

# Nation-Building through Ethnic Minority Education Systems: A Comparative Study of Chinese Education in Malaysia and Malay Education in Singapore

**Jieming Zhang**

Fudan University, China

Email: [JZhang003@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:JZhang003@dundee.ac.uk)

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## **Abstract:**

National ethnic policies and nation-building objectives profoundly shape the legitimacy and evolution of minority education systems. This research employs century-scale comparative case study (1920-2025), assessing the effectiveness of minority education in achieving respective nation-building objectives. Chinese language education in Malaysia has thrived through sustained resistance despite the government's mono-ethnic assimilationist education policy and nation-building objective, demonstrating the resilience of minority education systems. Conversely, Singapore's integrationist approach—characterized by its pluralistic yet unified framework—has effectively strengthened nation-state cohesion while unintentionally side-lining Malay-language-culture preservation. The nation-building strategies, corresponding education policies, and their outcomes in both contexts are dynamically shaped by the complex interplay of distinct historical paths, political-economic imperatives, and developmental needs. Acknowledging the uniqueness of ethnic education contributes to the implementation of national education and strengthens the identification with the nation-state.

**Keywords:** ethnic minorities, nation-building, educational evolution, policy evaluation

