

# MULTICULTURAL AND ETHNICITY HISTORY APPROACH TOWARDS NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN MALAYSIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Integration is a process to create national identity in a society which is differs in culture, social matter, location that live in a political unit. The concept of national integration is actually a broad concept. From sociological perspective, the process of understanding can be explained as integration, as in political integration resulted from the efforts in cooperating and uniting the parties that have followers with various ideological background. The national integration process happens as the result of the needs to strengthen the harmony and security for a sovereign country. Malaysia, however, has taken several concrete steps to bridge the diversity in ideology, politics, economy, and social matter, along with the efforts towards educational system. History education had been made as the main choice in Malaysia in order to realize the goal of teaching political value as well as its importance. History also plays a role in improving socialization and awareness towards politics within young generation, as well as strengthening nationalism as an important element to build a good citizenship. History education should be able to foster national integration and national development. The awareness towards historical heritage is important to foster group identity that later may form the sense of belonging, love, emphaty and loyalty. The development on history education in Malaysia shows that the subject of history has been made as a bridge in achieving the above goal (KPM, 2003) namely to foster the loyalty and identity as the citizen of Malaysia and as the member of the world society. Multicultural perspective is important to be delivered in history education so that every ethnic will be proud and respected. Multiculturality and diversity should be considered as a potential to foster diverstity into national integration. History may also build an understanding and respect as well as explores other ethnic cultures as to find similarities that can be accepted nationally to build tolerant and to prevent clash among ethnics in Malaysia in the future time.*

**Key words:** *multiculture, ethnicity, national integration, cultural diversity*

## Introduction

National integration is very essential to a multi-racial and multi-religious country such as Malaysia. The ability to foster the national integration depends on shared values as well as the spirit of tolerance among ethnic groups in order

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to build national unity. The population composition of the country is described in detail as in the following table of ethnic groups within Semenanjung, Sabah, and Serawak.

**Table 3.1: Composition of Malaysian Ethnic Groups**

Malay Peninsula				Sabah	Serawak
Malay	Chinese	Indian	Indigenous		
Banjar	<b>Hokien</b>	Malayali	Negrito	Kadazan	Bidayuh
Boyan	Chuan-chew	Punjabi	Senoi	Bajau	Bisaya
Bugis	Chin-chew	Selon	Melayu porto	Dusun	Iban
Jawa	Eng-hua	Tamil		Murut	Kayan
Kampar	Eng-choon	Telegu		Bisaya	Kedayan
Kerinci	Hok-chew			Kadayun	Kelabit
Mendaling	<b>Kwantung</b>			Orang Sungai	Kenyah
Minangkabau	Kanton			Suang laut	Melanau
Rawa	Teochew			Brunei	Melayu
Johor-Riau	Hakka				Murut
	Hailam				Penan
					Punan

The above table shows ethnic diversity in Malaysia. Malay, Chinese and Indian have their own sub ethnique and customs inherited from their ancestors. It is the cultural diversity that Malaysian statesmen pay attention to, as to unite the people, especially in the educational field. Pertaining to this issue, history teaching may play an important role to unite the people belong to different believes, cultures, languages, and ways of thinking, so that it may foster the national integration.

### **Cultural Diversity and National Integration**

The term of culture is derived from Sanskrit and Malay, namely budhi and daya. Budhi refers to logical mind, while daya refers to words. Malay is the power of influence and strength. Accordingly, in brief it may refer to the power of thinking, soul and willingness to move the soul. Kamus Dewan Budaya (Cultural Board Dictionary) refers the term to the development of mind, thinking, acts, etc. In brief, it is a way of life conducted by a certain group, comprising social system, organization structure, politics, religion, belief, custom, attitude, and value. The way of life conducted by a group of people comprises social, politic, economic, religious, belief, custom, attitude and value system. Culture has some characteristics of being learned, united, shared, inherited, evolving, and symbolical, as well as having world view.

Custom is guidelines for one to act in society. Language is an essential means of communication. Religion is belief values and guides of how to act in social life. Culture shows how to control life. However, there is some adopted culture influenced by another culture. The importance of culture is as follows:

1. to build image of the country towards national identity and personality
2. to foster national awareness of religious, humanistic, enthusiast and mental character
3. to be the identity of society and the descendant
4. to be inherited from a generation to the next one
5. Culture is a set of complete values comprising intellectuality and properties that can be inherited to fulfill social needs appropriate with the interface (Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, 20007)

Cultural diversity should be considered as a form of acceptance, a means of unity, respect towards uniqueness and understanding showing adjustment to other tribes. Stavenhagen (1986) states that cultural diversity relates to social reality in heterogen society. Cultural diversity is the product of adjustment between tribes and their cultural elements so that it produces understanding and tolerance among the cultures. Muhammad (2004) explains that the diversity in religion, culture and language among society is not a barrier since each tribe accepts the national language as the shared language and acknowledges official religion as the highest value of the national culture.

Pertaining to this, Baptiste (1979) states that diversity is the motivation to know other cultures as well as to find the similarity and respect towards the unique within the cultures. This is an important factor to build the national understanding and belongness.

There are some notions pertaining to the concept of integration. Integration is a process to create national identity in a society differs in culture, social matter, location that live in a political unit. Political elements comprise geographical, economical, cultural, social, educational and political integration.

1. Geographical integration is intended to bridge the social and economical inequality between the developed and underdeveloped area as of West and East Malaysia or Malay Peninsula and Sabah/Serawak
2. Economical integration is aimed to bridge economical inequality among ethnic groups
3. Cultural integration is aimed at producing national culture
4. Social integration is aimed to mediate all efforts in order to unite the society through social activities in education, health, and other activities
5. Educational integrity is aimed at fostering a national education system seen as an ideal form of JERI. Some of the implementation is the establishment of vision schools (*sekolah wawasan*), cluster school (*sekolah kluster*) and smart school (*sekolah bestari*).
6. Political integration is aimed at uniting society through political cooperation such as through Parti Perikatan (The Alliance Party)

Shadily (1980) describes integration as a structural unity of different parts that put them in harmony to reach a higher level. Sufean Hussein (1996), conveys that integration is the unity among ethnics as the result of understanding, tolerance, the acknowledgement of Malaysian identity and the admittance of loyalty as well as obedience to the king and the country. In a similar vein, Khalid Yaakub (1982) and Shamsul Amri (2007) assert that it is the reflection of all cultures that can be accepted as national identity in society.

The concept of national integration is actually a broad concept. From sociological perspective, the process of understanding can be explained as integration, as in political integration resulted from the efforts in cooperating and uniting the parties that have followers with various ideological background. Wan Hashim Wan The (1984) asserts that it is the process of connecting and maintaining unity of various communities or separated small scope societies separated one another. Mohd. Salleh Lebar (2007) also states that national integration is the process in harmonizing multicultural society as to create a national culture. This is in line with the definition of national culture composed in Kongres Kebudayaan Kebangsaan (National Culture Congress) of 1974 which has determined religion, language, arts, custom and culture of every ethnic as the core of culture and the main elements in the creation of a culture and civilization as well as national characteristics. Factors leading to national culture may be reflected in Pernyata Razak (Razak's Report) of 1956 and Pernyata Abdul Rahman Talib (Abdul Rahman Talib's Report) of 1960.

There are several factors should be paid attention pertaining to the national integration influencing national integration especially when we are about to strengthen the integrity of groups in Malaysia. National integration does not come alone. The national integration process happens as the result of the needs to strengthen the harmony and security for a sovereign country. It is impossible for a nation to reach a perfect integrity without a cause. Some sociologists say that a nation can exist and be accepted by its people, if the country can provide several conditions valuable to the people. This is in line with what has been conveyed by Herzler (1965), a sociologist, in his writing entitled *A Sociology of Language* that the condition comprises:

*... such economic condition as wide markets and non-discrimination in employment; wide and ready physical mobility in the pursuit of desirable regional, economic and other life condition; opportunity for political participation; freedom for rigid sosial stratification and sosial distance and, conversely, freedom of sosial opportunity and sosial mobility; acces to all levels of educational opportunity. As in the case of group unity and unification, language is also of facilitator of all these condition.*

The interaction among ethnics is also an important factor in national integration. Some sociologists state that an optimum national integration requires "a meaningful interaction between culture and ethnic"

Hariyanto (2001) and Banks (1994) admit that history teaching approach oriented to cultural diversity, ethnic and national historical perspective is the main medium to unite various tribes and ethnics in a country. Kymlicka (2002) states that cultural diversity that has understanding, respect towards the identity of each tribe, and equity among groups can be put as an important factor in the national integration of a multicultural country.

Green and Troup (1999) see the cultural diversity as a suitable approach in connecting academicians. Abdullah (2001) and Khoo Kay Kim (2002) admit that historical perspective plays an important role in strengthening national identity of a diverse nation. National historical perspective is a main media in strengthening national identity and the national symbol of Malaysia.

In brief, the goals of achieving national integration should be considered seriously and in educational context, history as a subject is a meaningful medium since it is able to explain the role of ethnics in order to develop the country as well as to strengthen the national identity. This is in line with what the statesmen and sociologists expected, i.e. to live in harmony as a country of Malaysia that views tolerance, respect and acceptance of cultural diversity as a state asset and the unique element of the country.

### **Cultural Diversity in History Teaching And Learning**

The racial issue is in fact not able to be avoided when there are groups of people having similar elements such as biology or culture who try to survive their group and oppress the other group at the same time. A lot of political and social organizations within the country are built based on ethnicity and inheritance.

Such an organization only fights for their interests and take their intended rights without thinking of other groups, or harmony and national prosperity. Our country has also had a violent conflict of the tragedy of May 13, 1969 that demanded an emergency status of the country. Racial conflict may also cause the alienation towards a certain group in terms of education, housing and occupation.

Such organizations will compete to get a broad support from their ethnics using several shared factors such as language, religion, and racial or ethnical identity. If such belief and act spread widely in society, there will be an effect toward the national political development. The sense of colonialization is the main factor in ethnic or racial conflict in Malaysia. Though Malaysia had reached its independence 40 years ago, British colonization seems to be live in people's mind. British governmental system based on the concept of 'divide and rule' had separated Malaysian into three groups of Malay, Chinese and Indian.

Colonial concept of immigration, education, economy, administration, land, language and culture creates a continued effect to the present. Free concept of immigration has changed population composition of the country. The economic concept has also caused a specific economic pattern in accordance with ethnic

groups as well as the alienation of their living area according to the economic activity. British colonial did not make education as an important means in integrating the multi ethnic society. On the other hand, they made English as an important thing to a certain group for their own benefit. Furthermore, the education for Malay was taken for granted.

Accordingly, Chinese and Indian forcefully control their own school and academical fund. The unsupervised educational development had finally caused a different political orientations and point of views. Further, through their concept, British had left a broad psychological sense towards the stereotype of the people within the country. British colonial has finally been succeed in influencing how the people within the colonial country think that is to respect them as a higher class compared to the other ethnic groups during the colonial time. On the other hand, there are some negative stereotypes seeing a certain racial groups as a low class. This not only impedes the cooperation and understanding but also causes negative thought and hatred among the people. All these states are hardly to be removed even we have been free from British colonialization.

Malaysia, however, has taken several concrete steps to bridge the diversity in ideology, politics, economy, and social matter, along with the efforts towards educational system. In educational system, there is some educational reformation such as Pernyata Razak (Razak's Report) of 1956, Pernyata Rahman Talib (Rahman Talib's Report) of 1960, Akta Pendidikan (Educational Act) and Laporan Jawatankuasa Kabinet (Cabinet Report) of 1979.

Pertaining to this, history education had been made as the main choice in Malaysia in order to realize the goal of teaching political value as well as its importance (Davies, 1994a; Roskin et al. 2000). Education on politics and nationality focuses on the efforts on equipping students with enough knowledge as well as comprehension towards national history (Kerr, 1999) so that the spirit of integrity can be realized and strengthened. History education is able to develop students' knowledge, skill, and attitude so that they are able to involve in a more complex society. If it can be conducted, the spirit of love and respect to the country of the young generation can be fostered and developed (Banks, 1990). As a guidance, history education has give a chance to spread experience on society and culture as well as to respect diversity among society; to learn about democratization and to explain the relation between rights and responsibilities of Malaysian.

History also plays a role in improving socialization and awareness towards politics within young generation, as well as strengthening nationalism as an important element to build a good citizenship (Ibrahim Saad, 1990; Abd Rahim Abd. Rashid, 1994) since it is the best medium to teach the new generation who will lead the country. This is because history can connect experts within the country so that they will states that the country is their right (Smith, 1986) Ibrahim Saad (1990) composes history education is important and so is history books recording some events and the past glory of the country as to foster patriotism and national

pride. He also sees the importance of what is conducted in school such as the song of *NegaraKu* and that the teacher's attitude within the history instruction may also influence the political socialization to the students.

History education has been admitted by many developed countries such as United States and Britain as a subject that may foster the unity of culture, society and spirit (Granatstein, 1998; Richard, 1995). They also assert that crisis within the young generation consists of three perspectives of:

1. badly informed – they have no knowledge on what their goal as the citizen
2. being isolated – they are separated from political life that they see it as full of dishonesty and corruption
3. Agnostic – they do not believe the values required as a democratic citizen.

White (1994) explains four main aspects in improving history education namely; history curriculum should provide students information on what they should master successfully; history should be a compulsory subject; the subject material should be appropriate and relate with the requirement of teaching and learning guidelines. His study also shows five requirements in history teaching, namely:

1. the ability to explain the present time and to relate it to the historical content
2. the comprehension on the society of different areas and places.
3. the understanding towards the development of human and society
4. the understanding on how to improve students' interest
5. the ability to improve students' analytical thinking skill.

History education should be able to foster national integration and national development (Aminuddin Baki, 1953; Zainal Abidin Ahmad, 1980; Davies, 1994). Smith (1986) states that history is able to unite experts within a country so that they may defend their country.

The awareness towards historical heritage and past time is important to foster group identity that later may form the sense of belonging, love, empathy and loyalty. It is the aspect that may mobilize people to do some acts for their country (Bar-Tal & Staub, 1993). The educational concept after the tragedy of May 13, 1969 is to strengthen people connection and to improve patriotism. The concept is aimed at having a united society that has awareness, personality and values as Malaysian who are able to take racial matters for granted that may destroy the national unity (KPM, 1979: para 117). The Second Malaysian Amendment or *Rancangan Malaysia Kedua* (1971-1979) states that:

“...; amending the educational guidelines as to create equity and loyalty among the ethnics within the country, to foster enthusiasm and diligence through many efforts... this goal is firmly state in the National Principles ... with all these elements, we shall create a united nation where loyalty and love to the country are above another loyalties.” (Malaysia, 1971: p.10)

Gould (1920) believes that if history is taught well to students, this study will encourage interest and be a social, moral and civic guidelines so that it may foster students' patriotism and humanity. However, some scholars and

researchers in history education often give a lame explanation towards patriotism in history education (White, 1996; Lee, 1996). Education is seen as a principle in strengthening national elements. In this context, the importance of history education can be explained as follows:

*“history ... it is an essential part of education of the young people of most countries and all modern nations... that is a subject which is taught in schools and universities and some educational-ists agree upon it as a basic education for everybody”* (Wung Gangwu dalam Zainal Abidin Wahid, 1964: hal. 1).

History education is considered as a factor determining what type of society to be built within a country (Haydn et al. 2001). The development on history education in Malaysia shows that the subject of history has been made as a bridge in achieving the above goal (KPM, 2003) namely to foster the loyalty and identity as the citizen of Malaysia and as the member of the world society. It is considered as an important factor in curriculum since it is considered as the main element in having united citizens who love the country (Savage & Amstrong, 2000). Patriotism is used as a mechanism to encourage people to act in accordance with historical events since history is the national glory, either in the past or in the future (Clogg, 1988) History education describes the truth of past events (Carr, 1962) through document analysis which is able to foster patriotic awareness and the integrity (Ben-Amos, 1997) as history is an intellectual activity that enable analysis and critics.

History education is in accordance with the intrinsic and extrinsic goals (Stow, 2000) Studies in England found that history education is able to improve intrinsic value, i.e to foster patriotism and loyalty to the country (Scruton, 1986; Beattie, 1987; Deuchar, 1989; Tate, 1994). In the terms of extrinsic value, several scholar studies show that history education can create an active society that has their own personality within liberal society and defy racial issues in society (White, 1993; Philips, 1997) Haydn, 2001 refers history as ‘social cement’ to unite various groups of society in Britain. There are many Britain scholars who intend to have history education as a means to improve respect towards cultural diversity and pluralism as well as to prevent the racial issue.

Walsh (1993) admires history as a way to foster students’ interest towards past time and thinks that students may understand the present day by learning history. Furthermore, he also believes that history education provides ‘the way to see almost all aspects .. issues within human life, the rules and the standards or any feelings one should has’ History, however, plays an important role in encouraging young generation towards humanity as it is a combination of evidents and social, cultural and moral studies that make history education as a complete discipline (Tate, 1994; Baogang & Yingjie, 2000).



Most countries do some development based on history to foster national identity and defence their country (Haydn, 1999) History education needs to consider globalization and the revolution on goals. It is required to equip the young generation with the ability to proceed goals scientifically, to show their inquiry skills critically so that they can face everything with a more sophisticated goal. History explains the truth of any eras through document analysis of past events through document analysis that may foster patriotism and integrity (Ben-Amos, 1997) since history is an intellectual activity that enable analysis and critics. Ben-Amos (1997) conveys that in building a country, besides the ability to live in society, it also needs the past heritage. He asserts that history and past heritage are tightly connected since history can explain truth and memory can supports history in fostering the development of the country.

In America, Bok (1996) believes that history education is able to give an understanding towards the plurality in terms of skin complexion, religion and culture and believes that students should be introduced to national identity, patriotism, and responsibility as an American citizen. This is in line with Benitez (1995) who finds American history education may create patriotism and political supports towards the kingdom. History education helps students to find the truth about facts through some efforts of exploring, criticizing, and organizing some goals (Husbands, 1996). Butts and Gagnon (1988) emphasize the importance of history study as a school subject in countries requiring democratisation. They see history as a means to teach American students about their roles in the future as a citizen of a modern and democratic country.

Ibrahim Saad (1990) says that history education is important, especially history books listing historical events showing respects towards the past events and past glory of the country as to foster patriotism and pride as the citizen. He also sees the importance of any conducts within a school such as the song of NagaraKu and consider the teachers' attitude during the instruction can influence the students' social political condition.

Slater (1989) sees that history education not only allows students to understand community, culture and country by knowing past events, but also allows students' loyalty to happen. It is because Haydn (1999) believes that history education allows the students to learn their own life and allows the fosterage of their loyalty.

In China, after the tragedy of Tianemen on June 4, 1989, the China Kaiser had emphasized the importance of patriotic education within history among young generation since the protest was accumulated from their decreasing patriotism. It is considered as a negative manifestation towards the king. President Jiang emphasized that young generation should be taught with patriotism, socialization, respect to the kingdom to inherit a new high class of moral, knowledge and discipline (Baogang He & Tingje Guo, 2000).

Seeley (in Heater, 1974) states that 'politics are vulgar when they are not liberalised by history'. History education teaches us political values (Davies,

1994a; Rosikin et al, 2000) and equips students with enough knowledge and knowledge on national history as well as political structure and process of a kingdom (Kerr, 1999).

National history education can realize students to plurality as ethnic, culture, and the way of life through past events. This is because in the attempt to build a multicultural society, it is important for young generation to understand how the communities were created (Fletcher, 1989) and to build identity as well as society understanding. Marwick (1984) supports this point of view and tell that history education allows community to establish identity, orientate an individual to understand the connection between past time and society.

Through empathy exercises conducted by teachers, men's attitude is able to be understood and explored to lead students to the understanding towards others and themselves (Andreeti, 1993). At the same time, culture (Dance, 1970) and heritage can be comprehended and used by students so that the nationality can be revealed.

Pertaining to the connection between history education and socio-culture, Banks (1994) states that "history education should help students to understand their community's culture, relieve them from the obstacles as well as to find knowledge, appropriate conducts and to involve themselves in several activities" . Social context provided by history education is important to improve students' social and personal integration (Schunk, 2000). The terms stated in the goals of the Educational Ministry puts history education as an important subject in junior high school level. The education is aimed at producing citizen who are proud and love their nation, have the sense of belongness and integrity as well as to be a part of world society who realizes understanding among nations (KPM, 2003) Furthermore, it may foster a comprehensive national integration for the sake of national interest.

History education in school generally aims at fulfilling some interests such as indoctrinating patriotism (Aminuddin Baki, 1953), spreading patriotism and critical thinking, as well as understanding present days based on the past time (Zainal Abidin Ahmad, 1980; Abd. Rahim Abd. Rashid, 1998). Building students with the spirit of nationalism, building nation (Tate & Talbot, 1997), and making some considerations towards values, role model, and lesson (Omar Mohd. Hashim, 1992) All these goals and interests can be put together towards the national integration that is to create citizens who love the country, proud to be Malyasian, and always think positively to develop Malaysia without looking at the inheritance, language, religion, and custom. It is the concept to achieve national integration applied in the multicultural society in Malaysia.

## **Conclusion**

Multicultural perspective is important to be delivered in history education so that every ethnic will be proud and respected. The followings are important elements in multiculturalism covering historical background, the role model of economical activities, natural exploration, municipality, custom, religion and belief as well as educational system.. All these elements, if it is implemented in history education, will interest students. In accordance with the ideals from the founding fathers to build a united Malaysia ready for future, the elements should be put into history subject matter.

Multiculturalism and diversity should be considered as a potential to foster diversity into national integration. History may also build an understanding and respect as well as explores other ethnic cultures as to find similarities that can be accepted nationally to build tolerant and to prevent clash among ethnics in Malaysia in the future time. By knowing cultural identity of other ethnics, students can learn and values the heritage of other ethnics besides their ethnic. It will build positive values and will not threaten the existence of other ethnics' culture.

Later, it will build the sense of respect and willingness to understand and learn other ethnics' culture through history education that may also build the sense of respects towards other ethnics. In the end, learning multiculturalism in the future may allow positive attitudes to be accepted, respected and maintained through social acts. Furthermore, every ethnic may also sit together and understand diversity among ethnics in Malaysia. It is the benefit of history teaching towards multiculturalism.

The above notion clearly shows that history education is very essential in integrating the intended nation by knowing and understanding the characteristics of the cultures within Malaysia. History teaching is a medium that is able to be used in teaching young generation who will lead the future. History education has been known and used in the world as a subject that may foster the sense of identity, understanding among ethnics and pure values to prevent the challenges on globalization\*\*\*

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