Navamukundan, a representative of the National Union of Plantation Workers,
this colonial philosophy of ensuring a supply of workers, who will replace retired plantations workers and are willing to respond to subsistence wages, has unfortunately continued after Independence in spite of repeated calls by the National Union of Plantation Workers for improvement in the quality of infant and child care in the creches. This improvement would enable plantation workers' children to compete on an equal opportunity basis in the mainstream of economic and social development in the nation (1993, p.248).

In 1923, the Labour Code was amended to include a legal requirement for plantation owners to provide schools for the children on the Estates. Although some Estates already provided schools this was the first legal provision for the education of Indian children that the colonial administration had made (Seng, 1976, p.46).

By the 1930s, there was widespread dissatisfaction amongst the various ethnic groups with such an inequitable system. The Chinese population in the Malay states had increased to equal that of the Malays. The sheer number of Chinese, the use of texts from China and the unification of different Chinese groups through the introduction of Kuo-Yu (the national language) as a common medium of instruction, facilitated the development of a strong Chinese consciousness among the Chinese communities (Solomon, 1988, p.24).

At the same time, a new Malay intelligentsia was emerging from the Sultan Idris Training College. Malay academics originally employed to teach vocational skills in gardening and horticulture encouraged their students to undertake a critical evaluation of Malay society and to develop a new Malay consciousness (Seng, 1976, p.88). At this time, the Pondock schools\(^1\) in the rural areas were also providing a strong focus, through Islam, for the

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\(^1\) Pondock (hut) schools were so named due to the students living in huts around the residence or local mosque of their religious leader.
reaffirmation of a Malay identity (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.238).
Similarly, the Madrasah schools which had been set up in order to preserve the Islamic identity of the Malays against British imperialism, also contributed to a new Malay consciousness amongst the rural Malays. This rising nationalism among the Malay and Chinese communities led to agitation for increased political rights throughout the 1930s and 1940s (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.238). The outbreak of World War Two and the subsequent occupation of the Malay States by the Japanese prevented the British Administration from responding to the demands of both the Malays and the Chinese.

After the end of the war, the British returned to Malaya with a commitment to facilitate the formulation of a united Malayan independent nation (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.261). In 1949, as part of the preparations for independence, the colonial government commissioned the Barnes Report on Malay education (Arasaratnam, 1979, p.187). The Barnes Report advocated a national policy for developing a unified national culture which would prepare the nation for the replacement of English by Malay as the language of administration (Solomon, 1988, p.26). It also recommended a national school system using Malay and English as the languages of instruction. This report received heavy criticism from both the Chinese and Indian communities who argued for the maintenance of home languages in the early years of school, believing strongly that the child's education should begin in their home language (Arasaratnam 1979, p.187).

In preparation for independence, the colonial administration began to devolve power to the Malayan people. In 1955, the new national Malayan Alliance government took office (Arasaratnam, 1979, p.189). This government regarded both language and educational policy as integral to developing a
united society based on Malay cultural traditions (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.278) One of its first tasks was to commission a second report on education, known as the Razak report. This report blamed the separate education systems developed under British policy for the divergent and distinct outlooks held by the different ethnic groups (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.239). It further outlined a proposal to create a national education system aimed at bringing all communities together under one system (Arasaratnam, 1979, p.189). Under this proposal each ethnic group would have their own vernacular primary schools that would also teach either English or Malay as a second language (Arasaratnam, 1979, p.189). These recommendations went some way in appeasing the dissatisfaction with the previous Barnes report felt by the Indian and Chinese communities.

The post war period and subsequent reorganisation of the education system had important implications for the Christian mission schools (Wong, 1973, p.132). Being open to all children regardless of ethnicity, these schools were believed to play an important part in the integration of the different 'races' in Malaya. They were, therefore, allowed to continue operating as long as they agreed to become part of the national education system and to revise their curriculum in line with the policy of Malayanization (Wong, 1973, p.132). This entailed a replacement of English syllabuses and textbooks with their Malay equivalent. According to Frances Wong, Associate Professor at the University of Malaya, the mission schools were also advised to be more 'with the people'.

In the past the English educated had tended to regard the rest of the masses as outside his [sic] circle. Now it is his duty to regain contact with the masses' (Straits Times cited in Wong, 1973, p.133).

Whether there was a direct link between the restructuring of the mission schools in line with government policy and the development of mission
kindergartens during the 1950s is difficult to ascertain. What is clear, however, is that both developments took place at about the same time. One of the first kindergartens in Kuala Lumpur, for example, was the Asunta Kindergarten established by Catholic sisters in the early 1950s. This kindergarten not only provided a pre-school programme for young children, but also led to the development of privately owned kindergartens in Kuala Lumpur.

Mrs. McWilliams, the wife of a British engineer, was instrumental in establishing privately owned kindergartens in Kuala Lumpur and the new city of Petaling Jaya. She gained experience in kindergarten work by helping the Catholic sisters at the Asunta kindergarten (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94). She then opened St. Anne's, one of the first private kindergartens in Kuala Lumpur. St. Anne's was renowned for its exclusivity because of the very high fees charged which limited enrolments to children from middle and upper class families. Although enrolment was open to anyone who could afford the fees, the employment of teachers recruited from Australia and Australian trained Malaysian teachers made the kindergarten particularly attractive to expatriate families (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94).

Throughout the 1950s kindergarten programmes, such as the one set up by Mrs. McWilliams, were established in the urban centres. These kindergartens provided half-day educational programmes for children aged between two to six years, whose parents could afford to pay the fees. Thus, the disparity in educational opportunities available to the different groups based on ethnicity and geographic location instigated by the colonial

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2 The three informants who said they could remember the first kindergartens named the Asunta kindergarten as one of the first, if not the first kindergarten in Kuala Lumpur. These informants all told the same story about Mrs. McWilliams.
administration was paralleled in the development of private kindergartens in the urban centres during the 1950s.

In 1960, the government undertook a review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Razak Report (Arasaratnam 1979, p.190). This review was chaired by the Minister of Education, Abdul Rahman Talib and its recommendations became known as the Rahman Talib Report. This Report recommended the closure of the Government assisted Chinese medium secondary schools and the continuation of both English and Malay medium secondary schools (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.279). In 1961, based on recommendations from the Razak and Rahman Talib Reports, the first comprehensive Malaysian Education Act was instituted. At this time there was still little interest in preschool education provided by the churches, missions and private kindergartens, even though 8,163 children under six years of age were known to be enrolled in kindergartens throughout Malaysia (UNESCO 1960). The lack of interest in preschool education meant that it remained outside the jurisdiction of the Education Act until 1971.

The implementation of the Rahman Talib Report's recommendation to abolish the national type Chinese medium secondary education in 1961 incensed the Chinese community who feared domination by the Malays (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.279). Over the proceeding years the ability of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) to represent the interests of the Chinese community within the Alliance was called into question by members of the Chinese community who felt that too much was being sacrificed in the name of national unity (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.279). Hence, education and language, the issues that encapsulated the role each ethnic group would play in a new Malaysian nation, became the contentious issues of the 1969 Federal elections (Andaya & Andaya 1982, p.250).
Although the Alliance held government in 1969, it lost many important seats and control of several important states (David, 1989, p.91). The success of the Gerakan, Democratic Action Party, People's Progressive Party and PAS Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party, denied the Alliance government its two-thirds majority which it needed to make constitutional changes with ease. Not only had the Alliance Government lost the support of Chinese and Indian voters, it had also lost support amongst the rural Malays. While the Chinese and Indian supporters of the opposition celebrated their success, militant Malay groups called for the resignation of Tenku Abdul Rahman blaming his efforts to accommodate the demands of the other ethnic groups for the election results (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.281). On the 13 May 1969, the interracial tensions that had been slowly building up during the previous years exploded on the streets of Kuala Lumpur (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.280). Fighting continued non-stop for four days and intermittent acts of communal violence persisted for another two months.

Thus, colonial capitalism aided by a divisive education policy led to a polarisation between the different ethnic groups and to widespread underdevelopment of the rural population. The Malaysian government's response to the civil unrest was to announce a State of Emergency and to formulate the New Economic Policy. The two principal objectives of the New Economic Policy were the restructuring of Malaysian society so that ethnicity was no longer identified with economic function and the eradication of poverty regardless of ethnicity (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.284). One of the strategies used by the government to meet these objectives was to establish pre-school programmes in the rural areas and urban squatter settlements (EPRD, 1985, p.1).
Malay capitalism, cultural deprivation and the ideology of individualism

Up until 1979, the only programmes for pre-school children in Malaysia were the child care programmes found in the Estates and the kindergartens operated in the urban areas by churches, missions and private individuals. These kindergartens were modelled on European kindergartens and nursery schools and used the methods advocated by Froebel, Maria Montessori and 'other great educators' (UNESCO, 1960). For the most part services were targeted at those who could afford to pay. The form and content of the programmes evolved through a process of cultural diffusion. Mrs. McWilliams, for example, used the knowledge and understanding gained from experience in an English Catholic kindergarten to fashion her own kindergarten. In turn her kindergarten became the site of cultural transmission for other women who later opened their own centres.

While many women gained experience in kindergarten work by assisting others, the wealthier Chinese, Indian and Malay women went to Britain to undertake courses in pre-school education at the Montessori colleges and the Froebel Institute in London (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94). A Montessori or Froebel training was considered very prestigious at the time. Centres run by these women tended to be popular with expatriate families who were used to children starting school two years earlier than the Malaysian system allowed. As the popularity of these kindergartens grew, western theories of early childhood education were disseminated and adopted widely throughout Malaysia.

The process of cultural diffusion, however, is not simple. According to Stewart MacPherson, a leading third world social policy analyst, one of the most 'vicious and insidious' forces at work in the process of cultural diffusion in many developing countries is the 'psychology of oppression' (1987, p.56).
The 'psychology of oppression' is described by Albert Memmi (1965) as the destruction of self-esteem in indigenous peoples resulting from the colonial relationship. Memmi argues that, in order to seek legitimacy for the advantages secured by the coloniser at the expense of the colonised, the coloniser must believe in the inherent inferiority of the colonised. Indeed, the success of colonisation is dependent upon the coloniser’s belief in the inferiority of those they oppress, and the manifestation of that inferiority by those they oppress (1965, p.8). As MacPherson explains,

colonised peoples, oppressed and dependent, were convinced both of the superiority of western culture and in many instances, of the inherent worthlessness of their own (1987, p.56).

In many instances, the colonised internalised colonial descriptions of themselves as 'worthless, lazy and indolent', and thus, came to believe that these characteristics were indeed inherent in the indigenous population (Memmi, 1965).

Extracts from a report made by Perak's inspector of schools in 1895 confirms the ascription of the myth of 'the lazy native' to the rural Malays by colonial government officials. Explaining the benefits of the Malay vernacular school, the inspector of schools maintained that,

after a boy has had a year or two at school he is found to be less lazy at home, less given to evil habits and mischievous adventure, more respectful and dutiful, much more willing to help his parents, and with sense enough not to entertain any ambition beyond following the humble home occupations he has been taught to respect (Collinge, 1894, cited in, Seng, 1975, p.16).

As Maaruf suggests, the 'myth of the lazy native' seems to be an essential component of colonial capitalism,
by negatively stereotyping natives who do not serve its interests, colonial capitalism justifies and legitimatise itself. The injustice of colonial capitalism is camouflaged by attributing the backwardness of the natives to their indolence and negative attitudes (1988, p.81).

It was not only the colonial administrators who subscribed to this 'mythical portrait of the colonised' to account for the under development of the rural Malay population. Having reaped many of the benefits of urbanisation and capitalism, the Malay elites tended to devalue the traditional world view of the rural Malays and blamed their backwardness for their impoverished situation (Maaruf, 1988, p.62).

It is significant that these same descriptions of the 'Malay character' provide the basis of many explanations for the civil unrest in 1969. According to Khoo, a central theme of the New Economic Policy put the blame for 1969 riots on a decade of mis-development "which paid insufficient attention to Malay backwardness" (1992, p.49). Many political commentators have acknowledged that much of the Government's New Economic Policy was based on sentiments expressed by the current Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir, in his book *The Malay Dilemma* published in 1970 (Khoo 1992, p.49). Although this book was banned at the time of its publication and Mahathir expelled from UMNO for three years, it nevertheless provides an excellent insight into the prevailing ideology of the time.

In the *Malay Dilemma*, Mahathir blames hereditary and environmental factors for the Malay character. For example, he cites the nature of rice cultivation and the Malaysian climate as the cause of a lack of industry on the part of the rural Malay,
rice cultivation, in which the majority of the Malays were occupied, is a seasonal occupation. Actual work takes up only two months, but the yield is sufficient for the whole year. This was especially so in the days when the population was small and land was plentiful. There was lots of free time. The hot, humid climate of the land was not conducive to either vigorous work or even to mental activity. Thus, except for a few, people were content to spend their unlimited leisure merely resting or in extensive conversation with neighbours and friends (Mahathir 1970, p.22).

Mahathir's thesis rest upon the notion that intelligence, diligence and resourcefulness are hereditary characteristics that had, to a large extent, been bred out of the Malays. According to Mahathir, the opulence of Malay society prior to colonial administration and immigration of Chinese traders thwarted the process of natural selection based on the survival of the fittest. 'Even the weakest and least diligent', he argues, 'were able to live in comparative comfort, to marry and to procreate' (1970, p.21).

Mahathir also blamed traditional early marriage and child rearing practices for a lack of resourcefulness on the part of the Malays,

in this sort of society, enterprise and independence are unknown. The upbringing of children is distorted by the well known excessive indulgence of grandparents and the incapacity of the parents to take care of the children. The long term effect on community and race is disastrous (Mahathir 1970, p.29).

It is significant that this view of traditional child rearing practices had been held by the colonial administration twenty years earlier. The Barnes Report on Malay education in 1951 referred to the 'spoiling' of Malay children by their parents and grandparents. The Report stated that,

Many of the children are not disciplined in any way. They eat when they like and what they like and seldom go to bed before their parents. Physical faults which could be remedied are not attended to, because either the grandparents are prejudiced against modern medicine the
parents are against it, or the child of only a few years "does not want it." (Barnes Report on Malay Education 1951 cited in Boey 1970, p.40).

This view was widely accepted in the early seventies. Not only was it an important part of Mahathir's thesis, but it was also used as an argument for the improvement in maternal education programmes aimed at improving mothers’ knowledge of child care (Boey 1970, p.40).

Mahathir argued that the Chinese, in contrast to the Malays, had evolved into a genetically strong and resourceful people through a process of continuous struggle for survival,

in the process the weak in mind and body lost out to the strong and the resourceful. For generation after generation, through four thousand years or more, this weeding out of the unfit went on, aided and abetted by the consequent limitation of survival of the fit only (Mahathir 1970, p.24)

According to this theory, a clash between the two ethnic groups with very different hereditary and environmental histories was inevitable. Mahathir proposed that the best solution may have been to lift all protectionist policies and let the Malays battle it out with the Chinese. This, he believed, would lead to the survival of the fittest and result in a strong and resourceful society. However, Mahathir argued that his solution would take thousands of years and the Malays, he maintained, could not wait that long. Instead Mahathir proposed a solution,

somewhere in between, in a sort of "constructive protectionism" worked out after a careful study of the effects of hereditary and environment. Until this is done, the deleterious effect of hereditary and environment on the Malays is likely to continue (1970, p.31).
His solution to the 'Malay predicament' was the rehabilitation of the Malays through programmes aimed at urbanisation and the replacement of traditional customs and ways of thinking with those more conducive to the modernisation of the country. Mahathir maintained, that to complete the rehabilitation of the Malays there is a need for them to break away from custom or _adat_ and to acquire new ways of thinking and new systems of values. Urbanisation will do this to a certain extent, but there must be a concerted effort to destroy the old ways and replace them with new ideas and values. The Malays must be confronted with the realities of life and forced to adjust their thinking to conform to these realities (1970, p.113).

What is most significant in relation to the development of child care and education programmes in Malaysia is the ideology of individualism and theories of cultural deprivation inherent in Mahathir's arguments. The ideology of individualism locates the cause of social problems in individual failure and looks to bring about social change by rehabilitating individuals (Williams, p.1989, p.22). Rather than putting the blame for Malay underdevelopment on the dualism intrinsic to colonial capitalism, Mahathir explained the position of the Malays in terms of environmental and hereditary factors that have impeded the development of Malay capitalism (1970, p.113).

Mahathir's emphasis on the need to change the environment, in particular the nurturing environment in which young Malay children were raised, was in keeping with the theories of cultural deprivation gaining prominence in education and social welfare circles in North America at that time. The cultural deprivation hypothesis stemmed from the work of two scholars, McVicker Hunt and Benjamin Bloom, and a misinterpretation of the work of anthropologist Oscar Lewis which focused on Latin American slums (Zigler & Anderson, 1979, p.8). Hunt and Bloom emphasised the importance of
environment, and in particular the quality of mothering, in shaping the intelligence of children between birth and five years. Lewis, on the other hand, identified characteristics common to many ‘indigent’ communities as positive adaptations on the part of individuals and groups to the impoverished social and economic conditions imposed on them by the larger society (Zigler & Anderson, 1979, p.8). However, according to Edward Zigler and Karen Anderson, both influential forces in American social and education policy during the 1960s, the popular interpretation of Lewis’s work, ‘was based on the middle-class belief that those who were culturally different were culturally bereft’(Zigler & Anderson, 1979, p.8). As these writers explain,

social science professionals reinforced these popular misconceptions by creating a stereotype of the American poor family on the basis of very meagre research. According to stereotype, the poor child was deprived not only of the health and nutritional care that the family could not afford, but of proper maternal care and environmental stimulation as well. Poor mothers, (fathers were assumed to be absent) were characterised as immature, harsh disciplinarians, unable to love because of their own dependency needs. The environment was either underestimating (insufficient toys, insufficient interaction and attention) or over stimulating (noise, fighting), or both. Verbal activity in the poor household was supposed to consist of body language, monosyllables, shouts, and grunts (Zigler & Anderson 1979, p.8).

This model of poverty conveniently located its cause within the individual. Thus, strategies for intervention were geared toward changing the individual with regard to skills, cultural traits and intellectual abilities (Stipek, Valentine & Zigler 1979, p.477). Moreover, this approach blames the victim rather than the institutions and structures that may have created and perpetuated poverty within particular communities.

Much of the discussion during the early 1970s regarding early childhood development in Malaysia centred on the effects of environment and
malnutrition on the cognitive development of young children in the rural areas. The underlying assumption was that traditional child rearing practices and environments were inherently flawed and did not equip young children for their part in the development of Malay capitalism.

An analysis of the papers and discussions presented at the National seminar on Planning for Children and Youth in National Development held in Kuala Lumpur in 1970, clearly indicates that theories of cultural deprivation influenced many of the discussions regarding the needs of children and youth in Malaysia. A common belief held by the speakers was that children growing up in the rural areas inevitably suffered from an under stimulating environment which impeded their intellectual development and, therefore, their ability to contribute to the economic life of the country.

Dr. Lim Kiat Boey, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Malaya, explained to the delegates that

Children growing up in the rural areas are often deprived of a stimulating environment. They have few toys and almost no picture books. Since the adults are busy during the day and too tired in the evenings to do anything, the children are not often talked to or taken anywhere. There is nowhere to go, in any case. There is little change in what they see from day to day. The Kampung road is little frequented by traffic and the shops are dull and uninteresting. Children in urban areas are exposed to the daily changes broadcast through the mass media and are often taken on visits to the zoo or gardens and other places of interest by their parents who are free at weekends (Boey 1970, p.39).

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3 See for example the paper by Dr. Atan bin Long delivered at the Seminar on Early Childhood Education held in Kuala Lumpur during 1973.
Suggestions of how to improve the conditions and prospects for young children centred on the extension of the Mother and Child Health Clinics to provide play groups or kindergartens.

These centres can go a long way towards developing in the children a sense of self-reliance, a spirit of adventure and an inquiring mind. Since the aim of development planning is to bridge the gap between the rural and urban areas, it is vital that more of these centres be established in the rural areas (Boey, 1970, p.42).

Many of the discussions also made reference to children and youth as human capital that could either be developed or wasted. For example, the problem of malnutrition amongst young children in the rural areas was described as a matter of concern not only from the humanitarian aspect, but also from the economic angle. A reduction in the learning capacity of the child gives rise to wastage in expenditure on educating and training him. A lower working capacity in his adult life means a smaller increase in national output (Kassim, 1970, p.2).

Likewise the disturbing statistics on infant mortality were also described in terms of wasting the human resources of the country.

The quality of care, therefore, that we afford to our children under five years is not only of crucial importance to the individual child's later growth and personality development, it also has direct relevance to our nation's wealth and man power, and the quality of our adult citizenry. For these reasons alone, we cannot but read with concern the statement that "the figures indicate that at least one third (33.7%) - 1969 of West Malaysia's population die before they reach the age of five years" (Chong, 1970, p.113)

Youth unemployment and the high school drop out rate were also considered major economic problems by seminar speakers. In 1967, the national unemployment rate was approximately 7% with the majority of unemployed being young people aged between 15 and 24 years of whom most had completed two or three years of secondary education (Kassim, 1970, p.3).
Only 1% of children entering primary school in 1956 completed the last two years of secondary schooling in 1967 (Mehmet, 1970, p.62).

Many of the presenters at this Seminar discussed the need for cross-sectoral planning and collaboration between the Ministries of Health, Social Welfare, Education and National and Rural Development. Encik Mohamed Sherriff bin Mohamed Kassim, the representative for the Economic Planning Unit, expressed the sentiments of many of the speakers when he explained that,

one of the main causes for the gaps which existed were due to the tendency under sectoral planning for Ministries to neglect those areas of child development which do not fall within their normal areas of responsibility (1970, p.3).

The seminar also recognised the need for a central agency to be the umbrella body which took responsibility for planning and co-ordinating services for children and youth. Suggestions made at the seminar were to establish a National Planning Council for Children and to extend the role and responsibilities of the Malaysian Council for Child Welfare. Subsequent to the seminar, the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports was reorganised to provide more emphasis on youth activities in Malaysia and a National Youth Consultative Council was established. No such council materialised for the planning of young children's needs even though the recommendations from the seminar stated tha,

[P]articular attention should be given to the first five years of a child's life in terms of building his or her physical, emotional, mental and social development since traumatic psychological experience can affect his or her adult life. As such kindergartens should be established in rural areas (not just in the urban areas) and such kindergartens must be properly supervised by government so as to ensure that all children can have a healthy start to life (MCDS 1972, p. vi).
In 1972, in response to concern over the disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes in rural and urban populations, the Education Planning and Research Division (EPRD) of the Ministry of Education conducted a nation wide study of 'School and Society' (Inf. 4 1: 15.1.94). In 1973, the Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka, Ministry of Education published a report of the findings of the research which became known as the 'Drop Out Study'. The report recommended a major overhaul of the country's education system including a wide reaching programme of compensatory education. Recommendation 18 made particular reference for the need for compensatory pre-school programmes. The recommendation stated that, compensatory educational services should be provided to help remedy early educational disadvantage. Allocation of funds for compensatory services could be based on the socio-economic status of the people as well as rural location. By this we mean, the poorest section of the population, especially those in rural areas, are the people who should get the benefits of compensatory services. Compensatory services should be concentrated at the pre-school and lower primary school levels. This is in combination with adult-parent-education....(Drop Out Study 1973, p.74).

This recommendation was made despite the study's findings that the self perception of students as disadvantaged was a more important indicator of the school drop out rate than socio-economic status (Sim 1977, p.144). It may be argued, therefore, that the political incentive to provide the same opportunities to preschool children in the urban areas to those in the rural areas was more influential in the formulation of this recommendation than the study's own findings.

Certainly, concern over the disparity in educational opportunities for preschool children in the rural areas resulting from the development of private kindergartens in the urban centres, was voiced by delegates at the Seminar on Early Childhood Education held in Kuala Lumpur after the
release of the Drop Out Study in 1973. A paper delivered by the Deputy General of Education Malaysia pointed out that... 

[In] spite of the fact that we begin our formal education at the age of six there are in the country, in Peninsular Malaysia alone, 510 registered kindergartens established by the private enterprises. These kindergartens give education to some 50,000 children below the age of six. Without even attempting to analyse the kind of curriculum adopted by these schools, it is fair to presume that by their sheer number and size, they have become an accepted feature of our education. In other words there is a need for it (Noor, 1973, p.2).

Of particular concern to government officials was the impact that kindergarten experience seemed to have on the success of children in the primary schools. ‘Express’ classes were introduced in 1961 to enable the more able students to complete their primary education in five rather than six years. By 1973, 90% of the children who benefited from the express classes had been to kindergarten before commencing their primary education (Noor, 1973, p.1).

Even so, the Deputy Director-General of Education, cautioned against the assumption that the provision of pre-school programmes on a national basis would automatically improve the situation in the schools. Arguing for structural reforms, he attributed the high school drop out rate to wider social and economic inequalities and urged the delegates to examine the wider implications of such a policy.

I submit therefore, in considering early childhood education at pre-primary level, our task is more than merely providing education in the form of kindergartens. We need to consider more than just extending what is available to the town children to all. In other words, by establishing kindergartens alone, all over the country, giving whatever education, even if it is based on sound educational principles may not necessarily solve our problem (Noor, 1973, p.2).
According to the Deputy Director General, in purely educational terms there was no doubt that children could start their education at a much younger age. He argued, however, that this would entail a complete restructuring of the education system which would not necessarily lead to an improvement in either the school drop-out rate or the social and economic position of the rural poor. Indeed the Deputy Director General appeared to be more concerned with improving the quality of lower primary education rather than the provision of state funded pre-school programmes and argued for the consolidation of existing educational programmes rather than an expansion of programmes. He also argued that the early childhood years should be considered a continuous period of development between three and nine years of age. As he explained,

the argument for this approach is that there is little good to be derived in putting the spot-light on the years before primary school if one loses sight of the improvement needed in the lower primary classes. In our context, perhaps, this is the crucial area where we need to examine, since this area perhaps forms the foundation of our educational effort (Noor, 1973, p.3).

Representatives from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation also warned against adherence to the cultural deprivation hypothesis and the assumption that programmes designed for middle-class children in the urban areas were appropriate for children living in the rural areas. Providing examples of the Foundation's work in Jamaica and Australia these consultants explained that they were forced to recognise that for one thing, these socially different children did not in fact have an impoverished experiential background. We indeed were the impoverished ones. We were too impoverished in

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4 The Bernard Van Leer Foundation is a large international aid organisation that specialises in supporting developing countries in the provision of early childhood care and education programmes.
imagination and insight to recognise that the children's experiences could only be regarded as impoverished if we accepted the middle-class child as the norm (Grant & Alford, 1973, p.171).

Despite these warnings from the Deputy Director General of Education and the consultants from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, theories of cultural deprivation had a major influence on the shape and form of programmes designed for young children in the rural areas and urban squatter settlements during the 1970s. The development of these programmes will be discussed in some detail in the following chapter.

In summary, colonial capitalism in the Malay States resulted in ethnic polarisation, widespread underdevelopment of the rural population, political instability and an inequitable education system that discriminated on the basis of ethnicity and geographic location. The disparity in educational opportunities available to children living in the rural and urban areas was further exacerbated by the colonial conditions in the plantation child care centres and the development of European style kindergartens in the urban centres during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1970, the Malaysian government formulated the New Economic Policy with the objective of maintaining social order while bringing about a restructuring of society through the promotion of national unity, employment opportunities and economic growth. However, through a process of cultural diffusion, colonial beliefs and attitudes regarding the 'Malay Character' had become part of the dominant ideology which encompassed notions of individualism and theories of cultural deprivation which blamed individuals rather than structural inequalities for widespread poverty and underdevelopment. Thus, discussions regarding the development of programmes for young children under the New Economic Policy focused on the provision of compensatory education and the establishment of European style kindergartens in the rural areas despite arguments made by the Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Education
and consultants from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation against such a proposal.
Chapter four

State assisted programmes

In the absence of any commitment from the Ministry of Education to provide preschool education, state assisted kindergartens were established by the newly formed Community Development Division (Kemas) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Unity Board and the Settler Development Division of the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) during the early 1970s. These kindergartens were set up to meet specific government objectives which included the 'rehabilitation' of the rural Malays and the promotion of national unity. The form and content of these kindergartens was heavily influenced by British and American approaches to early childhood education. In particular, theories of cultural deprivation popular in North America at that time, were a powerful force in deciding the compensatory nature of the Kemas and Unity preschool programmes. The following chapter provides an analysis of the development of the Felda, Kemas and Unity programmes with particular reference to government objectives contained within the New Economic Policy, and the influence of western theories of child development and early education in the evolution of those programmes.

Social order, the promotion of national unity and the 'rehabilitation' of the rural Malays

Following the ethnic rioting in 1969, the government declared a state of emergency and directed all administrative powers be centralised under the control of a National Operations Council. In an effort to improve relations between the government and its electorate, the National Operations Council
immediately established the National Unity Board in the Prime Minister's Department (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.281). The Board's charter was to establish a new national ideology based on the concept of national unity and to formulate new social and economic programmes. These programmes were to be aimed at eradicating poverty and bringing about a restructuring of society so that economic function would no longer be identified with ethnicity (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.281). On Independence Day the following year the National Ideology, the Rugunegara (Articles of Faith of the State), was publicly declared.

Our nation, Malaysia, being dedicated to achieving a greater unity of all her peoples; to maintaining a democratic way of life; to creation 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; we her people; pledge our united efforts to attain those ends guided by these principles,

- Belief in God
- Loyalty to King and Country
- Upholding the constitution
- Rule of Law

One of the first programmes to be implemented by the National Unity Board was the Community Relations Programme. The purpose of this programme was to improve relations between the government and its electorate by providing 'a channel of communication between the Government and the people' (Inf.11 1:19.7.94).

In 1970, as part of the post riot restructuring of government departments, the adult education division of MARA (Council for Indigenous People) was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's Community Development Division (Inf. 9 1: 13.7.94). The Community
Development Division (Kemas) had a close affiliation with the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), which was a leading power in the government. According to Crouch, a former lecturer in Political Science at the National University in Malaysia, the Kemas officers became instrumental in securing the rural vote for the ruling Barisan National alliance government.

The Kemas programme involved adult education classes in civics and various other useful skills like cooking, nutrition, hygiene and so on. But in practice Kemas officers were full-time propagandists for the government during election campaigns. Moreover, UMNO leaders regularly made it clear that village officials identified with the opposition would be dismissed while villages voting for the opposition would be in danger of losing development funds (1992, p.29).

The implementation of the New Economic Policy also enabled the government to use patronage to secure the support of the rural community. As Crouch explains,

government patronage was used blatantly to win support for UMNO. Relatively well-off farmers affiliated with UMNO almost always controlled local Village Development and Security Committees and the government-sponsored Farmers' Association through which government aid was channelled in principle to the village as a whole or to the very poor but in reality to UMNO supporters (1992, p.28).

The Village Development and Security committee was the lowest rung in the State Government's administrative hierarchy (Karim, 1982, p.17) The committee is chaired by the village head who was nominated by the district office and paid a nominal fee for services to the community. Traditionally village heads were known as Penghulu, a position which was often inherited and sanctioned by the head of State (Karim, 1982, p.3). Members of the Village Development and Security Committee were elected mainly on the
basis of their political allegiance to the ruling party. According to Karim, a Malaysian anthropologist,

it was not unusual for villages who supported the opposition parties to be denied access to development projects because the financial and technical aid was channelled to villages that supported the ruling party (1982, p.4).

Thus, the Village Development and Security Committees were a powerful force in the development process.

The first state assisted kindergartens were established by Kemas in 1970 under the supervision of the Village Development and Security Committees. The Kemas kindergartens were known as TBKs, short for TABIKA (Child Play Group).\(^1\) Every TBK had, and still has, its own management committee known as the Jawatankuasa TBK which is directly answerable to the Village Development and Security Committee (Rauf, 1994, p.3). The TBK committees is composed of the village leader, parents and representatives from various groups including other government departments and the Village Security and Development Committee.

Through their close links with the Village Security and Development Committee, the preschool management committees played an active part in local politics. The function of the preschools, however, was not simply to secure the rural vote for the government. The objectives for the preschool programmes indicate that they had an important role in the 'rehabilitation' of the rural Malays. The objectives not only referred to the needs of the children, but also, to the need for parent education and the employment of rural youth (Othman & Ibrahim, 1975, p.2).

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\(^1\) TABIKA is the shortened form of Taman Bimbingan Kanak Kanak
The need for the TBK programmes was argued on the basis of:

- Lack of early childhood educational facilities in rural areas, and expensive facilities in urban areas.
- Period covering ages 4 to 6 years is crucial for life-long physical, mental, and personality development.
- The existence of imbalances between the culturally, socially and economically advantaged and disadvantaged groups
- Poor home environment in the rural areas.
- Lack of exposure to stimulating educational and development experiences for children in rural areas.

(Othman & Ibrahim, 1975, p.3).

Thus, the rationale for the TBK programmes was based upon theories of cultural deprivation and the need to provide rural children with the same opportunities as children attending kindergartens in the urban centres.

Analysis of the role of the TBK teachers, however, indicates that much of their work entailed co-curricula activities aimed at ‘rehabilitating’ the villagers. The teachers were referred to as Pemaju Kampung (Village Developers) and later as, Pemaju Masyarakat (Community Developers) rather than teachers; an indication that their roles extended well beyond those normally ascribed to pre-school teachers. The Permaju Kampung were the secretaries of the preschool committees and were expected to report back to the Village Security and Development Committees on matters relating to the preschool programmes. They were also responsible for the running of the preschools, supervising the preparation of meals, communicating with parents and other voluntary agencies and ensuring that the buildings were maintained by the committees (Rauf, 1994, p.4). Most importantly, their duties included providing informal education to parents, in particular to the women, on matters relating to home economics and child care. According to a Kemas policy paper,
The whole idea of TBK is to develop certain sets of values among the rural population. Through TBK it is envisaged that whatever values passed on to the children would influence the family in general especially in terms of child care and education, rural health and nutrition. At the same time the programme could further enhance the spirit of self-help and self-reliance among the villages (gotong royong) and also build up leadership at the local level (Rauf, 1994, p.4).

The mission of the TBK programme was, therefore, primarily to help 'rehabilitate' the rural Malays. This, according to Mahathir's thesis, involved encouraging them to break from traditional customs and develop ways of thinking more conducive the development of Malay capitalism. For example, the traditional concept of Gotong Royong, that is the cooperative effort of villagers, was used to reinforce ideals of self help and self reliance (Maaruf, 1988, p.68). According to Maaruf, the focus on self help and the assumption that the position of the rural Malays depended on their capacity for self help, diverted attention away from any acknowledgment of the effects of an inequitable social structure, colonial capitalism and development policy (Maaruf, 1988, p.68). Thus, he argues,

the advocation of self-help for the Malays is just another facet of the view that Malays are lazy and indolent. Poverty is readily associated with laziness and capitalistic success with hard work and toil (1988, p.68).

Self help was very much a guiding principle within the TBK programme which focused on providing women with training in child care and home economics. It was made quite clear that the programmes did not provide a welfare service, child care or any other form of practical assistance,

This TBK is not a creche. Mothers especially, are brought in to participate. They are for example, invited to see and help prepare the supplementary food so that they too could utilise available cheap foods
for their feeding requirements at home (Othman & Ibrahim, 1975, p.3).

Although women involved in agricultural production were better able to balance child care with economic activities than their urban counterparts, many young children in the rural areas were left unattended or cared for by older siblings (Cheng, 1993, p.260). Even so, the TBK programmes were confined to three hours and were not to be used as a convenient form of child care. The task of the Kemas preschool programmes was, therefore, primarily to assist in the 'rehabilitation' of the rural Malays by promoting self reliance and capitalist ideals rather than providing direct help and support to families suffering from poverty and lack of resources.

Mahathir's notion of 'rehabilitating' the rural Malays through a process of urbanisation was embedded in the New Economic Policy which encouraged rural - urban migration in order to service the export-oriented industries being established in the Free Trade Zones (Ariffin, 1992, p.25). Thus, migration from the rural areas to urban centres during the 1970s contributed to general expansion in urban populations. Many of the rural migrants established themselves in the already existing squatter settlements in towns and cities throughout peninsular Malaysia (Andaya & Andaya, 1992, p.285). By 1978, there were 250,000 squatters in Kuala Lumpur alone, constituting 25% of the city's population (Low & Yusof, 1991, p.294). Many of these new settlers were young women seeking work in the new industrial areas (Ariffin 1992, p.44). According to Yun and Yusof, academics at the University of Malaya who worked directly in the squatter settlements, the rapid expansion of the urban population was a continual cause of concern to government and non government organisations, health professionals and town administrators.
(1991, p.294). Especially vulnerable were the women and children of poor settler families living in slums and shanty towns.

While the recommendations made in the Drop Out Study (Ministry of Education, 1973) had not specifically mentioned the need for preschool programmes in the urban squatter settlements, the Third Malaysia Plan, 1976-1980, did make a commitment to all young children in poverty groups and stated that,

During the plan period, opportunities for pre-school child development will be expanded on a selected basis, geared mainly to the location of such facilities in areas where there is a preponderance of poverty groups (Third Malaysia Plan cited in EPRD 1985, p.4).

In the first year of the Third Malaysia Plan, 1976, eight pilot Tabika classes modelled on the Kemas TBK programmes, were established in squatter settlements in urban areas by the National Unity Board under its Community Relations Programme (Inf.11 1 :19.7.94).

The Status Report on Pre-school Education prepared by the Ministry of Education in 1985 states that the National Unity Board's kindergarten programmes were established for the purpose of 'promoting national integration and unity among children of various ethnic origins' (1985, p.4). The expansion of the private sector kindergartens in the urban areas, however, seems to have been an important factor in the development of National Unity kindergartens. According to one informant, the first kindergartens established under the Community Relations programme were designed specifically to provide pre-school experiences for poor urban children who could not afford the fees charged in the private pre-school programmes (Inf. 11 1: 19.7.94). Thus, the programmes were available to
children from families whose combined family income did not exceed RM 400 and were simply concerned with trying to provide an alternative avenue for them to go to pre-school. That's all, because there were also kindergartens run by the private sector, private individuals on a private basis and the urban poor were not able to send their children. So then when they send their children to formal education, say primary one, then they lag behind because they don't have the extra mileage, you know, so that was one of the main reasons, as I say for providing an avenue for urban poor to go to school (Inf.111: 19.7.94).

In the late 1970s, the community relations programme 'received less emphasis' and the Unity kindergarten programmes were included under a new government initiative called Rukun Tetangga (Inf.111: 19.7.94). The Rukun Tetangga was primarily a neighbourhood security programme that also had responsibility for organising community activities. It was not until the early 1980s that the objectives for the kindergartens became more closely aligned to the National Unity Board's major objective,

Over the years the programme has developed into a programme that requires us to help to achieve the vision of the country, and of course, the vision of the country is the creation of a Malaysian race by the year 2020. What I mean by a Malaysian race is that you can identify a Malaysian by their behaviour, by their cultural norms, not as it is now when you talk about Malaysia people say oh Malay, Chinese and Indian. But by the year 2020 we want to be recognised as a total entity of a Malaysian race and the pre-school programme that we run had been restructured over the years consistent with the changing needs of the country (Inf.111: 19.7.94).

The role of the Unity Board's pre-school teacher, like that of her counterpart in the rural areas was more than simply teaching in the kindergartens. The teachers were expected to take part in co-curricula activities including child and youth camps, sports activities and other events designed to promote the objectives of the National Unity Board.
While the unity TBK programmes were modelled on the Kemas TBKs, the added emphasis on interracial socialisation and citizen education were important features of the Unity Tabikas. Particular attention was placed on the 'inculcation of moral values' and a respect for the different races, customs and religious beliefs (Inf.11 1: 19.7.94).

In our pre-school programme we show that OK, you are a Malay your religion is Islam and this is your place of worship and in your place of worship there are certain do's and don'ts. You have to respect these do's and don'ts, you have to respect that and during the Muslim Festival we have a small gathering to honour that religious festival, that religion. Likewise if you are Chinese during the Chinese New Year we have a small function to make the children aware and also to tell the other races that the Chinese also have cultural norms, certain do's and don'ts. So this is being practised in our pre-schools (Inf.11 1: 19.7.94).

In contrast to the Kemas kindergarten programmes, which clearly had a mandate to promote the ideals of self help and self reliance amongst the rural Malays, the Unity programmes were concerned with promoting community consciousness and compensating for the perceived preoccupation of urban parents with economic advancement.

We recognise that the society nowadays, in the urban areas a lot of times are taken up with pursuing economic development and that being so the caring of children to a certain extent is neglected. So when we run the preschool we emphasise the socialisation of the children when the parents emphasis is a lot on economic well-being (Inf.11 1: 19.7.94).

Thus, both the Unity and Kemas programmes had a compensatory focus. The Kemas programmes were designed to compensate for the 'cultural deprivation' experienced by rural children. The Unity programmes, on the other hand, were to compensate for the lack of moral education undertaken
by parents who were believed to be too concerned with economic advancement to attend to their children's moral education (Inf.11 1:19.7.94).

As one informant explained, the purpose of the Unity programmes was to counter the influence of western values in the urban centres by inculcating ....moral values into our children because we also realise that in a changing society the values of the children, the values of the young are changing. The influence of other values have been brought in and values change over the years. So [if] the children are firmly rooted in traditional values of the family system at an early age, as they grow up they will be still attached to the traditional values that we have, the Asian traditional family values (Inf.11 1: 19.7.94).

The role of the Unity pre-schools was clearly to 'assist in the Government's objective' (to establish a 'Malaysian race') through inculcating national values in children while they are still young. Like the Kemas programmes, assisting women with child care was not considered part of the Unity preschool programmes's role. As one informant explained, pre-school is not a social welfare programme. It is to provide, to assist the government to achieve the government's objective and we believe that assimilation of national values when they are young will help mould a person when they grow up when they become adult..... I know there are some kindergartens for the purpose of sending children there for mothers who are working. So we don't believe in that concept. We [the Department of National Unity] don't run our kindergarten just to take care of someone's child for three hours (Inf.11 1: 19.7.94).

The need for child care, however, was a real and pressing issue for women in the urban squatter settlements who, according to Yusof, found themselves unable to care for the families adequately without working long hours.

Some of them wake up at 4.00 a.m. to prepare food for the day before walking out to the main road to catch a bus to work in town or in factories. The children are left locked in their tiny one room but to fend for themselves till mother returns at dusk. It is very common to
see a 6 year old girl tending to her younger sisters and brothers. When the mother returns home in the evening, she has to clean up the children and the house, prepare the evening meal, do the washing and ironing, before going to bed. Her routine is never ending and it is only on weekends that she may have time for her children (Yusof 1983, p.89).

It seems that child care was an important issue for women in both the rural and urban squatter settlements yet the Kemas and Unity programmes were simply designed to provide half day educational opportunities aimed at ‘rehabilitating’ the rural Malays and promoting national unity within the urban squatter settlements.

The Federal Land Development Authority also played an important part in the government’s objective of ‘rehabilitating’ the rural Malays. Established in 1956 under the Land Development Ordinance its primary objectives were to increase the commercial production and export of rubber and palm oil, and to provide land (cleared jungle) for landless rural families (Andaya & Andaya, 1982, p.283, Ariffin 1992, p.22). During the 1970s and 1980s, under the New Economic Policy, Felda expanded its operations and became a major programme for poverty eradication (Salleh, 1992, p.108). The development of land schemes throughout Malaysia, however, has not been without cost to the settlers themselves. According to Halim Salleh, who conducted field work in the land schemes in Pahang during 1984,

It may be concluded that there is an inherent antagonism in the relationship between Felda and settlers in Felda land schemes. Although resettlement on land schemes promises land ownership and a better life, the organisation of Felda land schemes effectively denies the settlers full control over their land, finance and their labour. The settlers, therefore feel that they are dominated and controlled by Felda and its officials as if they were wage workers (1992, p.130).
Felda asserted control over the settler's lives in a number of different ways. Most importantly the settlers were not free to sell their produce on the open market. Settlers caught doing so faced eviction from the land scheme (Salleh 1992, p.112). Any debts accrued in the Felda shops were automatically deducted from the settlers' wages before they received them, causing much confusion and resentment amongst the settlers (Mahayudin, 1973, p.13). Even in relatively small matters the settlers lacked autonomy. For example, they did not own their own shovels, hoes and axes and had to rely on the Felda officials to hand them out each morning and collected them again at the end of each day (Mahayudin, 1973, p.12). Even so, there was little acknowledgment by Felda management of the lack of autonomy felt by the settlers. Indeed, it seems that the 'myth of the lazy native' formed the basis of explanations for the difficulty the settlers experienced in adapting to their new lives on the land schemes. According to Felda officials the settlers were merely 'adjusting to a new and unfamiliar environment entailing a certain degree of discipline, regularity and rigorous duties' (Talib, 1970, p.86).

In 1967, before the first TBK kindergartens were established by Kemas, the settlers initiated their own kindergartens on the land schemes. The need for child care, rather than for educational programmes, provided the motivation for settlers to set up the kindergartens (Inf.1 3: 12.7.94). At that time, many of the women in the land schemes were maintaining the family income by working outside the land schemes on sugar plantations. Consequently, they were often away from the schemes from early in the morning until late in the afternoon (Inf.1 3: 12.7.94). The absence of the women from the schemes created a need for organised activities for the children,

women themselves started it. There was a felt need. There was so many children. They felt that the children ought to be put in a place somewhere where the children can do something. So they started
having boy scouts. Boy scouts have some sort of training you know where they learn how to play games and do things outdoors, so there was one land scheme that used boy scouts. They wanted the children to do something constructive rather than run wild without anyone looking after them (Inf.l 3: 12.7.94).

Settlers at the Kulai Land Scheme in Johore and Ijok Land Scheme in Perak were the first to set up the land scheme kindergartens, with the settlers at the schemes in Tenang North and Negeri Sembilan quickly following suit (Felda, 1977, p2). These kindergartens were housed in temporary buildings such as the Suau (place of prayer), religious schools or settler's homes and lacked basic amenities like proper toilets, running water and children's equipment (Felda, 1977, p.2).

The Johore pre-school class was run by the son of the Imam (religious leader) while the Perak pre-school was organised by UMNO (Felda 1982, p.1). The pre-schools were started on an ad hoc basis with members of the local youth group organising activities for the children. The youth leaders were given a small allowance or 'pocket money' of about twenty dollars a month for taking care of the children during the mornings, while their fathers worked in the oil palm fields and their mothers were away at the sugar plantations (Inf.1 3: 12.7.94). The kindergartens were confined to morning sessions as the men had generally finished the work in the plantation by mid-day and were available to care for the children in the afternoons.

In 1968, the Social Development Division of Felda took over the organisation of the preschool classes, ostensibly to improve the quality of the programmes and establish more classes throughout the land schemes (Osman 1984, p.163). However, the wish to control settler activities may have been an added incentive for Felda management. The Social Development Division had been
established the previous year in order to 'handle the settler problems' (Talib, 1970, p.86). The introduction of community development workers to 'stimulate and guide the settler families to adjust and accept social and cultural changes' was recommended by the Department of Social Welfare after it completed a study of social life on the land schemes in 1967 (Dept. Social Welfare, 1967, cited in Mahayudin, 1973, p.6). Thus, the purpose of this Division was to

help settler families settle into their new homes, and make full use of all available amenities and help encourage them to work hard to ensure that the change they had made - from the life in the village to this new kind, is a worthwhile one (Mahayudin, 1973, p.19).

Clearly the Social Development Division had a mandate to 'reform' the settlers and to promote capitalist ideals on the land schemes. As in the rural areas, the women and children were targeted as important players in this change process,

they thought it was easier to change the women than a man. So once you get the women changed you have a better influence on the family. So they put women community workers, whose work was trying to change the attitude on education, on health, nutrition, family planning, things like that (Inf.13: 12.7.94).

The work of the settler development staff, according to Salleh, amounted to a form of social control that positioned women as 'useful adjuncts to men' (Salleh, 1992, p.128). In reality, where Felda may have intended that the Settler Development Officers exert control over the women, these officers often found themselves cast in the role of women's advocate. In 1973, one of the development officers reported that she and the other development officers, had 'quite a difficult task in trying to change the attitude of the Malaysian male, as a whole, towards women' (Mahayudin, 1973, p.24). The female
development officers lacked support from the Felda organisation and often struggled to impress upon the management the importance of settler development projects such as home economics classes, family planning and the kindergartens. Indeed, at many community development meetings women were consistently out-numbered and out-voted and their views not given serious consideration (Mahayudin, 1973, p.24).

In addition, the Settler Development staff were often accused of pampering the settlers 'making them difficult to control and discipline in the fields' (Mahayudin, 1973, p.27). Any attempt to assist the settlers and sympathise with their concerns was interpreted by Felda management as taking sides with the settlers against management.

This sometimes caused great frustration for the officers, if they genuinely want to help the settlers and at the same time, want to get the full co-operation of the field staff, This situation is aggravated especially in schemes where the management is not popular with the settlers, as any unrest or rebellious attitude displayed by the settlers is attributed to the settler development staff who are considered 'champions of the peasants' (Mahayudin, 1973, p.27).

The scheme managers were influential members of the kindergarten management committees (Jawatankuasa Tadika) which consisted of parents, the Settler Development Assistant and representatives of other settler organisations (Osman, 1984, p.168). These committees were overseen by the Village Development Committees which consisted of Felda managers and settler representatives. These committees, like the Development and Security Committees in the villages, had a great deal of power and were responsible for approving all the development projects carried out on the schemes and for making decisions regarding the settler's welfare.
Any development projects that the settler development officer initiates but do not receive the approval of this council, cannot be implemented. Even the wishes of Felda or any policy that this council disagrees with has to be amended (Mahayudin, 1973, p.27).

The role of the teachers in the Felda kindergartens differed from that played by the Kemas and National Unity teachers. In the Kemas programmes the teachers were expected to provide parent education and to be directly involved in community development work. Similarly, the Unity kindergarten teachers were also expected to take part in extra curricular activities outside the kindergarten programme. Within the land schemes these responsibilities belonged to the Settler Development Assistants, leaving the teachers free to concentrate on providing the programmes for the children. Whereas the Kemas and Unity programmes were set up to meet specific government objectives, the kindergartens in the land schemes appear to have responded, in the first instance, to a community need for child care rather than educational programmes. Nevertheless, the Felda kindergartens, as an important part of the Settler Development work, were influenced by particular social and political objectives contained in the New Economic Policy, as were the Kemas and Unity programmes.
The influence of western theories and models

While particular social and political objectives had an influence on the nature of the Felda, Kemas and Unity kindergartens, the form and content of the kindergartens was shaped by western theories and models of service delivery and the experience of young Malay women trained in Britain during the 1960's. In 1961, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, after consulting with the British High Commissioner, offered four scholarships to young women to study Nursery Nursing in England (Inf. 1 1: 12.7.94). Up until that time, much of the responsibility for promoting the care of young children in the rural areas had been left to nursing staff working through the adult education training centres. As one informant explained,

we had substantial people at that time for home economics but in child care we had to take nurses, so nurses also they have other jobs to do. Off and on they can come [to the training centres] so they asked us to take some courses in child care (Inf. 9 1 : 13.7.94).

It seems, however, that the courses undertaken by these young women reflected little understanding of the Malaysian context. For example, one young woman was sent to the Norland Nursery Training College, a very prestigious private training institution for English nannies. She described her experience thus,

it was very strange for me. When I went there it was 1960 something. In Malaysia, we were already using electric irons. May be it was the college, the Norland Nursery Training College, it was supposed to be very famous, but they were using little irons, you know real steel ones. It was so ridiculous actually, I thought, "God imagine what am I doing, I'm regressing. I'm going thirty years back or something". You know the little irons that you heat up, it was very strange. Of course I never use that (Inf.11 1: 5.1.94).
Even so, she did find some aspects of her English training useful on her return to Malaysia,

the nutrition, the child care was very useful. What made it more useful was not the theory but it was the practical part because I stayed with the children, played with the children and things like that because in Malaysia maybe now not so but before, for an adult to sit down and play with the children it was looked upon as if there is something wrong with you. You know we love children but we are very reserved with them (Inf.1 1: 5.1.94).

On their return to Malaysia these women were employed in adult education training centres and were responsible for training rural adult education teachers in home economics and child care. Initially they found their teaching was,

.... very limited because we couldn't do cookery. We couldn't do because we learn different dishes so at that time western dishes were not applicable to Malaysian ways so we couldn't do Malaysian cookery. We didn't do. We just do... child care (Inf. 9 1: 13.7.94).

When the Adult Education Division was transferred to Kemas in 1970, the Adult Education Training Centres became Family Development Training Centres (Inf. 9 1: 13.7.94). Subsequently, teachers trained in these centres became community development workers with Kemas. Two of the four young women who obtained the scholarships to train in Britain stayed with the Family Development Training centres when they transferred to Kemas and became involved in establishing the first Kemas kindergarten programmes in the rural areas (Inf. 1 1: 12.7.94). The third young woman left Kemas to set up her own kindergarten and the fourth was recruited in 1968 by the Federal Land Development Authority to establish the kindergarten programmes in the land schemes (Inf. 1 1: 12.7.94).
The initial decision to establish the Kemas preschool programmes, however, was based on the advice of a British Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) consultant, who recommended the introduction of play groups in the villages (Inf. 9 1: 13.7.94). The FAO was the largest of the United Nations agencies and specialised in rural development and agriculture (Rogers, 1980, p.81). It had a separate department responsible for all matters relating to women in its agricultural and rural development activities (Rogers, 1980, p.84). According to Barbara Rogers (1980), the FAO had no inhibitions about women's place being in the home. Activities for women were almost exclusively confined to small projects or small parts of larger rural development schemes and focused on motherhood, nutrition, sewing, knitting and housework. Rogers argues, that the focus on home economics in the FAO activities for women were 'the result of the Western stereotype of women as domestic' emanating from theories of 'maternal deprivation' popular in the west following the second world war (1980, p.86). Thus, the involvement of the FAO in the development of the TBK programmes explains some of the insistence of the Kemas officials that women should not use the kindergartens for child care.

In addition to theories of maternal deprivation emanating from the west, the international fervour regarding early childhood enrichment programmes sparked by the North American Head Start programmes also had an impact on the development of the TBK programmes. As one informant remembered, there was a tremendous interest in pre-school education, tremendous euphoria that spilled over from the Head Start programme that had to do with early childhood education, that was related to poverty eradication, community development, health and programmes that claimed to accelerate cognitive development (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94).
The Head Start programmes in North America were based on theories of cultural deprivation and promised an end to the cycle of poverty experienced by many poor American children (Zigler & Anderson, 1979, p.5). It was believed that the introduction of enrichment programmes aimed at increasing children's levels of educational attainment would lift them out of their impoverished communities. The focus of the Head Start programmes on parental involvement, children's health and nutritional needs as well as intellectual stimulation, created much interest amongst early childhood professionals in Malaysia, particularly those working in the rural areas. As one informant explained,

in the Kemas programme you cannot separate the preschool education from poverty eradication, community development and health programmes. You have to understand the integration in order to understand [the programme] (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94).

In 1969, fifteen community development workers were chosen to train as play group leaders for the rural kindergarten programmes (Othman & Ibrahim, 1975, p.1). These women were already trained in home economics field work and were members of Village Security and Development Committees. On completion of the training, ten of the fifteen women were selected to take part in a pilot pre-school project called TBK-Taman Bimbingan Kanak-Kanak (Tabika) (Othman & Ibrahim 1975, p.1).

In 1970, with the help of members of the American Peace Corps and the Malaysian Ministry of Education, a TBK kindergarten programme was set up in each of the ten states included in the pilot project (Inf. 9 1: 13.7.94). The TBKs provided three hours of activities five days a week to children between
four and six years of age and operated under the guidance of the Kampung Pemaju and her assistant.

In the early days of the Kemas TBK programmes, the Ministry of Education conducted research into the viability of various models of parent involvement and child development programmes under the guidance of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation (Inf. 4 2: 2.8.94). The Foundation provided officers in the newly formed Curriculum Development Centre with a number of different models used in Van Leer preschool projects around the world. The community based models were a natural choice for the Malaysian rural areas given that village life was traditionally organised around cooperative effort (Inf. 4 2: 2.8.94). In their evaluation of two different community based models, the Ministry of Education found that the community kindergarten model, which is similar to that used in the Head Start programmes, was most successful in attracting the participation of children and their mothers. It was this model that was adopted by the Kemas TBKs (Inf. 4 2: 2.8.94).

While the model chosen was based on the perceived needs of the rural communities, the ideological orientation of the early TBK programmes not only reflected theories of cultural deprivation, but also, the influence of American and British approaches to early childhood education. Officials referred to the approach taken by the TBKs as 'Play way' as 'learning through play' was the guiding principle of the early Tabika programmes (Othman & Ibrahim 1975, p.2). According to Kemas officials,

The play way of learning is carried out because, it is found that "the lives of many pre-school children are rich in symbolic play. This is important for, in play, the child can assimilate reality to himself without coercion; he can transform reality to his own personal needs. Opportunities for play, with suitable adult facilitation, seems likely to
be important for social, emotional and intellectual growth” (Othman & Ibrahim, 1975, p.2).

This psycho-dynamic view of child development was promulgated by American university laboratory schools and the writing of Susan Isaacs during the 1920s and 1930s (Roopnarine & Johnson, 1993, p.17). The psycho-dynamic view of children focused on the importance of play to the mental health of the child and to the child's educational experience.

In the early days of the TBKs the Kemas officials were quite passionate about the Tabika approach. As one informant remembered,

In the early days there was a lady who was very influential, Hallimah Othman, she was trained by Britishers; Britishers who had a very strong tradition in play way learning. That was one of the very influential things in Britain. Play way, no formal learning. And there was some even who advocated, for example, that the teaching of formal reading should be postponed until about seven or eight. They were extremists like that (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94).

This same informant remembered heated arguments between Hallimah Othman who was the Family Planning and Development Officer with Kemas, and other early childhood professionals,

In any meeting in the early days if you ever dared to introduce formal teaching, number work or phonics, you will taste her bite! She [Othman] will be full of scorn and she will run the thing down. So in the early days we had to be very careful when winning these people over we had to use very big words like "oh we are only teaching the pre-requisites not the real thing" (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.1994).

In 1975, a paper explaining the TBK approach and arguing against the more formal approach to pre-school education found in the urban kindergartens, was prepared by Hallimah Othman and Denise Faber from the Family Development Training Centre (Othman & Faber, 1975). In this paper, the
authors refer to American early childhood texts that exhort the advantages of children learning through discovery rather than through formal teaching methods. The emphasis is on the children's need for first hand experience in order to understand concepts.

Concepts to be useful to the child, must be experienced, observed, questioned and defined by the child for himself. Only after the concept is understood does the symbols for it (the word for it) become useful. This is also true with another set of symbols, our number system. Unless a number means something to a child, it is only a magical cipher. If he doesn't yet realise that '2' people and '2' plates are equal in quantity, it's unfair to expect him to begin adding and subtracting, much less counting (Othman & Faber 1975, p.2).

There is no mention in this paper of the need to build upon children's home experiences as had been advocated by the consultants from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation two years earlier at the Seminar on Early Childhood Education (Grant & Alford 1973, p.172). According to these consultants the task of the kindergarten teachers was to

accept these experiences as it does with the middle-class child, and to implement learning programmes which take these experiences as the starting point. The middle-class school in fact implements a programme especially geared to the previous experiences and stage of development of middle-class children. The school as usually constituted provides what is in essence a special programme for the middle-class child. It seems to us that for other social groups, the school should also implement programmes specially geared to the past experiences and stage of growth of the particular groups (Grant & Alford, 1973, p.172).

Indeed, the compensatory approach outlined by Othman and Faber was based on the assumption that young children are not provided with such first hand experiences within the home environment, and therefore, need to be exposed to them in the pre-school programme. Rather than build upon children's
experiences in the home, the approach taken by the TBK programmes assumed the need to compensate for the perceived inadequacies of the home environment.

In the short run it is not practical, not probably desirable, to vastly change the home environment. What is possible is to give pre-school children the opportunity to learn by discovery in an atmosphere which thus broadens their horizons while they are still curious (Othman & Faber 1975, p.6).

Clearly, theories of cultural deprivation prominent in North America at that time, were more influential in the development of the TBK curriculum than the advice of the consultants from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation which was based on first hand experience with children from marginalised communities in developing countries.

Part of the insistence upon the ‘play way’ approach adopted by the Kemas officials may be construed as an effort to counter the increasing formality of the curriculum being used in the private sector kindergartens. The Kemas programmes were deliberately called Tabika, while kindergartens run by the private sector, religious groups and voluntary organisations in the urban centres were commonly referred to as Tadika (Taman Didikan Kanak-Kanak). Tadika is commonly translated as pre-school or kindergarten and Tabika as child play group. Child care programmes were distinguished by the use of the term Taska. The distinction between the three types of programme was very important, as one informant explained,

..... in the early days if you understood their philosophy many people have forgotten this, they made a very strict distinction, now this distinction has been lost in literature. [There was a] tremendous distinction between Taman bimbingan kanak-kanak - TABIKA, and taman asuhan tabika - TASKA, and taman didikan TADIKA. Taman asuhan kanak-kanak dan taman bimbingan kanak-kanak versus Taman didikan kanak-kanak (Inf.10 1: 16.7.94)
The ideological and functional differences between Tadika, Tabika and Taska are reflected in more literal translations of the words. Tadika can be translated literally as a 'place for the training of children', Tabika as a 'place for guiding children' and Taska as a 'place for caring for children'. This difference is not merely semantic but is born out by local understandings of the different connotations of each word.

Kemas use Tabika because to them Tabika is Taman Bimbingan is to give assistance, to counsel along that line, Tadika is on didikan, didikan is more to educate. Tadika is more associated with the private. Tadika is a bit more formal because I can see these private agencies, private institutions are quite formal you know, they teach them reading and writing a lot of work sheets and work books but Tabika here suggests play its just a bit relaxed very flexible (Inf. 4 2: 2.8.94).

Like the Kemas TBK programmes the Felda kindergartens were very much influenced by the European and North American play based approaches to early childhood education. When Felda took over the organisation of the preschool classes in 1968, it recruited one of the four English trained Kemas officers to develop the kindergartens under the supervision of the Social Development Division (Inf. 1 3: 12.7.94). This woman was one of the first Assistant Settler Development Assistants to be employed and was responsible for settler development activities in a cluster of five land schemes.

One of her first tasks was to develop a set of rules and guidelines for the kindergartens to follow and to establish the kindergarten management committees. These committees were made up of the Felda manager, parents, the community leader and teachers (Inf. 1 3: 12.7.94). The establishment of formal preschool programmes in these land schemes receive an enthusiastic response from the parents.
...they were very excited about it. We didn't even have a proper building. We turned a settlers house, sometimes two or three settlers house into a kindergarten but the parents were so excited they made outdoor play things outside where the houses were then when Felda saw that the parents were really interested and they were willing to raise money to make the building so Felda subsidised for every dollar that we got from the community Felda gave another dollar so that's how we started the kindergartens (Inf.1 3: 12.7.94).

The settler houses accommodated fifteen children in each house with one teacher. Young women from the scheme's women's group were easily recruited to work in the kindergarten as it was thought to be a better option than working in the fields.

It was their first job in fact, it was difficult for them to get jobs because they had to leave the land schemes or they had work in the fields. Working in the kindergartens was more classy. It was cleaner, you don't have to work in the sun and all that kind of thing (Inf. 1 3: 12.7.94).

The Assistant Settler Development Officer used the experience gained at the Norland Nursery Training College in Britain to set up the kindergartens. She also enlisted the help of the Catholic sisters who were attached to the Catholic church in the nearby town of Kulai (Inf.1, p.3, 12.7.94). The sisters gave the kindergarten teachers advice on children's activities. The involvement of the sisters caused some concern among the community leaders who were quite astounded to see the nuns coming on to the land schemes.

At the time it was very difficult for the Malays in the rural areas to accept nuns coming in to my land schemes you know, they said "what are they trying to do make us Christians or something"? (Inf.1 1: 5.1.94).
Nevertheless, the Assistant Settler Development Officer was able to convince the community leaders that she needed the nuns to help her set up the kindergartens,

they had to admit that we Muslims or Malays at that time we didn't have much experience with kindergarten work whereas the nuns in Malaysia they started kindergartens together with the church (Inf.1, p3, 12.7.94).

The European influence continued in the kindergartens between 1972 and 1981 when Felda recruited German kindergarten teachers undertaking voluntary service in Malaysia (Osman 1984, p.164). These teachers were employed to help train the kindergarten teachers and to assist in the kindergartens. In 1981 this service was withdrawn by the German Volunteer Organisation and Felda replaced the German teachers with Japanese volunteers trained in kindergarten teaching (Osman 1984, p.164).

While the parents seemed to welcome the development of formal kindergarten programmes in the land schemes, the curriculum focus on learning though play caused some concern among them. As one informant explained,

I tried to do free play but parents don't really understand that they don't understand the value of play. They think that the child plays freely with the materials the child is not learning as much you know, as against the child sits down and the teacher says this and that then they feel that the child is learning (Inf.1 3: 12.7.94).

The resistance to the concept of learning through play can be explained in terms of both cultural norms and parental expectations. Traditional child rearing methods do not include playing with the children.

Because in Malaysia, now maybe not so, but before for an adult to sit down and play with the children it was looked upon maybe twenty
years as there's something wrong with you......actually people think if you play around with children and enjoy yourself there is something wrong with you (Inf.1, p3, 12.7.94).

The parents also had particular expectations for the children's education. Religious classes held for children on the land schemes and in the villages consisted of the rote learning of particular Arabic scripts. If the parents had received any primary education it would have been in the form of more didactic teaching where the teacher provided information to the children in structured formal sessions (Inf. 4 2: 2.8.94). Added to this the parents were also aware of the teaching methods used in kindergartens in the urban areas.

Parents normally look to the towns for comparison, and this creates problems as most kindergartens in town follow their own syllabus and methods of teaching. Their concept is primarily with teaching of the 3Rs, reading writing and arithmetic (Felda, 1977, p.2).

Even though the parents found the play based curriculum difficult to accept, the kindergartens proved to be extremely popular amongst the settlers (Inf.1 3: 12.7.94). The popularity of the kindergartens can be explained in part by the settlers striving to improve their economic position.

The parents had just realised the importance of education. They didn't have much education so the highest they could go, was entering the land scheme, it was a new way of improving their economic status. But once there they wanted anything that they felt could improve the economic condition, especially for their children (Inf.1, p3, 12.7.94).

However, it appears that the need for child care was an important element in the acceptance and popularity of the programmes.

As a large number of mothers work in the fields, they are very happy to send the children to kindergartens - but for a different reason ie. so that their children are safely and cheaply minded while they are away (Felda 1977, p.4)
Even so, Felda management did not acknowledge child care as a legitimate problem for women until an acute labour shortage in the 1980's forced them to actively recruit women to work alongside the men in the fields (Inf.1 1: 5.1.94). With the specific intent of encouraging women to work on the land schemes the Assistant Settler Development Officer set up a scheme of home based child care centres for children under four years of age. The older children were catered for by the preschool programmes in the mornings and by their fathers or extended family in the afternoons (Inf.1 1: 5.1.94).

Initially, these home based creches were very informal, with one woman staying home and caring for other women's children (Inf.1 1: 5.1.94). However, Felda felt the need to formalise the arrangements in order to better control the number of children being cared for by one woman.

When we did that at first it was quite ad hoc. Like the preschool we had some problems and then we found when we didn't control, we did not get any money, it was just the parents together with themselves. When they did that we found that we couldn't control. So what the agency [Felda] did, it gave some subsidy to the person who looks after the children and said, OK, if you look after these children you must follow these rules. You must not have too many babies, there ought to be a mixture of toddler and bigger children and a few babies. Five per home because we took into consideration the area (Inf.1 1: 5.1.94).

A committee was set up to oversee the operations of the home based creches. The committee consisted of a female community leader, the settler development assistant and the home based care providers (Inf.1 3: 12.7.94). The settler development assistant invited guest speakers and officers from the Department of Social Welfare into the land schemes to talk to the care providers and to run workshops on child development and children's play.
Influenced by government objectives and western approaches to early childhood education, the Kemas and Unity Board's programmes focused on the education of children and their parents and failed to acknowledge women's need for child care. Felda too, was slow to recognise women's need for child care even though it was often the move to the land schemes that created the need for organised child care in the first place. As one informant explained,

.....in the villages it was the extended family, so even if the mother goes out there is the grandmother or auntie who looks after the children. But when we take the nuclear family and transplant it into a new land scheme with no other relatives or anything nearby, they have to exist on their own. That's why the need for the creche arose (Inf.1 1: 5.1.94).

In summary, in response to the growth of private kindergartens in the urban centres, kindergartens were established in the rural areas and urban squatter settlements in order to meet specific government objectives under the New Economic Policy. These objectives included the development of Malay capitalism through the rehabilitation of the rural Malays and the maintenance of social order through the promotion of national unity. The Kemas and Unity programmes also helped secure the vote for the ruling Barisan National alliance government by providing a channel of communication between the government and its electorate. Through a process of cultural diffusion the form and content of the kindergartens was heavily influenced by theories of cultural deprivation and western theories of child development and early education through the involvement of European and American advisers and British trained professionals. As a legacy of a colonial past, the dominant ideology of the time which encompassed notions of self help, self reliance and theories of cultural deprivation created the climate in which western approaches to early education were simply replicated against the advice of the
consultants from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. These consultants argued that the curriculum in early education programmes should reflect the specific needs and experiences of children in the different social and cultural settings. The replication of European style kindergartens by Kemas, the National Unity Board and Felda also meant that women's need for assistance with child care was largely left unacknowledged. Indeed, the use of the kindergarten programmes for cheap and easy child minding was clearly frowned upon by Felda management and Kemas and National Unity officers.
Chapter five

The rise of the private sector

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, greater educational opportunities for women and a radical shift in women's employment patterns resulted in an increasing demand for care and education programmes for young children in Malaysia. In the absence of state provision, this demand was largely met by the private sector. While the private sector made little distinction between care and education, legislation passed in 1971 and in 1984 made the official distinction clear. The expansion of kindergarten and child care services throughout this period caused concern among many early childhood professionals and government officials who doubted the suitability of the curriculum being offered in the kindergartens and the quality of the care provided in the child care centres.

These problems became more pressing during the late 1980s, when aggressive marketing techniques were used by local and foreign entrepreneurs to promote programmes imported from the west. These programmes promised to produce 'intellectually superior' children and thus, became popular with middle class parents in the urban centres (Chiam, 1994, p.104). In an effort to regulate what was taught in the kindergartens and control the quality of the care provided in the child care centres, the government developed preschool packages and curriculum guidelines for the kindergartens together with caregiver training, legislation and a parent involvement manual for the child care centres. While a process of cultural borrowing and adaptation characterised the construction of the curriculum guidelines and the parent involvement manual they still reflected the hegemony of western
theories of child development and philosophies of early education. The same was not true, however, of the training developed for caregivers in the child care centres.

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**Early childhood care and education in Malaysia**

The dichotomy between care and education found in Britain, North America and Australia stems from the separate development of kindergartens and day nurseries. The kindergartens were established solely to provide educational enrichment activities for young children before they entered formal schooling. The day nurseries were established to provide custodial care to poor children of working parents. Thus, the distinction between care and education programmes in these countries was based on the type of service provided rather than the age of the children.

In Malaysia, the reverse is true. Since the amendments to the *Education Act* in 1972 and the passing of the *Child Care Centres Act* in 1984 the Ministry of Education has had responsibility for the registration of kindergartens and the Department of Social Welfare for the registration of child care services (Field notes 16.7.94). Unlike, Britain, North America and Australia, the distinction between care and education in Malaysia is based on the age of the child rather than the type of service provided. The amendments to the 1961 *Education Act* made in 1972, included a provision for the registration of kindergartens for children between four and six years of age with the Ministry of Education. This Act, however, did not apply to children under four years of age. In 1984, the *Child Care Centres Act* was passed which applied to services for children under four years of age. This Act made provision for the registration of child care services for children under four years of age with the Department of Social Welfare. In 1986, a circular from the Teachers and School Registration Division of the Ministry of
Education made the distinction between kindergarten and child care quite clear. The circular stipulated that services could not provide child care facilities for children under four years of age and a kindergarten programme for children between four and six years of age on the same premises (Navarathnarajah, 1986).

Some operators simply ignored this circular and others abided by the law and opened two separate premises; a kindergarten for children over four years of age, and a child care centre for children under four years of age (field notes 16.7.1994). In practice, however, the age division was not maintained as children from the kindergarten often joined children in the child care programmes in the afternoons when the kindergarten sessions had finished (Inf. 15 1:21.7.94). This situation was further complicated by many child care programmes catering for children over four years of age. Indeed, in the study carried out by the Department of Social Welfare in 1983, 69.3% of the institutional type child care services surveyed combined children over and under four years of age (Yusof, Ooi & Hamid-Don, 1983, p.27). Fifty-one percent of these services provided morning care only, which suggests that parents sent their children to these centres to receive some kind of pre-school education experience rather than simply work related child care (Yusof, Ooi & Hamid-Don, 1983, p.26). The following discussion regarding the expansion of kindergarten and child care programmes in Malaysia throughout the 1970s and 1980s relates to the type of service offered rather than the official distinction based on the age of the children attending the programmes. It seems that, in the private sector at least, the practical distinction between child care programmes and kindergartens is made in line with models of service provision originating in the west which define programmes according to the type of service being offered rather than the age of the children concerned.
Demand for early education

In 1973, there were 510 kindergartens operating in the private sector (EPRD, 1985, p.7). By 1979, this number had increased to 610 and, by 1983, had almost doubled to 1,1018, catering for 48% of all children attending kindergarten programmes in Malaysia. The growth of educational programmes for young children in Malaysia throughout the 1970s and 1980s should be understood within the context of rising expectations among Malaysian women. These expectations resulted from greater educational opportunities available to women following independence. Prior to independence, a combination of traditional values and colonial education policy left girls severely under represented in school enrolments. Legislation passed between 1908 and 1923 in the Malay states, made school attendance compulsory for Malay boys but not for Malay girls (Seng, 1975, p.15). Thus, Malay parents, who believed that a formal westernised education would lead to disorderliness and irreligiousness among their Muslim children, were forced to send the boys but not the girls to school (Ariffin, 1992, p.56). Indeed, Malay parents actively discouraged the girls from attending school as it was believed to be a corrupting influence. Unlike the Malays, the Chinese established schools for girls as early as 1908 and Indian parents encouraged girls as well as boys to attend school. Even so, prior to independence and regardless of ethnicity, girls were severely under represented in school enrolments. In 1938, female students accounted for only 28.6% of enrolments in the Malay medium schools and 32.4% of English medium schools (Ariffin, 1992, p.60).

Independence brought new hope to the country. The Malays in particular, expected great changes to their lives (Maaruf, 1988, p.120). Unfortunately, the new Malayan government under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman,
merely continued the dualistic development policy of the previous colonial
government which discouraged the development of Malay capitalism
(Maaruf, 1988). Indeed, the Tunku and his governing elite, influenced by the
colonial 'myth of the lazy native', believed that the Malays were,

a simple and contented people, used to their own way of life, their
distinctive traditions, their deep Islamic belief in God and the
Hereafter, and respect for their Sultans, Sons of the soil and the sea,
they lived close to nature in a bountiful land. Why bother to work
hard? "Allah will provide", they would say. So economically they
could not hope to compete with the industrious morn-noon-and-night
Chinese for whom the Hereafter is an extension of the present, so the
better off you are on earth the more-so it will be in the world to come
(Rahman cited in Maaruf, 1988, p.124)

The Tunku also believed that there was no need for the development of
Malay capitalism as,

nobody need starve in this country, as one can just stretch out one's
hand and pick one's food. There are fish in every river, food in
abundance on the land, Even the forest yield animals and vegetables,
that can be eaten. all that one has to do is to use a little energy, a little
brain-work, and one can get what one needs. That's why my people
are said to be lazy, because they don't have to work, and less still
struggle in order to live (Rahman, cited in Maaruf 1988p122)

During the 1960s, the precarious alliance between Malay political power and
traditional economy on the one hand, and non-Malay capitalism on the other,
disintegrated (Maaruf, 1988, p134). The Tunku's racial stereotypes, which
assumed that the non-Malays were as incapable of political interest as the
Malays were of capitalist ambition, were proved erroneous (Maaruf, 1988,
p135). Indeed, the demand for greater access to political power by the non-
Malays and the upsurge of Malay capitalism within UMNO were influential
in prompting the civil unrest and ethnic rioting following the May 1969
election results. The subsequent resignation of Tunku Abdul Rahman and the
formation of the Barisan National government under the leadership of Tun Abdul Razak signalled the beginning of a new and distinct cultural and economic era that rejected the dualistic philosophy of the colonial and post colonial governments (Maaruf, 1988, p137).

Education became the vehicle through which both Malays and non-Malays sought the status and prestige denied them by the previous colonial and post colonial administrations. The British colonial government's practice of giving the most prestigious positions in the public service to upper class Malays educated in English schools had already demonstrated the value of a 'good education' to Malaysian parents wishing to do the best for their children. With the new opportunities provided by independence many parents actively encouraged their daughters to gain an education. Consequently, female participation in all levels of schooling increased markedly during the 1970s with girls accounting for 42.6% of all enrolments in upper primary schools by 1975. (Arrifin, 1992, p.61). By the end of the 1970's, even though female students accounted for only 0.4% of the population qualified to be at university, female enrolment in post secondary education had increased to 44.6% of all enrolments. The increase in the number of women completing both primary and secondary education during the 1970s has been cited as the reason for 'a revolution of rising expectations' among Malaysian women who subsequently demanded greater participation in social and political affairs (Ariffin, 1992, p.22). It seems that exposure to a western style secular education led many women to question traditional values and aspirations (Arrifin, 1992, p.63). This seems to be especially true with regard to their own children's upbringing. As one woman explained,

I studied mass communication and psychology and all that, and those years helped me a lot, helped me build my self confidence, it made me
think back to what I was missing....I thought it's not fair to impose the same way on my children (Inf. 7 1: 13.7.94).

Thus, many kindergartens were opened throughout the 1970s and early 1980s by highly educated middle class Malay, Indian and Chinese women looking for quality programmes for their own children. As this woman explained,

It was when I started to have my own children I realised that I'm sure that there is something you can do for this child. I'm sure there is a way because you can help develop your child I was quite enthusiastic and ambitious there has to be right way I mean I just can't go into it bull nosed into it and fortunately my sister came back from the UK and she had a lot of experience in child care and we decided to form this company (Inf. 7 1: 13.7.94)

Similarly, one of the first Montessori kindergartens in Kuala Lumpur was opened by a lawyer looking for 'a good experience for her own kindergarten children' (Inf. 14 2: 6.7.94). She employed a London trained Montessori teacher to establish and run the school for her while she continued to practice law. Likewise, an English woman who converted to Islam, opened one of the first Islamic kindergartens in Kuala Lumpur when her own child reached kindergarten age (Field notes, 21.1.94). Other kindergartens were opened by ex-government officials who capitalised on the experience gained during their time in the public service by opening their own centres. One of the four young women sent to England by the government to do nursery nurse training in 1961, for example, opened her own centre on her return to Malaysia (Inf. 1 1: 5.1.94). The Director of the Curriculum Development Centre in the Ministry of Education, also opened her own very exclusive centre in Kuala Lumpur upon her retirement from the Ministry (Inf. 1 2: 12.7.94).

Other kindergartens were opened by former primary school teachers. The kindergartens offered these women the opportunity to run a lucrative
business and to work shorter hours (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94). They saw themselves very much as professional teachers rather than operators of small businesses. As one informant explained,

we were all very good primary school teachers, we were very very dedicated. At that time education was not in the business world at all. It was purely education. Very professional, we charged people for what we did, but it was never business. We bought what we could afford and encouraged the teachers to make a lot of teaching aids (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94).

While their kindergartens were definitely aimed at the middle and upper classes who could afford to pay, these women did make concessions to families who could not afford the fees.

I gave them lesser fees, If a rich man paid RM150 or RM80 and a poor man came in and said I would like to come, I would look into his salary and say, "right pay RM60 if you would like to come". So we had workers' children here, we had taxi drivers' children, we had carpenters' children. We also had the children of our own staff at a lower rate (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94).

The popularity of the kindergartens, lack of training facilities and legislation pertaining to pre-school education, however, led to the establishment of many kindergartens by people with little or no experience who were looking to make quick profits. As one informant explained,

Whether we like it or not a lot of pre-schools were set up with people with no formal training. A lot of heads of schools were not qualified at all. If you had money you could just set up a pre-school. All that they would have remembered was their own days in primary school. So they would have just set up a building with tables and chairs and they also started bringing exercise books and square lines and they did exactly what they did [in primary school] and there was nobody to stop them. (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94).

The more formal academic programmes provided in these kindergartens proved popular among parents who were impressed that their children learnt
to read and write before they started primary school (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94).

The introduction of the 'express classes' in 1962 must have also contributed to parent's interest in pre-school education. The express classes enabled children to complete their primary education in five instead of six years (EPRD, 1974, p.3). By 1970, 90% of the children in the express classes had attended some kind of kindergarten programme. Indeed, some people believe that the primary school teachers began to rely on the children attending kindergarten programmes before they entered formal schooling.

It [pre-school education] was becoming very important for the parents because you see the children learned quite a bit and this left a pressure for the children in the kindergartens. Because by the 1970s, 1975, 1980 primary schools began to depend on the kindergartens so a lot of their workload was quietly shifted onto the kindergarten teachers (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94).

By the 1980s, the more formal approach to kindergarten education had become an accepted part of life for middle class Malaysian children in the urban areas. Indeed, in 1982, it was not unusual for the kindergarten children to have examinations and homework (Inf. 14 1: 26.7.94). As one of the teachers explained, the parents particularly liked the formal approach 'because their children could read and write and this made them more comfortable when they went to primary school' (Inf. 15,1, 21.7.94).

The formal approach to pre-school education provided by the private sector during the early 1980s forced the government to reassess the curriculum of the Kemas and Unity Tabikas. Until that time, the Tabika curriculum had faithfully adhered to the informal approach insisted upon by the western trained professionals involved in establishing the programmes during the 1970s. A study carried out in 1985 by the Ministry of Education, however, found that the TBK children performed well in tests on socialisation in their
first year of school but were not performing on a par with children attending urban kindergartens with regard to the reading, writing and arithmetic (Inf. 9 1: 13.7.94). Consequently, the curriculum was modified and bought in line with curriculum being offered in the private kindergartens to include basic preparation in reading, writing and arithmetic. The change in curriculum was explained in a report prepared by Kemas for UNICEF in 1994.

Since the middle of 1985, there was a shift in policy over the curriculum that should be taught in all the TBK classes. The strategy of instruction is to ensure that children from the TBK would be able to compete with the children from other pre-school institutions, thus emphasis is given on 3Rs besides following the existing curriculum. This change in policy effects the basic philosophy of pre-school education which emphasised informal activities, socialisation and familiarisation with figures and letters. But at the same time it was inevitable for this shift in policy. Pre-school education in the urban areas is in fact more inclined towards formal learning where children are taught basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic (Rauf, 1994, p.5).

Thus, the curriculum offered by the private sector kindergartens was instrumental in the revision of the curriculum in the state assisted kindergarten programmes.

Demand for child care

In 1982, a national survey of child care services identified 537 privately owned child care services operating in Malaysia. As many as 252 of these services were centre based services, 163 of which were found in the Estates and 89 were found in towns and urban centres. Most of the remaining 285 services were found operating in private homes in the rural areas. The increase in the number of women participating in the paid work force is the most often cited reason for the escalating demand for formal child care services in Malaysia since the 1970s (Chiam, 1991, p.xi; Onn 1993, p.11; Ong 1993, p.14). While it is true that women's participation in the work
force in Malaysia has increased from 37% in 1970 to 47% in 1990, the shift in employment patterns, rather than an increase in work force participation, is more likely to have had a more serious impact on women's child care arrangements. Women's participation in agricultural production, where it is easier to balance work and child care, declined from 67.9% in 1970 to 28.2% in 1990 (Peng, 1993, p.251). This decrease in the number of women engaged in agricultural production is matched by the rise in the number of women involved in the manufacturing and tertiary sectors (Peng, 1993, p.252). Figures from the Malaysian Family Life Survey in 1988 indicate that the number of women with children under four years of age in the work force had only increased by approximately 14% between 1968 and 1988 (Peng, 1992, p.252). Thus, it would seem that the type of work women are engaged in is a more accurate indicator of the need for formal child care arrangements than the number of women in the work force.

The employment of young unmarried women in the factories and manufacturing industries throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, created a short fall in the number of young women willing to work in primary service industries (Inf. 8 2:2.7.94). Concern over the lack of reliable home help in the early 1980s led to the development of child care courses in vocational schools throughout Malaysia. However, despite these training programmes, young women continued to favour factory work over domestic service.

In those days there was a lot of this thing about training girls for the home, for working in the home, because of the shortage of household help for working mothers but as I say along the way you know the shift of policy and the whole thing has [changed] it does not help anyway because the girls are not going to work in the homes (Inf. 8 2:9.7.94).
As reliable domestic help became increasingly difficult to find, women turned to the already established kindergartens for help with their child care arrangements.

People began to ask could we leave our children for a fee. If it is viable and if they are getting some extra money, why not, and so, some of the kindergartens started doing this which was better than the children staying home with the maids (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94)

Consequently, some kindergartens extended their hours and continued to care for children after the kindergarten session had finished. Others opened for the morning sessions only but took in children well below four years of age (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94)

These practices created a problem for the authorities as the official distinction between kindergarten and child care programmes was based on the age of the children, rather than the type of service being offered.

it caused us some problems because one law caters for children under four and another for over four. So either they have to have two buildings put the 2 - 4 years here and the 4 - 6 years here and there are some that do that, others take 2 - 6 but they don’t take many of the older ones or they take less of the younger ones so they fit in with the law (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94).

In addition to these problems, the content of the curriculum and quality of the care provided in these services also became a source of concern to the authorities.

**Curriculum content and quality of care**

The diversity and the proliferation of kindergartens established by different religious and ethnic groups led government officials to believe that much of
what was being taught in the kindergartens was not in the national interest.¹

As one informant explained,

there were lots of kindergartens springing up all over the place. We had the Muslim ones, the Chinese one, Buddhism, we had all sorts of things. Not only the religious and the cultural, we also had under Felda under Police, under the Army all sorts of things. So the Ministry of Education, the Government, felt that something had to be done to make sure that all these people don't go their own way not having the national interest. Because this is very important because if you don't instil national interest and national aspirations in the children there is going to be lot of damage (Inf. 1 2: 12.7.94).

Others were concerned with the formality of the programmes and doubted the quality of the experience for the children.

We were so unhappy at that time, we saw so many incidences, scenes where pre-school teachers teaching formal education they have children seated in rows, sixty children in a class and we thought "that's not it" we must put a stop to it (Inf. 4 1: 15.1.94).

In 1973, in an effort to improve the quality of kindergarten programmes being offered to young children, a Catholic nun, Sister Denise Parker established the Kindergarten Association of Malaysia² (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94).

Sister Denise received much encouragement from delegates at the 1973 Seminar on Early Childhood Education and representatives from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. The purpose of the Association was to provide training and leadership to the private sector kindergartens. As one informant explained,

¹ It was suggested to me a number of times during my field work that PAS the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party had set up kindergartens in the rural areas in opposition to the Kemas programmes as part of their campaign against UMNO and that part of the governments concern over the content of the curriculum being provided in the kindergartens was concern with the fundamentalist teachings being promoted by PAS officials. However, this was not verified by any of the informants during the course of the interviews
² Persatuaan Tadika Malaysia
every body else in Malaysia was doing their own thing, and she was the one who said this thing had to stop and opened up the teacher training centre (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94).

Sister Denise, a dynamic, talented and strong personality in pre-school education, was the principal of a primary and lower secondary school in Kuantan on the east coast of Malaysia (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94). In the early 1970s, she was requested by the Bishop of Kuala Lumpur to take over the running of Fatimah kindergarten at St Johns church in Kuala Lumpur. As Sister Denise became involved in the work of the kindergarten she became concerned at the lack of local training available for teachers working in the private sector.¹

There was a tremendous need to provide cheaper training, the other programmes were too expensive, like Montessori, Froebel, you had to go to England and the exchange rate in those days was 8 or 9 dollars to the pound and only the very rich could afford to go there, you had to be a scholarship student and very few could obtain scholarships a handful of them only five or six were able to go. And they came back and those qualifications were considered very prestigious, Montessori and Froebel so the locals had no training programme (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94)

It was extremely important to Sister Denise that the training provided by the Kindergarten Association was given official recognition by the Malaysian Government. Her concern to maintain positive relations with the Ministry of Education is reflected in the Association's objective,

to educate and encourage the development of kindergartens in the urban and rural areas, while at the same time fostering a closer relationship of the Association with the State Education Department (EPRD, 1985, p.4).

¹ The Methodist Church had run kindergarten training programmes for their teachers during the 1950s and 1960s but had moved their base to Kuantan on the east coast by the 1970s
The training programme set up by Sister Denise in 1973 still provides, in its original form, 210 hours of in-service training to private sector kindergarten teachers over a two year period (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94). The course is divided into six steps completed in the school holidays. In the early days, however, there was some confusion over the role of the training programme which, some argue, attempted to imitate the government teacher training programmes for primary and secondary school teachers. These government training programmes were full time over five semesters and carried out in specialist teacher education institutions. While the Kindergarten Association could not compete with such a comprehensive training programme, Sister Denise was adamant that the training programme offered by the Association should be recognised by the Malaysian authorities (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94). To this end, she employed a number of university and teacher training college lecturers to teach in the Association programme. Although highly qualified in their respective fields these lecturers tended to have unrealistic expectations of their students and take an unnecessarily academic approach (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94). Many of the teachers in the private sector had only achieved completion of form three secondary schooling and were not equipped for academic study. Even so these lecturers tended to model their teaching on their own experience at university or teacher training colleges where they had been taught by English lecturers. As one of the early Association lecturers explained, they believed that whatever they had been taught by the English lectures was worth emulating.

Whatever we offered in this programme was good, because we related back to what we did when we were doing teacher training because the people who came from England were very strict. So we passed on all these expectations back to the curriculum (Inf. 15 1. 21.7.94).
Thus, unwittingly these teachers became the vehicle for the continued transmission of western approaches to early childhood education and development.

While the academic approach taken in the Association's programme resulted in some discord amongst members of the association, it did achieve the aura of respectability sought by Sister Denise (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94). Even so, government recognition of the training programme was limited and did not allow the Kindergarten Association trained teachers to teach within the state school system. One of the other major drawbacks of the training courses provided by the Kindergarten Association was that they were, and still are, conducted in English. This makes them inaccessible to teachers who do not possess a good command of English. Nevertheless, the Association's teacher training programmes are recognised for making an important contribution to the improvement of the quality of the kindergarten programmes being offered to children in Malaysia (Inf. 10 1: 16.7.94).

In addition to concerns over the content of the kindergarten programmes, the quality of the care being provided in the child care centres also provoked anxiety among government officials. In 1981, the Ministry of Social Welfare began to receive complaints from members of the public about conditions in some of the child care centres (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94). The national newspapers also reported incidents of children in child care centres being drugged to make them sleep, overcrowding and parents failing to return for their children (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94). Despite the call for inter-sectoral collaboration made at the National Seminar on Planning for Children and Youth in Development in 1970, there was no collaboration between the different departments responsible for kindergartens and child care services and consequently, each
department utilised different means to improve the quality of the respective programmes.

**Official responses**

The Ministry of Education attempted to regulate the curriculum content in the kindergartens by developing a pre-school package and a set of curriculum guidelines for kindergartens (Inf. 4 1: 15.1.94). The pre-school packages contained a general and a specific guidebook for pre-school education, activities that could be carried out in the pre-school classes, materials for the children to work with (blocks and activity books) and pictures and posters (CDC n.d.). The use of the pre-school packages was based on a set of principles advocating parental involvement, learning through play, respect for individual differences, the importance of children's interactions, environment, the use of local materials, fairness and attention to the children's health, safety and comfort (CDC n.d.). The preschool package has been criticised for being expensive and nothing more than a replication of materials and activities found in most European kindergarten programmes (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94). The officers from the Curriculum Development Centre, however, went to much trouble to ensure their packages were suited to the local context. Each set of materials were tested and evaluated in their own experimental kindergarten class and in Kemas, Felda and private sector pre-school programmes before they were made available for widespread distribution (Inf. 4 1: 15.1.94).

A process of cultural borrowing and adaptation characterised the development of the curriculum guidelines. Under the direction of the Curriculum Development Centre and with funding from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, the guidelines were developed by a committee of 'experts' from all the major pre-school organisations (Inf. 1 3 :12.7.94). Among these were
representatives from Felda, Kemas, the Police, Army, National Unity, the private sector and the Ministry of Education. Sister Denise, from the Malaysian Kindergarten Association, was a particularly influential member of this committee (Inf. 13: 12.7.94). Over a ten year period this committee met regularly and took part in week-long workshops to develop and refine the curriculum objectives. The diversity of viewpoints among these representatives meant that the process was not an easy one (Inf. 13: 12.7.94). While western approaches to early childhood education provided a base from which to work, the workshop groups modified and adjusted specific objectives to suit the Malaysian context. Special emphasis was placed on formulating social, moral and religious objectives based on Malaysian rather than western values. In particular, collective rather than individualist values were emphasised. As one member of the curriculum development committee explained,

we took a lot from the west but we found that a lot had to be realigned to suit our own needs. Especially the social and the respect for the elders and especially religion and also values, social values. Like in our society we are more for the type of children who should be more obedient to the elders, to respect their elders, rather than personal freedom, individual freedom. And also to care for the community you know for the family, as against for the individuals. In fact if one person has to go overseas to study at the expense of others in our society, most probably that person will not go. But in western society, correct me if I'm wrong, they say, OK it is your right you should go and not be held by the others. So that's the values that we had changed. Mostly it's the religion and social (Inf. 13: 12.7.94).

At one level the curriculum guidelines reflect a distinctly Malaysian approach to early childhood education. The guidelines clearly incorporate the sentiments of the New Economic Policy with an emphasis on the promotion of national unity through Citizenship Education, Moral and Spiritual Education, the use of Bahasa Malaysia and Islamic Religious Education.
(Ministry of Education 1993). The use of western, unidirectional approaches to early childhood education as a base from which to work, and the involvement of western trained 'experts', however, resulted in the adoption of universal guidelines which were assumed to meet the needs of all children in all circumstances. While, the guidelines urge teachers to 'adapt the suggested activities to the developmental needs of the children and the local situation', there are no instructions on how this should be done. The section on Citizenship Education includes the objective 'To know and respect the customs and cultural practices of the various races'. The suggested activities for this objective, however, focus on visiting the homes of friends of different racial backgrounds on festive occasions, and on the celebration of festivals in the kindergarten rather than the incorporation of children's home experiences in the kindergarten programme.

This perspective is symptomatic of a 'compensatory' rather than 'constructionist' approach to early childhood education (Myers, 1992, p.93). A constructionist approach gives emphasis to respecting local cultures and reinforcing local ways of doing things and views the child not as a passive recipient of 'stimulation' but as an actor influencing the developmental process (Myres, 1992, p.76). Overall the guidelines tend to be based on middle-class norms derived from the west and do not take into account the very different needs of the children in the urban squatter settlements, rural areas, plantations and metropolitan centres.

Unlike the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Welfare instigated a 'constructionist' and 'bottom' up approach, in the form of an action research project, to improve the knowledge and understanding of care providers in the child care centres. Initially, however, the Ministry of Social Welfare with funding from UNICEF and assistance from the University of Malaya
undertook a nationwide survey of child care services to assess the extent and quality of programmes delivered to children under four years of age (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94). When the Ministry announced its intent to undertake the survey there was considerable opposition both from the Department of Labour, which was responsible for regulating the living and working conditions of Estate workers, and from the plantation owners themselves (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94). As private holdings, access to the Estates was limited to those who lived and worked on them. Consequently, little was really known about the condition of Estate child care centres (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94). Fearing the survey would reveal the truth about conditions in which the children were cared for on the Estates, the plantation owners used essentially racist arguments about ethnicity and different cultural values as reasons for not being included in the survey (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94).

Nevertheless, the survey went ahead and revealed that the minimum standards laid down under the 1966 Housing and Minimum Standards Act were not being adhered to in the Estate centres (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94). Indeed, the conditions in many of the Estate child care programmes were simply appalling. One of the participants in the study described a visit to an Estate child care programme thus,

> It was terrible when the first time that we went I saw a child, a normal child, so retarded in every sense. Physically he was not able to stand, his limbs were so small he was not talking. He looked so tired he was so, you know, limp. There was nothing wrong with him. I would say he couldn't see properly, you know, because of the problem with malnutrition...... Talk about, you know, the place being really dirty, urine all over the floor. We had to walk like this, like that, just to avoid these things (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94).
Apart from the poor hygiene and sub-standard buildings the staff-child ratios were exceptionally high. Seventeen percent of the Estate child care centres had one care giver for over 30 children. These caregivers were women who were considered too old or too sick to work in the fields (Yusof, 1987, p.3).

The home based centres fared much better than most of the Estate centres. The majority of them, 86%, cared for only one child and their houses were meticulously clean and maintained (Yusof, Ooi & Hamid-Don, 1983, p.62). However, the caregivers in the home based centres had very low educational qualifications and had the poorest understanding of the importance of early educational experiences and children's health needs. The institutional centre based services generally offered better quality care than the home based or Estate centres. All thirteen centres that received an excellent rating in the survey were institutional centres operating in metropolitan centres. Eight of these services were in the metropolitan cities of Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya, two were in towns in Sabah, one in Johore Bharu and two in Penang (Yusof, Ooi & Hamid-Don, 1983, p.62).

The major weakness in all types of services surveyed, including good quality institutional centres, was the emphasis on custodial care and the lack of stimulating activities and experiences for the children. This caused concern among the government officials as, regardless of the official distinction between child care and kindergartens 74% of Estate centres and 61% of the institutional centres catered for children between four and six years as well as children under four years of age (Department of Social Welfare, 1983, p.26).

The findings of the National Child Care Survey prompted the Ministry of Social Welfare to introduce legislation in the form of the 1984 Child Care Centres Act, and to seek funding from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation to
establish Unit Taska (The Child Care Unit) within the Department of Social Welfare (Inf. 51: 27.7.94). The Unit was responsible for the formulation and implementation of the Alternative Child Care project. The major objective of the Alternative Child Care Project was to formulate a Malaysian, as opposed to western, concept in Child Care (Dept. Social Welfare, 1992). In order to do this, the Ministry of Social Welfare with funding from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, undertook an action research project in the child care centres.

In the initial phase of the project officers from the Department of Social Welfare visited centres in the three different sectors, the Estates, rural areas and urban centres. Three Estates in Negeri Sembilan, several home based programmes in the Felda and Felcra land schemes were selected along with institutional centres in the rural areas and metropolitan cities of Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh (Inf. 131: 30.7.94). The purpose of this phase of the project was to develop training strategies for the child minders in the three sectors based on their different needs.

For eighteen months officers carried out observations, conducted needs assessments, provided parent education programmes and in-service training for the child minders (Inf. 131: 30.7.94). Each officer spent a minimum of three days each month in the child care centres working with parents and caregivers. Many of the officers had little or no training in child development.

It was actually in house training for us as well, as all of us who were involved in the project were degree holders but we had not done child development per se, we had not majored in child development. We could have done, like me one semester of child development, and the others, they would have done human development. So for us it was actually first hand experience. We had to stay in the centres, go in
before the doors opened and stay until the doors closed (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94)

On completion of this phase of the project the Unit Taska officers developed separate training packages for the caregivers in each sector based on their observations and assessment of needs. This initiative was based on the belief that,

one type of training or one model of training won't apply to everybody, because it does not work in the plantations purely because they don't speak the same language, they are at a different level of background altogether, then the urban is another story, the rural Malays another story (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94).

Apart from the different environmental conditions in the different settings, very different cultural traditions had to be taken into consideration.

....at that time it was quite distinct, you talk about the Indians, you talk about the rural it was Malays, Urban it was mixed. So we had to work out different strategies and models of training. That was one thing. I felt that to support training we had to work to understand what parents do, what adults do with children. That is why we had to look into some simple traditional parenting strategies (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94).

In contrast to the academic approach used by the Persatuaan Tadika Malaysia and the 'compensatory' 'top down' approach taken by the Ministry of Education, the curriculum for the child minders training was deliberately based on what was actually being done ordinarily every day in the centre, in the home. That means looking at daily routines, that means looking at traditional practices...when we talk about language stimulation of children then they will just say how would you use daily routines to stimulate language rather than planning special activity which is not part of the routine, you know you have to get children grouped together (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94).
This 'bottom up' approach represented an innovation in child care and kindergarten training in Malaysia. Rather than employ academics to carry out the training, experienced practitioners were recruited and trained as 'master trainers'.

......the strategy for training was very interesting because it was not an academic approach to training with knowledge, contact, theory. But more involving people who are directly involved. It means other childminders who have better training who are more skilful, more experienced who can explain how to work along with the welfare to train other child minders, so the training strategy is one of using other child minders to train childminders, so it was good in that sense. It was not theoretical it was theoretical but more answering the problem of skill (Inf. 51: 27.7.94).

Much of the impetus for this innovative approach to training was due to the leadership of one woman, Cik Long Kamariah, a senior public servant with the Ministry of Social Welfare from the early 1980s to her retirement in 1990. Kamariah started her career in social welfare as an extension worker in an agricultural double crossing rice project in 1967 (Inf. 51: 27.7.94). It was here that she gained experience working with communities and developing training strategies suited to the needs of the local people.

Like Sister Denise, Cik Long Kamariah recognised the need for an independent association to provide training and leadership to the child care providers. She invited respected child care providers to form the association and undergo supervisory training that would enable them to become master trainers (Inf. 141: 26.7.94). By 1987, 60 licensed child care providers had registered as members of the Child Minders Association and 48 urban and 270 rural and Estate child care providers had completed a month long training package (Yusof, 1987, p.16). When the funding from the Bernard
Van Leer Foundation for the Unit Taska ceased in 1990, arrangements were made for the Child Minders Association to become solely responsible for the provision of child care training in Malaysia. Unfortunately due to limited funding, the one month training package was reduced to two weeks (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94)

In contrast to the 'bottom' up 'constructionist' approach taken to the development of the training for the care providers, a process of 'cultural borrowing' and adaptation was used to develop the child care regulations that formed the mainstay of the 1984 Child Care Centres Act. The officers responsible for formulating the regulations gathered information from other countries before developing a set of regulations for Malaysia.

What we did was, we tried to get a few regulations and Acts, I remember I had something from Hong Kong, a little bit from South Asia, from South Korea, then something from Thailand, a bit from Sweden. Because we wanted to compare, for example, the ratio of minder to child. So we needed some comparisons before we come up with what we thought would be appropriate for Malaysia (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94).

Consequently, the child care regulations in Malaysia have much in common with regulations found in many other countries including Australia and Britain.

The differences in the approaches taken by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Welfare to improving the quality of the kindergartens and child care centres, reflect different ideological positions regarding the role of education and the role of 'experts' in the development process. The Ministry of Education with its long association with colonial structures and values took an interventionist approach based on the belief that its role was to ameliorate deficiencies among parents and teachers and to insure that kindergartens
served the interests of the government, rather than the children and their families. The Ministry of Social Welfare, however, unencumbered by a colonial legacy, adopted a more 'empowering' model of development to improve the conditions in the child care centres. This approach was based on the acknowledgment of the different needs of children and families living in very different social and cultural environments and the belief that its role was to improve the conditions in which people live rather than to serve the interests of the government.

**Entrepreneurial activity**

Despite the government's efforts to regulate the content of the curriculum in the kindergartens, both Montessori and Doman-Delacato approaches to early childhood education dominate discussions about curriculum in the private sector. The combination of greater interest in the benefits of early education and the increasing demand for child care services created a climate ripe for entrepreneurial activity during the 1980s. The activities of two women in particular, were to have a far reaching effect on the development of the private sector kindergartens during the 1980s. Between them they were responsible for the widespread adoption of Montessori and Doman-Delacato approaches to early childhood education throughout Malaysia (field notes January 1993).

Mrs. Lew, a Malaysian Academic at the University of Malaya was the first person to initiate discussions with the London School of Montessori regarding establishing a Malaysian Branch of the School in Kuala Lumpur. However, negotiations between the two parties broke down early on and in 1982, the

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4 In the interests of assuring the key informants the confidentiality promised to them, the names of these women have been withheld. In this instance it is more important to the analysis to be able to report the detail provided by these informants than to disclose the names of the particular women concerned.
franchise was offered to a young woman who had already set up her own Montessori kindergarten. This young woman was first introduced to Montessori education while helping out at the kindergarten her cousin attended (Inf. 14 1:26.7.94). After finishing secondary school in 1977 her family persuaded her to study at St. Nicholas Montessori teacher training college in London. While she was not particularly interested in teaching, she believed the training would be provide her with 'a good finishing school so at least I would be a good mum when I got married and had my own children' (Inf. 14 1:26.7.94).

On the return to Kuala Lumpur this young woman opened her own Montessori school and between 1982 and 1992, worked in collaboration with the London School of Montessori to provide a correspondence course for kindergarten teachers in Malaysia (Inf. 14 1:26.7.94). The students were provided with study materials and attended workshops at the kindergarten in Kuala Lumpur. Many of the graduates of this training course opened their own very expensive kindergartens which espoused an allegiance to the Montessori philosophy.

Many of these kindergartens, however, simply used Montessori's name as a useful marketing tool.

They use the word Montessori very loosely you know and ah I’m sure if you go to those Montessori school if you have spoken to them they will tell you it's not really a hundred percent Montessori not really what they have studied. Either they adapt it to suit the local needs or to suit their own budgets (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94).

A key player in the Montessori franchise in Malaysia voiced her frustration at the entrepreneurial approach taken by many of these kindergartens thus,
They just do a correspondence {course} and workshop. So for years I was churning out correspondence and workshop students. I'm the Dennis the Menace behind it. They all go out and put Montessori and they all charge and they all say they are doing it and there is nothing we can do about it. I'm the culprit I suppose (Inf. 14 1: 26.7.94).

While many of these 'ad hoc' Montessori schools simply use Montessori's name there are a number of genuine Montessori kindergarten's operating successfully in Malaysia. Some of these have gone to great pains to adapt their programmes to the local context while maintaining a genuine Montessori philosophy. These programmes teach the national language, Bahasa Melayu, and incorporate the Ministry of Education guidelines into their curriculum (Inf. 14 1: 26.7.94).

While the Montessori philosophy is recognised internationally as a legitimate method of early childhood education and appears in many discussions of early childhood educational philosophy, the Doman-Delacato method of instruction has been treated with suspicion by educationalist since its development in the late 1950s (Robbins & Glass, 1967). Even so, as in many other countries, the Doman-Delacato method of instruction gained enormous popular following when it was brought to Malaysia during the mid 1980s by a senior public servant who was involved in population and family development programmes. This woman, a doctor by profession travelled to America and returned with great enthusiasm for the work being carried out by Doman and Delacato in Philadelphia which promised to accelerate young children's cognitive development (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94).

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The Doman-Delacato method of instruction is based on a theory of neurological organisation that postulates that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny (Robbins & Glass, 1967, p.2). Ontogeny is the process of individual development and phylogeny the process of species development. The theory suggests that human development can be divided into five separate levels, each level is dependent upon the development of a previous level and associated with a specific part of the brain. Correspondingly, each level is also associated with a particular stage of animal development. According to this theory, specific developmental stages must occur in a prearranged order for 'normal' human development to occur (Robbins & Glass, 1967, p.9). Thus, problems such as dyslexia, hyperactivity, aphasia, ataxic gait, reading reversals, stuttering, spelling deficiencies, low scholastic aptitude were attributed to immature neurological organisation (Robbins & Glass, 1967, p.4). Treatment for these problems consists of specific exercises designed to restore the level or neurological organisation required to fulfil these functions. These exercises included creeping, crawling, walking, reducing all musical activities, sidedness exercises, establishing a sleep posture, patterning and many more.

This technique was originally developed for children with brain injuries in North America between 1955 and 1962 (Robbins & Glass 1967p2). Glen Doman, a physical therapist, Carl Delacato, a teacher and Robert Doman, a medical practitioner, worked together to develop the technique which was practiced at the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential in Philadelphia (Robbins & Glass, 1967, p.2). The institute was privately run and the cost of treatment per child quite considerable. The Doman-Delacato technique and the work of the Institute was the subject of much international criticism at the height of its popularity during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1967, the Laboratory of Educational Research at the University of Colorado...
published a critical analysis of the Doman-Delacato rationale (Robbins & Glass 1967, p.2). The report refuted the basis upon which the techniques were founded and criticised the Institute for not carrying out verifiable evaluations of their work. The report also concluded that there was no evidence to substantiate the value of the theory or the practices used in the Doman-Delecato techniques (Robbins & Glass 1967p37).

Despite warnings to the public issued by notable authorities, such as the American Academy of Paediatrics, that claims made by the Institute of Human Potential were largely unsubstantiated, the Institute attracted an enormous amount of media attention and popular following world wide. This was particularly so when treatment was extended to include delayed or poorly articulated speech, poor handwriting, behaviour problems in school and at home and squints(Robbins & Glass, 1967, p.5). In New Zealand, the popular following of the approach during the 1970s was attributed to the lack of alternative treatment programmes available to parents and the enormous investment parents were asked to make in the programme (Beale, n.d. p.7). In a report to the New Zealand Psychological Society on the Doman-Delacto method, it was argued that,

the expenses in money, effort, organisation, and obligation that is attached to the DD programme guarantees that they will at least be continued, adored, and seen to be effective (Beale n.d. p.7)

Although the Doman-Delacato technique was developed to assist children with developmental delay the Institute of Human Potential claimed that 'normal' children could also benefit from the programme (Norton & Doman 1982). Despite these claims a study of different curriculum approaches used in 'Head Start' programmes in Detroit during 1968, indicated that children undertaking his programmes make no more gains than other children
receiving the normal multi-sensory programme used in the Detroit Head Start and kindergarten programme (O'Piela 1968). In 1983, The American Academy of Paediatrics published a policy statement citing lack of research into the effectiveness of the Doman-Delecato approach. The statement raised concern over the effect of the approach on parents and other family members and concluded that the demands of the programme might overburden families without achieving gains for the child concerned over and above those gains expected through normal growth and development (American Academy of Paediatrics 1983).

The rhetoric of the Doman-Delecato approach, which claimed to accelerate children's cognitive development and produce children _par excellence_, proved particularly appealing to Malaysian government officials whose principal objective under the New Economic Policy was the creation of a new 'Malaysian race'. In his book, _Teach Your Baby to Read_, Doman advocates the utility of his early reading programme, which was based on the use of rote learning and flash cards, to produce a superior 'race' of people,

> What a race and what a future might we not produce if we could stop the waste of children's lives when their ability to take in language in all its forms is at its peak. Now that the children can read and thus increase their knowledge, perhaps beyond anybody's dreams - what will they do with the world? (Doman, 1964, p.158).

The persuasiveness of this rhetoric and the credibility of the senior public servant responsible for bringing the programmes to Malaysia managed to persuade the government to demonstrate support for the Doman-Delecato method. Indeed, none other than the Prime Minister officially opened the first public workshop by Glenn Doman in Malaysia (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94).
The Government also invested large amounts of money in the programme but was disappointed when no attempt was made to adapt it for Malaysian use (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94). For example, the flash cards that are an important part of the programme were not translated into any of the local languages. The programme also stipulated a special diet for the children that was based on foods common to North America and not Malaysia. According to one informant,

when the government did an evaluation they were very disappointed because the evaluations showed that the package was imported exclusively as it was and they did not really cater for our children, our culture, our environment, so they did not really make a big success of it where they had promised in the beginning (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94).

Even though the Doman-Delacato programme lost the support of the Malaysian Federal Government, it continues to be used by the State Government of Sarawak in some of its rural development programmes. Similarly, in Kuala Lumpur, the Nuri institute established by the civil servant responsible for bringing Glen Doman to Malaysia, continues to provide kindergarten programmes and teacher training course based on the Doman-Delacato technique. As a method of instruction the Doman-Delacato technique enjoys a popular following among parents who are eager to grasp every opportunity to assist their children to 'get ahead'. Indeed it seems that having a child who is an intellectual genius is a much sort after status symbol and thus, programmes which claim to produce intellectual giants are in great demand (Chiam, 1994, p.102).

The popularity of the Doman-Delacato method of instruction among parents is due in large part to the aggressive marketing of the programme which
included exploitative media coverage. Particularly influential was the television coverage of the programme, 

Big money was spent on it. One of the parts of the campaign was trying to show the impact the effectiveness of the programme She [the senior public servant responsible for bringing the programme to Malaysia] had grandmothers say one or two English words to the child and the child and the grandmother would speak English. She had the children identify flags of the world. So politicians, people who don't know in the rural areas think "wow these are very intelligent children" (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94).

The programme also evoked newspaper coverage where it was claimed that the success of the programme could be seen in the children who could differentiate crystal from glass and Mercedes from BMW's (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94). While some people argue that parents are attracted to accelerated learning programmes because of a lack of understanding of child development, others put the popular following of the Glenn Doman programme down to the persuasive rhetoric which encourages parents to believe that every child can be programmed to be a genius (Chiam, 1994, p.104).

There were so many papers, so many written in the articles so many kinds of conventions, seminars, all to help Malaysia, to make a brighter child. So everybody make a rat race to get into the kindergarten but what is wrong is the rat race is to raise a brighter child regardless of whether the child is happy or not (Inf. 14.1: 26.7.94).

According to Chiam Heng Keng, professor of Social Psychology in Education at the University of Malaya, parents believed that the exorbitant fees charged by many of the kindergartens using the Doman-Delacato techniques was proof enough that the techniques worked; 'the higher the fee the better
the programme, and the more spectacular the educational outcome' (Chiam, 1994, p.103).

The popular following of the Doman-Delacato approach to early education in Malaysia should also be understood within the context of a colonial legacy that persuaded politicians, early childhood professionals and parents alike, that their own child rearing methods were deficient and that those found in the west were inherently superior. Indeed, it seems that the 'psychology of oppression' is very much apparent in the reasons given for the widespread popularity of accelerated learning programmes for young children in Malaysia. According to informants, parents still tend to believe in the superiority of western culture and hence the supremacy of programmes originating from the west.

Montessori and Glen Doman are foreign based and you know, I don't know about other countries, but here if it's foreign based it must be good. OK so it's from London it's from US so it must be a good program. Europeans have done well on this program so people believe it must be good (Inf. 131: 30.7.94).

Another informant described the vulnerability of Malaysian teachers and parents to the exploitative marketing techniques used by both foreign and local entrepreneurs thus,

Malaysia is like a sponge so hungry anything is absorbed, it has confused the scenario because all these people accept blindly, they just take these foreign ideas and don't adapt it to the local scenario (Inf. 141: 26.7.94).

**Post 1980s sensitivities and confusion**

The aggressive marketing of Doman-Delacato approaches to early education resulted in the proliferation of very expensive early education material ranging from ordinary child care products to academic materials (Inf. 131:
Informants believed that these products have caused much confusion among parents who are trying to do the best for their children.

Five years ago nobody came and asked me what system I used, but now it is the next question the parents ask. Sometimes it annoys me. I said, "why do you ask what system, this is an established school", we are qualified and registered and what system can I use except the best system. The parents are in utter confusion and they talk about phonetics. I've had parents who come in asking "are you running the school of phonetics" and I said, "what phonetic lesson, phonetics are just a portion of the reading skill". You see this is the confusion that it causes nowadays and I am angry but I am like a lone head mistress trying to fight the immense confusion (Inf. 15 1: 21.7.94).

According to another informant, the widespread adoption of Montessori and Doman Delacato methods of instruction by the private sector kindergartens also caused confusion and suspicion between the government and the private sector.

There was a few years of total confusion. There was hostility from the government because the private sector just do what they like. These people [government officials] cannot come in and give instructions when they did not bother to do any evaluation of what they were doing, or on what we are doing, I am one of them......They are saying that my children are too bright when they go to school they will cause problems I say that's not my problem that's your problem to deal with it. My children don't have exams they don't have homework they don't do pages and pages of things. It's for you to worry about, not me (Inf. 14 1: 26.7.94).

In 1991, concern over the widespread use of programmes and materials emanating from the west led to the development of a Parent Involvement manual (Program Penlibatan Ibu - Bapa) for child care services. According to the writers of this manual, parents were depending on western programmes and materials which did not accommodate traditional values and norms (Department of Social Welfare, 1993, p.1). Thus, the aim of the Parent Involvement manual was to provide parents with an alternative to
'western materials'. The introductory chapter of this manual discusses the important role played by grandparents and village elders in providing support and guidance to young parents: a role, it argues, that has diminished with the advent of the nuclear family and the migration of rural families to the urban areas.

The manual was produced by the Department of Social Welfare with funding from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. Initially, funding was made available for a study of child rearing practices in Malaysia but the funding was diverted towards the development of parenting skills (Field notes 19.12.93). It seems that the popular following of the Doman-Delacato programmes and the trend towards accelerated learning in the kindergarten programmes may have been an influential force in determining the content of the Parent Involvement Manual. The handbook consists of six sections; Ibu Bapa teras pertumbuhan dan perkembangan kanak kanak (the importance of parents in the growth and development of children); Perkembangan kanak kanak (child development); Teman Bersama (companionship); Teman Berbual (interactions); Teman Bermain; (playing together) and Contoh akiviti - Penglibatan Ibu Bapa di Rumah (activities for parents to play in the home).

Unfortunately, the manual does not reflect the 'bottom up' approach used in the Child Minders training packages and has been criticised for its 'top down' orientation (Inf. 13 1: 30.7.94). According to one informant, this is because it was not written by practitioners or parents but by university academics.

They don’t respect parents you know in that way because they feel that parents need to be taught. Parents need to have knowledge. They call in university professors write up chunks of different parts of the handbook. What ever knowledge [they have] comes from the book. And they keep on talking about parent involvement, they don’t know what is parent involvement and what is parent empowerment. [They
Certainly, the language used in the handbook assumes a certain level of education that many parents in the rural areas and in the Estates may not have achieved. For example, the child development section is divided into four developmental domains; language, physical, cognitive and social and emotional development. These are concepts that are second nature to trained early childhood professionals and understood by middle class parents familiar with the principles of early childhood education, but are not part of the daily lives of parents living in the Estates and rural agricultural areas of Malaysia. One informant suggested that the whole approach in the parent involvement programme has been misguided,

I think you have to sort of cut away the expert approach, you have to work with parents, and you learn from them. I have learnt a lot from working with parents. But of course, at the back of your mind, you have some ideas of how you are going to move about. But I think that the respect for parents must be there you must ask what is it, What problems are you are faced with, and work from there (Inf. 5 1: 27.7.94).

Indeed, the approach taken in the parent involvement manual is one of parent education rather than involvement. The manual provides parents with activities aimed at facilitating their child's development rather than strategies to help them ensure that the kindergarten and child care programmes are responsive to the social and cultural reality of children's lives. It seems that, in its attempts to counter the influence of what were perceived as western approaches to child rearing and early education, in particular the influence of the accelerated learning materials and programmes, the handbook was written for a predominantly middle-class audience. Thus, the needs of children and
parents in the Estates, rural areas and poor urban areas seem to have been overlooked.

In the late 1980s, however, the needs of the rural children in the TBK programmes became a priority for the Minister for Education, Anwar Ibrahim. Despite the adjustments to the TBK curriculum made in response to the findings of the study carried out by the Ministry of Education in 1985, Anwar was anxious for the Ministry of Education to take 'a more dynamic leadership role in pre-school education' (Inf. 10: 1: 16.7.94). Consequently, in 1990, the Ministry of Education established the Annexe pre-school programmes (Inf. 4: 2: 2.8.94). The Annexe pre-schools were attached to primary schools and were thus considered part of the national education system. The Ministry of Education also established pre-school classes in the teacher training colleges and formed a working committee to develop a five semester training programme for pre-school teachers (Inf. 10: 1: 16.7.94).

However, the Deputy Prime Minister of the time, with the support of Kemas officers opposed this plan. The Kemas officers were concerned that the political and development role played by the Kemas TBK's would be threatened by the Ministry of Education programmes which did not include a community development perspective. As one informant explained:

[the Deputy Prime Minister] was not so favourable to the new role of the Ministry of Education because the annexe programmes was supposed to cater the needs of the poor and the Kemas people are in the same game really. So although there were lots of assurances from the Ministry of Education that they were not going to areas which were very established by Kemas there was a lot of unease [amongst] KEMAS officers. Politically these people have influence because the early power base of UMNO was in the rural areas. The Malay teachers and the Kemas teachers especially, were the change agents. You cannot separate politics from this change process really many people feel uneasy about that role but it's not like that (Inf. 10: 1: 16.7.94).
The opposition to the Ministry of Education's plans, described by another informant as a 'tussle between the Ministry of Education and Kemas', resulted in the freezing of the Annexe pre-school programme and the five semester pre-school teacher training programme (Inf. 11: 5.1.94). However, the teacher training division maintained its role in providing 'master' training courses to the teacher trainers from Kemas and the Department of National Unity who remain responsible for training the pre-school teachers in their respective programmes (Inf. 10: 16.7.94). There are currently 1139 pre-school annexes throughout the country mostly in rural and poor urban areas where there are no other pre-school programmes provided by either Kemas or National Unity (Ministry of Education figures 1992). The focus of the annexe programmes has been diverted to research, the provision of experimental programmes and the development of model centres (Inf. 4: 14.1.94). Thus, while responsibility for registration and curriculum guidelines remains with the Ministry of Education, responsibility for the provision of pre-school education in Malaysia remains largely with the Kemas, the Department of National Unity and the private sector.

In summary, greater opportunities for women including exposure to western style secular education, and a shift in women's work patterns led to an increasing demand for early education and child care services during the 1970s and 1980s. In the absence of state provision this demand was met by the private sector. While many kindergartens were established by middle class women seeking educational opportunities for their own young children and ex-primary school teachers who looked upon kindergarten work as a vocation, a large number of kindergartens were set up by profit seeking entrepreneurs with little experience or training in early childhood education. A combination of lack of training and experience on the part of the service providers and pressure from parents for more formal programmes resulted in
the widespread adoption of academic curriculum in the private sector kindergartens. Discrepancies in the school performance of children who attended these more formal kindergartens and those who attended the TBK programmes in the rural and poor urban areas, resulted in the adjustment of the TBK curriculum to include a focus on reading, writing and arithmetic.

Questions over the appropriateness of the curriculum in the private sector kindergartens, together with the expansion of child care services which offered substandard care for young children, created concern among government officials who instigated measures to improve the conditions in both the kindergartens and child care centres. Unfortunately, inter-sectoral divisions meant that responsibility for improving the conditions in the kindergartens and child care centres was left to different government departments. The Ministry of Education took a 'top down' compensatory approach to the improvement of the curriculum being offered to young children in the kindergartens which resulted in a lack of acknowledgment of the different needs of children living in different social and cultural environments. The Ministry of Social Welfare, on the other hand, took a 'bottom up' constructionist approach to the development of caregiver training that was specifically tailored to the needs of children living in different social and cultural environments. The difference in the two approaches reflects different ideological positions regarding the role of education in the development process.

During the 1980s, the introduction of Montessori teacher training programmes and programmes for young children based on the Doman-Delacato method of instruction, had a huge impact on the curriculum being offered to young children in private sector kindergarten and child care centres. The aggressive marketing of the Doman-Delacato programmes, in
particular, led to the proliferation of early education products and to the popularity of accelerated learning materials and programmes among parents. It appears that money allocated to the study of different child rearing practices in Malaysia was diverted to the development of a parent involvement manual directed at countering the dependence of parents on educational materials emanating from the west. With the attention focused on the private sector in the urban centres, little attention was given to children in the Estates, rural areas and poor urban communities where the responsibility for programmes remained with the Ministries of Labour and National Unity and Rural Development. In 1990, the Ministry of Education announced its intention to take a more 'dynamic leadership role' in preschool education but was opposed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Kemas officials who feared the Ministry of Education programmes would undermine the role of the TBKs in the development process.

Thus, administrative fragmentation and ideological division continues to characterise the delivery of services for young children in Malaysia. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the registration of kindergartens and providing curriculum guidelines for children between four and six years of age; the Department of Welfare is responsible for the registration and training of care providers in child care centres for children under four years of age; and the Department of Labour remains responsible for overseeing the child care centres in the Estates. The responsibility for the provision of kindergarten programmes in the rural and poor urban areas lies with the Ministry of National Unity and Rural Development. In the absence of any state provision for child care, the private sector provides child care services throughout the country and kindergartens for the middle classes in the urban centres.
Figure 3. Kindergarten programmes provided by the Ministry of Rural Development in

Ministry of Rural Development

Kemas
Community Development Division

Village Development and Security Committee

Kindergarten management committee

TABIKA

Felda and Felcra TADIKA

Police and Army TADIKA
Kindergarten and child care programmes provided by the Ministry of Unity and Social Development

Ministry of Unity and Social Development

- Department of Unity
  - Neighbourhood watch programme
  - Unity kindergartens for children 4-6 yrs in the urban and rural centres - TABIKA

- Department of Social Welfare
  - Training for Unity kindergarten teachers
  - Alternative child care project. Registration of child care centres for children 0-4 years
  - Association of registered childminders
    - Provides training for caregivers and professional support
Figure 5  Preschool programmes provided by the Ministry of Education 1994

Ministry of Education

- Teachers and School Registration Division
  - Curriculum guidelines for kindergartens in Malaysia
- Curriculum Development Centre
- Schools Division
  - Annexe preschool programmes
- Teacher Training Division
  - Training of master trainers for the Unity and Kemas teacher education programmes
While it is clear that the experience of industrialisation created a demand for formal child care services, the experience of colonisation and western imperialism seems to provide a more plausible explanation for the way in which both kindergarten and child care programmes have evolved in Malaysia and may also provide an explanation for the predominance of western models of service delivery and the lack of acceptance of indigenous models throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The consequences for Malaysian children vary according to social status, ethnicity and geographic location and raise important questions regarding the morality of exporting ethno-specific courses in early childhood care and education to developing countries.

Summary of findings
The 'psychology of oppression' described by both Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1965) was an important part of the colonial experience and led to a widely held belief in the superiority of western education among the middle class Malays. These beliefs were reinforced through the practice of providing upper class children access to the elite English schools which assured them a successful career in the public service. This practice contrasted with the complete neglect of Chinese and Indian children's schooling and the deliberate decision by the colonial administration to provide only very basic vernacular education to the rural Malays.
Beliefs in the superiority of western education were reinforced during the 1950s when the first kindergartens were established by missions, churches and private individuals in the urban centres. These kindergartens provided half-day educational programmes for middle class children who could afford the fees and were modelled on kindergartens found in the west. Children attending these kindergartens were advantaged when they went to primary school and were, therefore, able to complete their primary education in five rather than six years. The success of these early kindergartens prompted many Malay, Chinese, and Indian women to travel to England to undertake teacher training courses at Montessori colleges and the Froebel Institute in London. Others simply opened their kindergartens based on their own experience in primary schools.

A significant factor in the popularity of these kindergartens was the rising expectations of Malaysian women who, for the first time, had access to western style secular education for themselves. In particular, exposure to post-secondary and tertiary education led women to question traditional approaches to child rearing and seek greater educational opportunities for their young children. Thus, many women opened their own kindergartens in order to provide their children with a 'head start' in life.

The development of private sector kindergartens in the urban centres further exacerbated the disparity in educational opportunities for children in the rural areas created by a colonial education policy which discriminated on the grounds of ethnicity and geographic location. The plight of the children in rural areas was a matter for concern among delegates at the National Seminar on Planning for Children and Youth held in 1970. Unfortunately, colonial beliefs regarding the inferiority of traditional approaches to child rearing were embedded in post-colonial ideology which embraced capitalist notions.
of individualism and blamed individuals rather than structural inequalities for widespread poverty and underdevelopment. Hence, theories of cultural deprivation, popular in North America at that time, provided a convenient explanation for the under-achievement of poor Malay children living in the rural areas and were widely adopted by early childhood professionals and policy makers in the early 1970s. Thus, plans to improve the conditions for rural children, were focused on providing compensatory education in the form of western style kindergarten programmes such as those already proven successful in the urban centres.

These kindergartens were designed to promote particular government objectives which included the 'rehabilitation' of the rural Malays and the promotion of national unity. The notion of 'rehabilitating' the rural Malays was influenced by theories of cultural deprivation gaining currency in North America at that time, and was instrumental in deciding the compensatory nature of the state assisted kindergartens in the rural areas. The form and content of these programmes was also influenced by the British FAO adviser who first suggested the establishment of kindergartens in the rural areas and the Kemas officials who were given Malaysian scholarships to study in Britain during the 1960s. Kindergartens established under the guidance of the FAO adviser, the American Peace Corps and the Kemas officials were modelled on programmes developed for children in the West rather than designed specifically for poor children in the rural regions of Malaysia. Indeed, the whole orientation of the FAO towards western conceptions of motherhood and its preoccupation with home economics projects for women, seems to have been an influential force in deciding the role of the kindergartens, which, in complete disregard for the needs of working women, refused to provide them with child care services. Even though many women were able to combine agricultural work with child care, the need for child
care among rural women was clearly demonstrated by women in the Felda land schemes who established their own kindergartens and child care services so that their children were cared for while they worked.

During the 1970s and 1980s the government’s New Economic Policy actively encouraged rural-urban migration in order to service the export-orientated industries being established in the Free Trade Zones. The accompanying shift in women’s employment patterns from the agricultural and primary service sectors, where it may have been easier to balance economic activity with child care, to the manufacturing and secondary service sectors, where it was not possible to combine the two, created a huge demand for child care services. This demand, however, was not met by statutory provisions but by private individuals and the kindergartens already well established in the private sector. Unlike the state assisted programmes, which were influenced by western conceptions of motherhood, the private sector was quick to accommodate the needs of working women. Some kindergarten operators opened a separate child care centre for children not accommodated by the traditional kindergarten programme and others, regardless of the legal requirements, integrated a younger children into the existing kindergarten programme which was extended to cover the entire working day.

The expansion of the private sector kindergartens and child care services during the 1970s and 1980s was followed by growing concern among government officials and early childhood professionals about the content of the curriculum in the kindergartens and the quality of the care young children were receiving in the child care centres. Despite calls for inter-sectoral collaboration made at the National Seminar on Planning for Children and Youth in 1970, efforts to regulate and control the quality of child care and kindergarten services were left to the particular government departments
responsible for them. It is significant that the Ministry of Education, with its long history of colonial involvement and a high proportion of western trained officials, opted for an essentially 'top down' approach to the regulation of the curriculum taught in the kindergartens. While a process of cultural borrowing and adaptation characterised the construction of the curriculum guidelines, the guidelines still reflected the hegemony of western theories of child development and philosophies of early education and thus, did not take into account the specific needs of children living in different social and cultural environments in Malaysia.

Unlike the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Welfare unencumbered by a colonial legacy and a plethora of western trained professionals, adopted a 'bottom up' approach to the development of caregiver training in order to improve the quality of care provided in the child care centres. Rather than use western approaches to early childhood care and education as a base from which to work, the Ministry of Social Welfare used local ways and traditions as the starting point for the development of the training packages for caregivers. This approach enabled training packages to be developed around the very specific needs of children living in different social and cultural environments. Thus, training packages were specifically designed to meet the needs of particular communities and were not intended to be universal in their application.

Despite these efforts by the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare to control the curriculum in the kindergartens and the quality of care provided in the child care centres, the activities of western entrepreneurs had a huge impact on the form and content of both kindergartens and child care services in Malaysia during the 1980s. During this period, continuing concern over the poor school performance of children in the rural areas and the continuing
hegemony of western life style and perceptions resulting from the colonial experience predominant among middle class parents, provided a climate ripe for entrepreneurial activity. Both the London School of Montessori and the Institute for the Development of Human Potential in Philadelphia, seized the opportunity to market and franchise their programmes in Malaysia. These programmes, in particular the Doman-Delacato programme which claims to be able to programme every child to be a genius, have reinforced the hegemony of western approaches to early care and education and have been held responsible for a great deal of confusion and suspicion amongst parents, service providers and government authorities.

In an effort to counter the hegemony of these approaches and to offer guidance to parents wishing to enhance their children's development, funds were diverted from an investigation into different child rearing practices in Malaysia, to the production of a parent involvement manual. The aim of this manual was to provide a Malaysian alternative to western materials being used by parents to facilitate their children's development. Unfortunately, it seems that the programme was written by academics, themselves entrenched in the hegemony of western theories of child development and early education, and thus assumes the utility of universal theories of child development rather than addressing the very different needs of children living in different social and cultural environments in Malaysia.

In 1990, the Ministry of Education attempted to take a more active part in the provision of early childhood education programmes for young children in the rural areas by introducing the Annexe preschool classes which were attached to primary schools. This initiative was quickly thwarted by opposition from Kemas officials and the Deputy Prime Minister who believed that the existence of these preschool classes would undermine the work being carried
out in the village Tabikas. Hence, programmes for young children in Malaysia continue to be characterised by administrative fragmentation and ideological division comparable to that found in similar programmes in North America, Britain and Australia. The Ministry of Education remains responsible for the registration of kindergartens and providing curriculum guidelines for children between four and six years of age. The Department of Welfare remains responsible for the registration and training of care providers in child care centres for children under four years of age and the Department of Labour remains responsible for overseeing the child care centres in the Estates. The responsibility for the provision of kindergarten programmes in the rural and poor urban areas lies with the Ministry of National Unity and Rural Development and in the absence of any state provision, the private sector provides child care services throughout the country and kindergartens in the urban centres.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of the evolution of early childhood care and education programmes in Malaysia has demonstrated that western theories and models of service delivery were influential in determining the form and content of these programmes. The experience of colonisation and western imperialism, in the form of the continued involvement of western trained professionals and entrepreneurs, has had a tremendous impact on the way in which services for young children in Malaysia have developed. It is clear that similarities between programmes for young children found in the west and those operating in Malaysia are due to the experience of colonisation and western imperialism rather than simply the result of a common response to similar needs.
Thus, it is argued that the industrialisation-convergence hypothesis is not an adequate explanation for the similarities between programmes for young children in Malaysia and those found in the west. Rather, the predominance of western models of service delivery in Malaysia is due to the pervasiveness of western hegemony that originated in the colonial experience and was perpetuated during the 1970s by western trained advisers, policy makers and early childhood professionals. In the 1980s, the aggressive marketing of programmes emanating from the west reinforced the belief among parents, policy makers and advocates alike, that not only were indigenous child rearing methods faulty, but that those found in the west were inherently superior. In more recent years, government officials and early childhood professionals have attempted to promote indigenous approaches to early childhood care and education but have been thwarted in their endeavours by their own complicity in the hegemony of the west and by ideological differences and inter-sectoral divisions that characterise service delivery in Malaysia.

The consequences of the way in which programmes for young children in Malaysia have developed vary in the different sectors. For middle class children living in the urban centres, the real and disturbing problems lie in the pressure that seems to be exerted upon them to achieve academically from a very early age. The pervasiveness of western hegemony, and the introduction of accelerated learning programmes originating in the west, have convinced middle class parents that academic achievement will provide their children with the key to future success. Thus, these young children are often denied the opportunity for adequate rest and play and have been described as the new generation of 'children without childhood' (Chiam, 1994, p.106).
The autonomy of plantation owners and inter-sectoral divisions among the different government departments has meant that young children in the Estates have been the most neglected in Malaysia. Although the Department of Social Welfare and the Department of Labour have made some inroads into improving the appalling conditions in the child care centres which were established during the colonial administration, many continue to provide very poor quality care. The official distinction between care and education has also had consequences for young children in the Estates. Legislation refers only to provision of child care facilities in the Estates and not to kindergartens for children over four, thus, kindergartens are often inadequate and sometimes non-existent.

For children in the rural and poor urban areas the consequences are less clear. Certainly there has been criticism of compensatory programmes for young children in other developing countries (Myers, 1992). This criticism is based on the evidence that compensatory approaches to early education tend not to reinforce local ways and customs and thus put young children in the difficult position of trying to accommodate two or more very different cultural blue prints. Assessing the extent to which this is true in Malaysia is beyond the scope of this study. What is clear, however, is that the focus on the provision of kindergartens rather than child care facilities means that children of working women often have to attend more than one service in a day, which does nothing to assure the stability and continuity of care that young children need in order to develop to their full potential.

Implications for future directions in policy and research
The application of this study to the development of programmes for young children in other countries in the Asia-Pacific region lies in its ability to offer an explanation for why early childhood programmes in the region still suffer
from the slow acceptance of indigenous models, preference for imported models from the west and a lack of emphasis on non-formal approaches to meeting children's needs (Makagiansar 1989, p.237). It is hoped that the experience of Malaysia can be used in supporting the case for indigenous models of service provision and help policy makers, advisers and service providers understand the pervasiveness of western hegemony and the way in which their own actions and decisions can work to reinforce and perpetuate it.

The study raises important questions about the morality of exporting what amounts to be ethno-specific courses in early childhood care and education to developing and newly industrialising countries. What seems clear from this study is that western education is a powerful force in the perpetuation of western hegemony and has, in the past, acted against the best interests of young children and their families in the Third World. In order to prevent this occurring in the future, courses need to be designed around the very specific needs of children and families in the countries concerned. Curriculum development, therefore, needs to start with local knowledge and understandings and incorporate indigenous approaches to child rearing, care and education. Thus, curriculum development needs to be emergent, evolving from the interactions between course developers and local policy makers, advisers, parents and service providers.

This thesis has not attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes for young children in Malaysia, but rather to understand the relationship between western theories and models of service delivery and the evolution of programmes for young children in Malaysia. What is clear from this analysis, however, is that a truly Malaysian concept of care and education for young children, as described by the Department of Social Welfare (1992),
can only be achieved through a radical rethinking of programmes currently operating in Malaysia. As in Australia, the official distinction between care and education is not a useful one. Nor is a push towards a national system of preschool education that would undermine the important community development work performed by the Kemas and Unity Tabika. In order to develop policies and programmes that truly reflect the needs of children and families living in very different social and cultural environments in Malaysia, policy makers need to understand the pervasiveness of western hegemony with regard to outmoded theories of child development and early education and their own complicity in it. A useful way forward for Malaysia may be the formation of an independent body to investigate ways of achieving integrated programmes for young children that combine child care, early education and community development. This suggestion is not so very different from the unsuccessful call to establish a National Planning Council for Children made at the Seminar on Planning for Children and Youth in National Development held in Kuala Lumpur in 1970. Such a council would be able to ensure that programmes for young children in Malaysia respond to the unique needs of children living in different social and cultural environments and build upon the rich cultural base and time honoured practices that are already part of children's lives.
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