

## ETHNICITY AND SCHOOLING IN MALAYSIA: THE ROLE OF POLICY

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*This paper discusses the meaning of ethnicity and how ethnicity is used in constructing national education policies in Malaysia. The Second Malaysia Family Life Survey (MFLS-2) is then used to illustrate that national policies are powerful tools in altering the access to schooling for different ethnic groups directly. Also, each ethnic group appeared to respond to the Malaysian government's national policies in regulating school supply and employment opportunities for each group by increasing or restricting their fertility. The MFLS-2 data suggest that larger sibship size - a result of higher fertility - is associated with lower level of children's educational attainment, and vice versa. This finding indicates that restrictions on family size by each of Malaysia's ethnic groups were a rational attempt by parents to compensate for constraints on their ability to invest in their children's education.*