

THE ROLE OF THE MALAYSIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION
ON EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE IN FOSTERING HIGHER
EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN
MALAYSIA*

Pamela Sodhy

The Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange (MACEE) was established on January 28, 1963 when the United States Ambassador to Malaysia, Charles F. Baldwin, and the Minister of Education for the Federation of Malaya, Captain Abdul Hamid Khan, signed an agreement to promote educational exchange between the two countries. This agreement between the two governments implemented the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 which aimed at furthering mutual understanding between the United States and other nations through educational and cultural exchanges.¹ Malaya became the forty-fourth nation to enter into such an agreement with the United States. The Fulbright-Hays Act, also known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, superceded the earlier Fulbright Act of 1946 on which it was based. The Fulbright Act was the brainchild of Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas who proposed that the funds from the sale of surplus war materials be used to finance educational exchange activities with other nations.² The Fulbright Program began in 1946 with exchanges between European

* Prepared for the Tun Abdul Razak Chair Conference on Malaysia on the theme "Higher Education and Economic Development in Malaysia: Thinking Ahead," May 10, 1985, Ohio University, Athens.

¹ The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 stated its aim as "to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries . . . to promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement." See Philip Coombs, *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy: Educational and Cultural Affairs* (New York, 1964), p.51. For a detailed account of this Act, see *Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Eighty-Seventh Congress, First Session on S1154, March 29 and April 27, 1961 (Washington, 1961). For a brief discussion, see Walter Johnson and Francis J. Colligan, *The Fulbright Program: A History* (Chicago, 1965), pp. (50-53).

² Johnson and Colligan, *The Fulbright Program*, p. 3.

and American scholars and was extended in scope with the Fulbright-Hays Act. MACEE was thus established fifteen years after the Fulbright Act and two years after the Fulbright-Hays Act.

Since its inception twenty-two years ago, MACEE has played a significant role in the growth of higher education and economic development in Malaysia. As a binational Commission with a Board comprising five Malaysian and five Americans, MACEE has been very sensitive to the needs of the new nation.³ Formed at a critical juncture in the nation's history, just four-and-a-half years after independence and in the same year as the formation of Malaysia, MACEE, not surprisingly, directed its efforts toward educational advancement and economic growth.

From the beginning, MACEE stressed exchanges in the scientific and technological fields. Most of the early Fulbright scholarships for Malaysians to pursue degree programs in America were in these fields as were the courses taught by Fulbright professors sent to the University of Malaya, then Malaysia's only institution of higher learning. In its first year, MACEE awarded one post-doctoral research grant in chemistry and fifteen scholarships, mainly in the sciences, to Malaysian grantees.⁴ It also sent five officers from the Ministry of Education for courses in the United States under the Teachers Development Program.⁵ In addition, MACEE awarded several travel-grants to Malaysians who had independently secured admission to universities and arranged their own expenses. On the American side, MACEE attached two experts to the Ministry of Education, to advise on library science

³The first Malaysian members of the MACEE Board were: Dato Wong Pow Nee, Chief Minister of Penang; Dato Nik Ahmad Kamil, Member of Parliament and businessman; Dato Sir E.E.C. Thuraisingham, Senator and lawyer; Encik Aminuddin bin Baki, Chief Education Adviser; and Tunku Mohamed bin Tunku Besar Burhanuddin, Principal Establishment Officer. On the American side, the original members were: Mr. Wilfred P. Allard, Chief Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S.I.S., and Chairman, MACEE; Mr. Ronald D. Palmer, U.S. Embassy Officer and Treasurer, MACEE; Mr. Fayette Pervin, Assistant Representative Ford Foundation; Mr. Donald R. Liggett, RIDA Training Center; and Mrs. F. Sedky, Lecturer, University of Malaya.

⁴First Annual Report, MACEE, 1964.

⁵Under the Teachers Development Program, the Ministry of Education nominated teachers to undergo a six-month non-degree program in the United States. The Ministry of Education began this program prior to 1963 and MACEE continued it. See First Annual Report, MACEE, 1964.

and educational psychology, and sent four American professors to the University of Malaya to teach seed technology, engineering, geography, and physiology. MACEE also arranged for an American graduate student to undertake research in political science in Malaysia.⁶

In its second year, MACEE awarded one post-doctoral research grant, again in Chemistry, and sixteen Fulbright-Hays Scholarships for graduate degrees mainly in the science fields.⁷ The Teachers Development Program awards climbed to thirteen and there were seven travel grants. For the first time, MACEE administered grants from the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. The four East-West Center grants were for Master's degrees in agriculture, physics, education, and chemistry. On the other side of the educational exchange, there were seven American professors: in soil science, American history, industrial management, pathology, political science, educational psychology and philosophy. There were also three graduate students, in ecology, political science, and primitive art.⁸

In MACEE's third year, the post-doctoral grants were for botany and chemistry. As before, they were for research only.⁹ Of the fourteen scholarships granted, eight were for graduate

⁶*Ibid.* The American graduate student, Felix Gagliano, was attached to the Department of History, Universiti Malaya. Dr. Gagliano is now both director of the Center for International Studies and Associate Provost, Ohio University.

⁷For the Fulbright-Hays Scholarships in 1965, the fields represented were: plant physiology, physics, marketing, biology, political science, soil science, electrical engineering, music, agricultural economics, mathematics, art education, vocational guidance, music education, agronomy, and chemistry. See Second Annual Report, MACEE, 1965.

⁸*Ibid.* Two of the American professors renewed their grants from the previous year.

⁹Only in 1977 was a Malaysian scholar awarded a grant that covered teaching as well as research. The rationale behind barring teaching awards was neither clear nor persuasive. According to MACEE. "It has not so far proved generally workable to sponsor Malaysian/Singapore lecturers as Visiting Lecturers at American institutions. The pressures on these lecturers are such that they can hardly be spared to undertake overseas assignments, and during study leaves (sabbaticals) there is a preference for doing research work rather than for teaching." See Second Annual Report, MACEE, 1965.

training in the sciences.¹⁰ The Teachers Development awards were reduced to two but there was discussion between the Ministry of Education and MACEE of allowing some of the teachers to pursue degree programs in the United States.¹¹ On the American side, there were seven professors under Fulbright grants administered by MACEE and their fields were medicine, education, philosophy, mathematics, political science, Southeast Asian history and American history.¹² MACEE's Third Annual Report gave no indication of the presence of any American graduate students in Malaysia or of any East-West Center awards for that year. Financial constraints possibly limited some activities of the Commission because the first two annual reports both alluded to funding problems.¹³

Despite any funding problems, however, educational exchanges increased and MACEE soon made an impact on the Malaysian scene with its contributions to the country's growth. As early as 1964, the then Malaysian Minister of Education, Abdul Rahman bin Haji Talib, recognized the increasing role of MACEE in aiding national development through educational exchange. In his message to commemorate the first anniversary of MACEE, he said:

This country is undergoing a period of rapid national development and it is necessary that as many Malaysians as possible should receive training in the specialist knowledge, techniques and methods in all fields of study so that they may contribute more effectively to the development of this country. I know that during the past year the Commission arranged for a number of

¹⁰There were two awards for mathematics and one each for fish-processing, mechanical engineering, chemistry, medical technology, science and engineering. Of the six remaining awards, two were for undergraduate degrees in Liberal Arts and economics, one for an undergraduate degree in political science, and the rest for Master's degrees in economics, education, and anthropology. Third Annual Report, MACEE, 1966.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.* Two of the Fulbright professors, Dr. Hector Kinloch (American History), and Dr. Gerald S. Maryanov (Political Science) renewed their grant from the previous year. Dr. David K. Wyatt, who taught Southeast Asian History at the University of Malaya for one term, is currently Chairman, Department of History, Cornell University.

¹³The First Annual Report noted that "effective implementation of the program over a wider area requires additional funds" while the Second complained that "Finances are inadequate to allow a full development of the program." See First Annual Report, MACEE, 1964, and Second Annual Report, MACEE, 1965.

Malaysians to be placed in American institutions of higher learning throughout the United States to pursue subjects ranging from irrigation to music. This contribution I most heartily welcome.¹⁴

Two years later, the next Minister of Education, Mohd. Khir Johari, reiterated MACEE's role in higher education and economic development in Malaysia. He wrote, "Malaysia is doing her very best not only in the field of education but also in other spheres of activities to improve the standard of living of her people. The Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange has helped us to achieve these important objectives."¹⁵

For MACEE to contribute effectively to Malaysia's development, however, the Commission had a major task ahead. It had to get the Malaysian government to recognize American academic degrees and so enable Malaysians with such degrees to readily obtain employment on their return. In 1963, when MACEE was founded, the Malaysian government recognized only a few select American degrees, mainly in mining, chemistry, and engineering.¹⁶ This bias against American degrees was due to Malaysia's lack of understanding about the American educational system as well as to its colonial legacy. Because Malaya had been a British colony for a long period of time, most Malaysian students, when they went abroad for higher studies, opted for British universities. Commonwealth universities in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were also preferred to American ones. This bias was shared by the Malaysian government, the major sponsor of overseas scholarships.¹⁷ The Malaysian government was also influenced, adversely, by the higher cost of American universities.

¹⁴ Abdul Rahman bin Haji Talib, Minister of Education, Malaysia, First Annual Report, MACEE, 1964.

¹⁵ Mohd, Khir Johari, Minister of Education, Malaysia, Third Annual Report, MACEE, 1966.

¹⁶ Rene Peritz, "American-Malaysian Relations: Substances and Shadows," *Orbis*, XI (Summer 1967), p. 545.

¹⁷ At the 1983 symposium on "Issues and Trends in Malaysian-American Educational Exchange," one of the first MACEE grantees from Malaysia, Dato Dr. Elyas Omar, recalled that "before MACEE came and even afterward for some time, Malaysia was typical of a colonial country and was closely tied to the British apron strings in every respect. We used to send our students largely to Britain, and it became some kind of second nature even in administration to send everyone to Britain for training." Thus when he received a Dag Hammarskjold fellowship granted through the Fulbright program, at first the Malaysian government would not release him. It was only after a struggle that the Establishment Office removed its strong objections to his going to the United States.

For those Malaysian students already in the United States, the future looked bleak without recognition of their degrees by the Malaysian government. As a 1963 memorandum by the then Malayan Students Association of North America noted:

There are about 500 Malayan students in the United States of America. Most of these students are anxious to return to Malaya and to contribute to the progress of our nation. However, these students with training equivalent to that obtained in British or Malayan universities are not given equal recognition. It is a pity that many qualified Malaysians are discouraged from returning to Malaya because they are not given due recognition. . . . The Malayan students have been presenting their case since the early 1950s, but their attempts have not been successful.¹⁸

The memorandum warned that with the great demand for trained personnel, "it will not be beneficial to the country to retain these old prejudices."¹⁹

MACEE began to champion the cause of these Malaysian students in the United States. Even before the establishment of MACEE, efforts had been made by the American Embassy, the United States Information Service, and the American Universities Club, to help these students, but to no avail.²⁰ The American Ambassador to Malaysia, Charles F. Baldwin, as Honorary Chairman of MACEE, made a concerted effort to win wider recognition of American degrees.²¹ So did his successor, Ambassador James D. Bell. Both Baldwin and Bell made several personal representations to the Malaysian cabinet on this subject.²² MACEE considered the wider recognition of American degrees by the Malaysian government as among the 'major issues' that faced the Commission.²³

¹⁸First Annual Report, MACEE, 1964.

¹⁹*Ibid.* The memorandum by the Malayan Students of North America also noted correctly: "The misconception about American degrees may arise from outdated prejudices and inadequate investigation of the American educational system."

²⁰First Annual Report, MACEE, 1964.

²¹Interview with Ambassador Charles F. Baldwin at Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 20, 1979. See also Charles F. Baldwin, Recorded Interview by Dennis O'Brien, March 13, 1969, p. 58, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

²²Rene Peritz, "American-Malaysian Relations: Substance and Shadows," *Orbis*, XI (Summer 1967), p. 545.

²³First Annual Report, MACEE, 1964. This report also said, "It is hoped that with the energetic interest of Commission members added to the growing awareness of the problem on the part of the public, the Malaysian authorities will extend wider recognition to previous academic degrees."

This issue of recognition was still a problem in MACEE's second year. The Second Annual Report complained: "The limited recognition of United States undergraduate academic degrees has a repressive effect on the program and deprives Malaysia of the possibility of introducing new needed disciplines into its own educational institutions." An interministerial Commission was appointed in 1965 under the chairmanship of the Principal Establishment Officer, but "no conclusive results" had emerged.²⁴

MACEE's persistent efforts, however, finally bore fruit. As the Fourth Annual Report of MACEE proudly proclaimed:

A great step forward taken by the Malaysian Government recently has been the recognition of American academic degrees by accredited American institutions. It is hoped that this would pave the way for more students interested in undergraduate work to gain admission into American universities. This is an additional possibility which Malaysian students can explore besides that of the Commonwealth institutions which they had favoured in the past.²⁵

In championing the recognition issue, MACEE was greatly aided by the popularity and success of the Peace Corps Program in Malaysia. This program had been introduced in 1961.²⁶ The program appeared an idealistic, humanitarian organization and was accepted as such. The Peace Corps volunteers, who worked mainly at the grassroots level, were widely respected and admired in Malaysia. By the end of 1966, over a thousand volunteers had served in the country, mostly in rural areas.²⁷ They generated a better understanding of the American educational system as well

²⁴Second Annual Report, MACEE, 1965. According to this report, because the Federal Establishment Office had no established uniform procedures for MACEE grantees regarding study leave, "uncertainty as to their entitlement to leave discourages many well-qualified candidates from applying." In practice, however, the response to the MACEE grants continued to be overwhelming. In 1966, a total of 237 applications were received of which only fourteen were eventually chosen for scholarships. See Third Annual Report, MACEE, 1966.

²⁵Fourth Annual Report, MACEE, 1967.

²⁶Malaya was among the first twelve nations that voluntarily asked for the Peace Corps. Interview with Ambassador Charles F. Baldwin at Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 20, 1979. See also *New Partnerships: The Malaysian American Experience*, published by the Malaysian-American Society in cooperation with the United States Information Service (Kuala Lumpur, 1976).

²⁷James W. Gould, *The United States and Malaysia* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 228.

as a more favorable Malaysian disposition towards that system and towards the United States as a whole.

The way was thus paved for more educational exchanges with the United States. These exchanges continued to reflect greater interest in the science fields than in the social sciences and the humanities. Malaysian students seemed as enthusiastic as their government about science and technology and about meeting the developmental needs of the country. In 1963, Malaysian students who visited MACEE showed that their fields of interest were "largely those of technologies and business administration."²⁸ In 1968, MACEE reported that "The most desired fields of study were in the applied or technological sciences, engineering, pure sciences, medicine" and that there was growing interest in business administration. MACEE noted: "A very small number of students reflected interest in the liberal arts or the humanities."²⁹ MACEE observed the same trend the following year: "Fields of study most attractive to Malaysians appear to be technologies, sciences, engineering, medicine, and business administration."³⁰

MACEE's awards mainly mirrored these interests. From 1964 to 1968, MACEE administered twenty awards for agriculture, thirteen for chemistry, nineteen for engineering, twenty-seven for education, eighteen for mathematics, twenty-one for medical sciences, eight for physics as compared to two for anthropology, two for drama, one for history, seven for liberal arts, four each for music and social work and two for sociology.³¹ MACEE's awards have therefore acted somewhat like a barometer of the interests of the Malaysian government and the students. MACEE's approach was deliberate. There were 'priorities' which guided the Commission in selecting candidates. Besides the academic ability of the candidate, one of the major factors was the "applicability of the subjects to local needs." MACEE itself acknowledged that "government priorities as set forth in the Five Year Plan are closely paralleled in academic subjects sponsored."³²

²⁸First Annual Report, MACEE, 1964.

²⁹Fifth Annual Report, MACEE, 1968.

³⁰Sixth Annual Report, MACEE, 1969. There was also growing interest in hotel administration, tourism, and journalism, but there was a lack of scholarships for these fields.

³¹See table of awards granted by MACEE from 1964 to 1968 in Fifth Annual Report, MACEE, 1968. These awards included full scholarships, travel grants, and East-West Center awards. For the 1964 to 1968 period, MACEE awarded 27 Teacher Development Awards.

³²Fifth Annual Report, MACEE, 1968.

Perhaps because MACEE was so attuned to 'government priorities,' the Minister of Education, Mohd. Khir Johari, called on MACEE in 1968 to contribute further to Malaysia's developmental needs by increasing its awards in science and technology. He said:

As a developing country, Malaysia is putting greater stress on Science and Technology in order to keep pace with the current trend of development in the world. It is hoped, therefore, that more and more Malaysian grantees will be given the privilege to undergo training in this field through the sponsorship of the Commission.³³

The Minister noted that Malaysian grantees had brought back with them "not only knowledge and skills but also friendship and goodwill from the people of America." These students were now "full of new ideas" that would "no doubt be useful in their efforts towards bringing about changes that will ensure greater progress and prosperity to the country."³⁴ By 1965 many scholars, students, and researchers, sponsored by the Commission, had completed their program and returned home to play their part in Malaysia's development. Many went on to hold high positions in the country.³⁵

Meanwhile, the Commission's activities widened considerably, especially regarding facilitative services. Since 1964, the Malaysian Ministry of Education had requested assistance from MACEE to obtain admission for sponsored Malaysian students in American universities.³⁶ At that time, there was no Student Affairs office in the Malaysian Embassy in Washington D.C.- this was only created in February 1974, with regional branches later in Chicago and Los Angeles in September 1982.³⁷ In 1968, with the marked expansion of the MARA institution, MACEE became involved in finding placements for MARA students at the undergraduate level.³⁸ Under an informal agreement with the MARA

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ MACEE's distinguished alumni include Tan Sri Dr. Ani Arope of the Rubber Research Institute and Dato Dr. Elyas Omar, Datuk Bandar, Kuala Lumpur, and Secretary-General, Ministry of Federal Territory.

³⁶ See Seventh Annual Report, MACEE, 1970. The report was entitled "Educational and Cultural Exchange, Annual Report, July 1969 - July 1970."

³⁷ Interview with Encik Baharom Othman, Education Attache of the Embassy of Malaysia, in Washington D.C. on August 16, 1984.

³⁸ Fourth Annual Report, MACEE, 1967.

Training Division, MACEE undertook to obtain tuition-free scholarships for students who had been selected and referred by MARA. Several American universities and groups of universities cooperated by providing tuition-free admissions for twenty-five MARA students for the academic year beginning September 1968. These colleges included: Ohio University, Western Maryland College, the Associated Colleges of the Midwest and several of the New York State universities. MACEE also negotiated a separate formal agreement between the East-West Center (EWC) and MARA under which the EWC agreed to award partial scholarships to ten MARA-sponsored students. Under this arrangement, MARA provided international transportation and a monthly stipend while the EWC provided room, tuition, and other benefits.³⁹

Besides facilitative services, MACEE's counseling services also grew. From July 1, 1968, the student counselor, employed on a part-time basis, wrote more than 1,000 letters to students in Malaysia and Singapore. About twenty-five students per month received counseling personally while about seventy-two students came to Fulbright House to take English proficiency tests. Eighty-five percent of the students who corresponded with or visited MACEE were undergraduates seeking advice on admission to American universities. Nearly all required some financial aid, most needing a full scholarship. Most of the graduate students counseled were interested in advice on specific universities offering programs in their fields. Nearly all required financial aid and most were Fulbright-Hays or East-West Center applicants. Some were sponsored by other organizations or foundations, for example, the Rubber Research Institute, Asia Foundation and the Muslim College, and they also required assistance with applications and selection of schools.⁴⁰ The following year, July 1, 1968 to June 30, 1969, the part-time student counselor wrote about 1,500 letters and counseled around 420 students. About fifty English proficiency tests were administered. At the MACEE office, students could take standardized examinations, such as the College Entrance Exam, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and the exam for foreign medical graduates.⁴¹

³⁹Fifth Annual Report, MACEE, 1968. Subsequently, some of the students originally referred by MARA were sponsored by other bodies, for instance, the Rubber Research Institute.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Sixth Annual Report, MACEE, 1969.

It needs to be pointed out that student counseling and facilitative services, referred to as 'supplementary services' by MACEE, were expanded when the Commission faced funding problems.⁴² Why these services were expanded when MACEE was going through what it called an "austerity period" was due to the relatively low costs in running these services. As MACEE itself acknowledged about student counseling:

In an attempt to maintain an expanding volume of educational exchanges under conditions of contracting financial support, every effort was made to intensify student counseling. By this means, private students and private resources were brought together effectively by Commission services with minimal financial expenditure.⁴³

In this effort to keep the exchange program intact when MACEE suffered a budget cut in its fifth year, MACEE cut down on administrative expenses and diverted residual program funds to provide more travel grants for Malaysian students. The latter move "to some extent alleviated the harsh impact of budget cuts,"⁴⁴ as did the expansion of student counseling and facilitative placement services. The following year, 1969, when there was another budget cut, MACEE had no choice but to suspend certain phases of the program for which commitment had not yet been undertaken. This resulted in the temporary suspension of the Teachers Development awards, the Research Scholar awards and the awards to American graduate students to carry out research in Malaysia.⁴⁵ The Teachers Development awards were never implemented again while the other two awards were resumed after a few years.

Thus, while fostering higher education and economic development in Malaysia, the binational Commission experienced financial difficulties and tried its best to overcome them. The budget cuts, of course, caused MACEE much frustration, especially as MACEE planned to increase its role. MACEE complained: "The particularly unfortunate aspect of the present critical state of finances is that Malaysia and Singapore are currently expanding and enhancing their higher education systems." It claimed, quite correctly, "The dilemma consists of having a contracting program in an expanding situation."⁴⁶ Therefore, in 1969 when the "over-

⁴² Fifth Annual Report, MACEE, 1968.

⁴³ Sixth Annual Report, MACEE, 1969.

⁴⁴ Fifth Annual Report, MACEE, 1968.

⁴⁵ Sixth Annual Report, MACEE, 1969.

⁴⁶ Fifth Annual Report, MACEE, 1968.

riding problem" was that of "financial support," MACEE warned that the earlier achievements of the Commission were "threatened because of the inability of the Commission to provide continuity or any assurance of consistency in face of inadequate finances." MACEE realized the ironic timing of the budget cuts - they occurred when new institutions of higher learning, such as Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, were being set up. The Commission noted: "While new and developing educational opportunities are burgeoning, the Fulbright-Hays program is paralyzed by financial problems."⁴⁷

The Fulbright-Hays program was experiencing financial problems because of the nature of the Fulbright-Hays Act - every year adequate appropriations had to be obtained to implement it.⁴⁸ Strengthening the educational dimensions of foreign policy had a low priority on the agenda of appropriations committees, with the effect that even though more binational Commissions had been established around the world, the funds had not increased significantly and had to be thinly spread out.⁴⁹

Despite budget reductions, however, MACEE continued to maintain a relatively stable level of Malaysian awards for graduate students under Fulbright-Hays scholarships. These graduate scholarships were, after all, an extremely vital part of the program. To continue to keep this phase of the Fulbright program stable, however, a reduction of the total exchanges was in order. This meant, as mentioned earlier, that the Teacher Development awards, the Research Scholar awards and the grants to American graduate students had to be suspended for the time being. In 1970, travel-grants were also suspended temporarily.⁵⁰ In terms of total exchanges, therefore, there was a decline - from a high of sixty-three in 1967 to twenty-four in 1970 and down to fifteen in 1971.⁵¹ Another way that MACEE managed to keep the most essential parts of its program intact was by cutting down on administrative expenses. It did this by reducing its Secretariat

⁴⁷Sixth Annual Report, MACEE, 1969.

⁴⁸See Coombs, *The Fourth Dimension of Foreign Policy*, p. 53.

⁴⁹*Ibid.* Johnson and Colligan, *The Fulbright Program*, p. 36.

⁵⁰Educational and Cultural Exchange Annual Report, July 1969 - July 1970.

⁵¹See the eighth annual report, entitled: "Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange, Annual Report, July 1, 1970 - June 30, 1971.

staff from six employees to two and by relocating in November 1970 to smaller and less expensive quarters.^{5 2}

MACEE's move to a new location signalled other momentous changes. In January 1971, MACEE, with the acceptance of the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the American Embassy, proposed to dedicate itself to a five-year plan emphasizing staff and curricular development of the three Malaysian universities: the University of Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Universiti Sains Malaysia.^{5 3} As MACEE explained: "This five-year institution building arrangement was designed to eliminate the possibility that grantees would not return and to ensure that fields of study most needed by the developing universities would receive major attention."^{5 4}

In view of this new direction, the membership of the Commission also underwent a major change. The Vice-Chancellors of the three universities were appointed new members of the Commission upon the expiration of the terms of the previous Commission members. Therefore, as of January 1, 1971, the five Malaysian members of the Commission were: Professor Hamzah Sendut, Vice Chancellor, Universiti Sains Malaysia; Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz Ungku Abdul Hamid, Vice Chancellor, University of Malaya; Dato (Dr.) Ariffin bin Ngah Marzuki, Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; Enche Mohd. Yusof bin Abdul Rahman, Director, Training and Career Development, Public Service Department; and Enche Ibrahim bin M.Z. Ariffin, Principal Assistant Secretary, Scholarships and Training, Ministry of Education. The five American members were: Mr. Edward H. Mattos, the Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS; Miss Diana Mae Richards, the Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS; Dr. Milton Barnett, Consultant, Prime Minister's Department; Mr. Robert Gaw, Administrator, International School; and Mr. Brewster Campbell, Jr., Manager, Bank of America. Mr. Mattos served as Chairman of MACEE, Miss

^{5 2}By reducing the MACEE staff to only an Executive-Secretary and a typist/secretary, and, by moving from Fulbright House in Ampang Road to the Lee Wah Bank Building in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. MACEE effected great savings. This was clearly shown in MACEE's financial accounts. For instance, in 1970, MACEE spent \$28,464.00 on administrative expenses, in 1971 \$16,872.00, and in 1972 only \$13,921.00. See the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth MACEE Annual Reports.

^{5 3}MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1970 – June 30, 1971.

^{5 4}See MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1973 – June 30, 1974.

Richards as Treasurer, and Ambassador Jack W. Lydman as Honorary Chairman.⁵⁵

Another major change in 1971 was the appointment of a Malaysian, Mrs. Baljit Ng, as the first local Executive-Secretary of MACEE. Mrs. Ng replaced Mrs. Mona Sedky, an American who had held the position for eight years, from the formation of MACEE until January 22, 1981.⁵⁶ Mrs. Ng was appointed on a one-year contract, from May 13, 1971, and when she did not renew it, Mr. Manogaran Maniam, another Malaysian, replaced her in July 1972.⁵⁷

Yet another important change in 1971 was that, for the first time, Singapore students were no longer included in the program. Since its formation, MACEE had administered grants for Singaporeans. MACEE undertook, however, to fund Singapore grantees still in the United States until the completion of their studies.⁵⁸

A major change also occurred in student counseling in 1971. This service was moved from the MACEE office to the USIS Library, known as the Lincoln Cultural Center. This change was prompted by MACEE's move to smaller premises and by the departure of the Commission's part-time student counselor. The change also meant that USIS assumed responsibility for the counseling services. MACEE, however, planned to re-incorporate the counseling section into its activities. With this in mind, it made "an attempt to get larger space for the Secretariat with the hope that the Counseling section would come under its wing."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1970 – June 30, 1971. Before the change in Commission membership in January 1971, the Malaysian members were: Dato S.O.K. Ubaidulla, Senator and businessman; Tuan Syed Nasir Ismail, Member of Parliament and businessman; Dr. Mohd. Rashdan bin Haji Baba, Vice Chancellor, Universiti Kebangsaan and Principal, College of Agriculture; Enche Yusof Abdul Rahman, Training Division, Public Services Department; and Enche Abdul Aziz Hussein, Office of Scholarships and Training, Ministry of Education. See Educational and Cultural Exchange Annual Report, July 1969 – July 1970.

⁵⁶ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1970 – June 30, 1971.

⁵⁷ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1971 – June 30, 1972. When Mr. Maniam went on a year's study leave, from 1975 to 1976, an American, Mrs. Elaine Noss, filled in for him until his return. Mr. Maniam served as Executive-Secretary for seven years, until 1980, when Mrs. S.W. Kang was appointed. Mrs. Kang served from December 1980 to December 1981 and was succeeded by Encik Lokman Abdul Manan, the present Executive-Director of MACEE, who has been in this post since January 1982.

⁵⁸ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1971 – June 30, 1972.

⁵⁹ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1972 – June 30, 1973.

The following year, in July 1972, the Secretariat did move into larger premises, on the same floor of the Lee Wah Bank building, but student counseling continued to be at the Lincoln Cultural Center.⁶⁰ In 1973, this service came under the budget of MACEE again, although student counseling continued to be located at the Lincoln Cultural Center. Student counseling was administered by a paid part-time counselor, Mrs. Sarah B. Collins, and her six part-time American volunteers. By then more and more Malaysians were showing interest in higher studies in the United States. The counseling section wrote about 3,000 letters that year and conducted around the same number of sessions with students.⁶¹

Because MACEE undertook "to gear itself to the staff and curricular needs of the three Malaysian universities," Malaysian grantees had to be sponsored by a local university before being granted a scholarship.⁶² The ten Fulbright-Hays scholarships for 1972/73 therefore went to the staff members of the three universities. Universiti Malaya received four scholarships while Universiti Sains and Universiti Kebangsaan received three each. As in earlier years, the majority of the awards went for science subjects, with mathematics being the most popular that year.⁶³ The six 1973/74 Fulbright-Hays scholarships were equally divided between the three universities, with Universiti Malaya receiving awards for Education and Chemistry, Universiti Sains for Sociology and Education, and Universiti Kebangsaan for Economics and Sociology.⁶⁴ For 1974/75, MACEE awarded five Fulbrights-Hays scholarships, of which two went to Universiti Kebangsaan (for Educational Psychology and Business Administration), two to Universiti Sains (for Material Science and Library Science) and one to Universiti Malaya (for Nuclear Engineering).⁶⁵ These fields represented disciplines in which the universities needed assistance.

The American lecturer awards were also geared to "fields which were relatively less developed and needing direction in growth."⁶⁶ For example, in 1973, Professor Jerome M. Sattler, an educational psychologist, was attached to Universiti Kebang-

⁶⁰ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1973 – June 30, 1974.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1972 – June 30, 1973.

⁶² MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1970 – June 30, 1971 and MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1972 – June 30, 1973.

⁶³ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1971 – June 30, 1972.

⁶⁴ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1972 – June 30, 1973.

⁶⁵ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1973 – June 30, 1974.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

saan to help set up a viable Psychology Department and to organize the first Educational Psychology Seminar for educationalists in Malaysia. That year, Professor Leonard Currie, an architect, was attached to Universiti Sains Malaysia to set up the School of Housing, Building and Planning.⁶⁷ In 1974, the four American lecturers were specialists in the following fields: Hydraulic Engineering, Mathematics, Pharmacology, and Public Administration. The local universities had requested assistance, through MACEE, in these fields.⁶⁸

By contributing to staff development and the introduction of new disciplines at the universities, MACEE's role in fostering education and economic development in Malaysia expanded further. In the mid-1970's, the National Institute for Public Administration (INTAN) and the new universities, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Agricultural University) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (the University of Technology), also participated in the Fulbright program.

By then, the East-West Center program had enlarged considerably. Besides the East-West Center scholarship awards, there were also short-term internship awards. MACEE's chief function with regard to the EWC grants was to relay information to various ministries, agencies, educational institutions, and prominent business concerns on the availability of these courses run by the five Institutes of the East-West Center.⁶⁹ MACEE's role evolved from a liaison office to Program Representative for all EWC activities. MACEE's new role was formalized by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the EWC in February 1975. A new Program Officer for the Commission with special responsibility to the EWC was also selected. This Program Officer was, among other duties, entrusted with the responsibility for the newsletter, *Warta MACEE*, which made its first appearance in November 1974.⁷⁰

Warta MACEE, the creation of the then Cultural Affairs Officer, Mr. John Keller, provided information on educational programs administered by the Commission. It also served as an organ for all Fulbrighters and interested persons to write on topical issues.⁷¹ In so doing, it called attention to MACEE's ever

⁶⁷ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1972 – June 30, 1973.

⁶⁸ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1974 – June 30, 1975.

⁶⁹ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1971 – June 30, 1972.

⁷⁰ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1974 – June 30, 1975.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

expanding role in fostering higher education and economic development in Malaysia.

In the meantime, MACEE's five year program which concentrated on staff development of the Malaysian universities came to an end in 1975. By that year, more Fulbright grantees had returned to serve at the universities and these universities had also already started their own staff training programs. More changes for MACEE were thus in order. As the 1974/75 MACEE Annual Report noted: "As a departure from earlier concentration, assistance with staff development alone will no longer be the prime focus of MACEE future programming." MACEE planned to look more into "areas of strong social significance," for instance, the preservation of environmental resources. The Commission also hoped to "contribute toward regional planning" and to "develop a greater awareness of Malaysian and American societies through Southeast Asia Studies and American Studies programs."⁷²

As part of the departure from concentrating on staff development at the universities, MACEE changed the Fulbright-Hays Scholarship's selection. There was now a two-tiered program, combining open competition grants with specific institutional grants. As a result of the open competition grants, there was a larger number of applicants for degrees in cultural fields.⁷³

Another major change in 1975 was the introduction of cost-sharing between both countries. This helped to alleviate concern about budget difficulties.⁷⁴ In 1973, MACEE had expressed concern about the US dollar devaluation and the low rate of exchange which proved "problematical to the Commission."⁷⁵ In 1975, four Malaysian universities agreed to share the costs for their nominees, a move that lightened the Commission's financial woes.⁷⁶

Perhaps partly because of fewer funding problems, MACEE was able to move to larger quarters in 1975.⁷⁷ This move enabled MACEE to once again incorporate the counseling services that had been shifted to the Lincoln Cultural Center. The counseling section became so busy that a Director of Student Counseling was

⁷² MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1975 – September 30, 1976.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1973 – June 30, 1974.

⁷⁵ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1972 – June 30, 1973.

⁷⁶ MACEE Annual Report, July 1, 1975 – September 30, 1976.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* MACEE moved to premises vacated by the Ford Foundation, in Jalan Ceylon, Kuala Lumpur.

appointed and the counseling hours were expanded, from only two hours each afternoon to 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. In 1976, nine American women volunteers assisted the Director of Student Counseling. The number of Malaysian students taking entrance examinations to American universities also increased so much that MACEE appointed a testing supervisor in January 1976. From July 1, 1975 to September 30, 1976, 5,219 students wrote letters to MACEE while 5,444 students visited the counseling office. MACEE was thus correct when it remarked: "No other aspect of the MACEE program has grown to the extent experienced by the Student Counseling Office."⁷⁸

The Student Counseling Office experienced such great activity because of the increased interest in American education on the part of Malaysians. This heightened interest was due to four main reasons: the high increase in fees in British universities which diverted more attention towards the United States and made American universities' fees seem less exorbitant than before; the growing evidence that British and other Commonwealth countries were thinking in terms of foreign student quotas; the growing number of scholarships granted by the Malaysian government and by American universities; and the radical shift in educational bias, from a strictly conservative British oriented system to a more liberal one. In 1980, the Malaysian government awarded over 1,000 scholarships for study in the United States while American universities awarded scholarships worth US \$229,308 to forty-five Malaysian students. That year the number of privately funded students to the United States totalled 824. In November of the same year, a fourteen-member delegation of US university administrative officers sponsored by the Institute of International Education, and assisted by MACEE, came to Malaysia to offer direct advice to parents and government scholarship bodies about their own universities.⁷⁹ The number of Malaysians in America has grown tremendously since then. In 1981, over 4,000 Malaysian students entered US institutions of higher learning. In that year, Malaysia ranked sixteenth among all nations in the number of students enrolled in American universities.⁸⁰ By 1983, it

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Warta MACEE*, Vol. 16, June 1981; Vol. 14, December 1979.

⁸⁰ Annual Program Proposal of the Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange for the Program Year 1983 Covering Exchanges for the Malaysian Academic Year, September 1, 1983 to June 30, 1984.

ranked fifth and by 1984, with 24,000 students, Malaysia had jumped to second place.⁸¹

With the great influx of Malaysian students to the United States, MACEE's activities naturally expanded. To meet this expansion, MACEE relocated twice - in January 1979 to larger quarters in Jalan Ampang and in early 1984 to yet bigger premises in another section of that area. The Commission now provides an Educational Information Center, headed by a Director, with counseling and testing services aimed at preparing students for higher education in the United States. In 1983, MACEE staff and advisors handled about 44,000 individual inquiries about American education.⁸² Other services by MACEE include a reference library, a newsletter, liaison with the Malaysian government, liaison with American universities and institutions, and pre-departure orientation programs. In January 1984, MACEE also opened a branch of the Educational Information Center at Penang to meet the demand for services there. MACEE has distinctly established itself as the main resource center in Malaysia for information on educational opportunities in America.

At present, MACEE administers the following grant programs: the Malaysian Lecturer Program, the American Lecturer Program, the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program, the East-West Center Program, and the MACEE/ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) Program. Except for some grants for graduate study through the East-West Center Program, MACEE no longer offers Fulbright scholarships for degree programs. Instead, MACEE now focuses more on post-doctoral grants for Malaysian academics to teach courses and conduct research at American universities. The Malaysian Lecturer Program clearly reflects this aim and orientation. More attention is also being paid to disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. MACEE has also increased the number of American professors, students, and researchers to Malaysia. Despite whatever changes in MACEE's activities, however, it has remained constant in wanting to help meet the growing needs of Malaysia. For instance, the American Lecturer Program continues with close collaboration with the local universities. For example, to be more specific, for the 1983/84 program, MACEE arranged for an American professor to assist in the establishment of a biotechnology research center at Universiti

⁸¹ *Warta MACEE*, Vol. 22, December 1983; Interview with Encik Baharom Othman, Education Attache of the Embassy of Malaysia, in Washington D.C., on August 16, 1984.

⁸² *Warta MACEE*, Vol. 21, March 1983.

Pertanian. This project, in turn, was in keeping with the Fourth Malaysian Plan (1981-1985) which had given priority to the development of agro-based industries.⁸³

Therefore, MACEE has consistently played a very significant role in higher education and economic development in Malaysia. During its twenty-two years of existence, MACEE can count among its achievements the recognition of American academic degrees, the establishment of new disciplines in Malaysian institutions, the undertaking of research of interest and importance to Malaysia, the strengthening of academic ties with American universities, and the boardening of American understanding of the country and region. The grant programs have provided Malaysians with valuable training, knowledge, and expertise, opened new areas of learning, widened the universities' curriculums and brought in new ideas and perspectives. In so doing, MACEE has helped Malaysia to meet its manpower needs in both the public and private sectors. The American Fulbright professors to Malaysia have introduced new courses, broadened Malaysia's educational base and provided intellectual stimulation for Malaysian students. In addition, the research conducted by American and Malaysian scholars have added to the literature on Malaysia. Furthermore, the counseling and testing services of MACEE have enabled more Malaysians to study in the United States. The phenomenal increase in the number of Malaysian students in America attests to the success and effectiveness of MACEE in disseminating information about education in the United States.

All of MACEE's above achievements demonstrate that MACEE realizes the importance of education to help build a strong economic base for improving the quality of life for the Malaysian people. The Commission has shown that it is aware that economic development is a key to Malaysia's stability and security and can guide the nation towards prosperity. MACEE has witnessed the transformation of the Malaysian economy from agro-based to manufacturing and has contributed to that change.

⁸³Annual Program Proposal of MACEE for the Program Year 1983. For the 1983/84 year, MACEE also sent professors in the following fields: American and Comparative Literature at Universiti Sains Malaysia; United States Foreign Policy and Political Science at Universiti Malaya and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; Plant Science at the Sabah campus of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; and Social Development and Administration at Universiti Sains Malaysia. The teaching of U.S. Foreign Policy and Political Science involved a joint appointment between Universiti Malaya and Universiti Kebangsaan.

That MACEE has been so sensitive to the developmental needs of Malaysia has been due, in large part, to the binational character of the Commission. This binational characteristic has helped to develop cost-sharing between the two countries and to channel the awards on more equal lines. Nowadays, the awards denote less of the donor-and-recipient relationship between the United States and Malaysia. MACEE's binational nature is, surely, one of its greatest strengths and can help counter criticism of the Commission as a psychological instrument of foreign policy.

As more students continue to go to the United States, MACEE's role will continue to grow. However, because the number of Malaysian students overseas has tripled that enrolled in the seven local universities, with Malaysian students in America accounting for one-third of all overseas students, MACEE, along with the Malaysian government, the Ministry of Education and the local universities, will need to assess the long-term implications of having such a large student population overseas. The effects of this trend on national unity, the local universities and the flow of money overseas need to be examined.⁸⁴ In fact, Malaysia needs to review its educational goals and policies and MACEE can help in this assessment.

MACEE has already done some stocktaking of its own. In 1983, when it celebrated its twentieth anniversary, MACEE held a symposium on "Issues and Trends in Malaysian-American Educational Exchange." For two days there were discussions on how MACEE could support the major trends in Malaysian higher education and how it could assist students intending to further their education in America. The following were some proposals: that MACEE could focus more on computer education and business education; that it could train teachers in specialized fields such as testing, curricular development and counseling; that it could establish more inter-university links between universities in Malaysia and the United States; that MACEE could assist in the area of English language teaching; and that it could also help in the orientation of Malaysian students going to America.⁸⁵ MACEE has been responsive to these proposals or new challenges.

⁸⁴For a discussion of some problems in Malaysian higher education, see Fatimah Hamid Don, "Malaysian Higher Education: Policies and Objectives," Paper prepared for the Conference on Malaysia, held at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, November 18-20, 1984.

⁸⁵*Symposium on Issues and Trends in Malaysian-American Educational Exchange*, MACEE, 1984.

A three-member Advisory Committee, set up by the MACEE Board in May 1984, is already studying MACEE's role in English teaching and in the orientation of Malaysian students before departure for the United States.⁸⁶

Now that Malaysia is no longer an underdeveloped nation and has progressed to the stage where it about to launch into heavy industries, there is still room for MACEE to assist in Malaysia's new development needs. MACEE has worked closely and well with the the Malaysian government in the past and can be expected to do the same in the future. By working hand-in-hand over two decades, from infancy to adulthood, MACEE has contributed its share to Malaysia's progress. With Malaysia's continued thirst for knowledge and higher education, and with its needs in the industrial field still to be fully met, the indications are that MACEE, in the future, will continue to contribute significantly to Malaysia's economic development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer is indebted to the following for providing the annual reports and newsletters of the Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange (MACEE): Dr. Craig Stromme, Cultural Affairs Officer, United States Embassy, Kuala Lumpur; Encik Lokman bin Abdul Manan, Executive-Director, MACEE; and Mrs. Kala Kovan, Secretary, MACEE.

⁸⁶ *Warta MACEE*, Vol. 24, August 1984.