



**NATION-BUILDING AMONG YOUTHS IN MALAYSIA:
THE CIVIC EDUCATION APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the nation-building among youths in Malaysia through civic education. Today's youths are exposed to various social challenges, including domestic and global intimidations, and they are easily involved in social problems and immoral activities. Moreover, some of the youths are seen as close-minded, lack respect for the elders and

intolerant in their daily life which may affect inter-ethnic relations in a multiethnic society. It is crucial to foster the youths to ensure a better development of the country. The government has implemented civic education approach in educating the youths to foster a strong patriotism and nationalism, and strengthen their loyalty towards the country. The purpose of this study is to provide insights into the implementation of civic education approach cultivating civic consciousness among the Malaysian youth groups. This study employed quantitative approach through a survey technique by using questionnaires distributed to 431 Malaysian youths from Universiti Putra Malaysia (i.e 241 Malay and 190 Chinese students). Descriptive analysis was implemented to compare and contrast the intensity of civic education based on three dimensions, namely civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition. The findings show that the Malay and Chinese respondents have high levels of civic education and high civic consciousness as to understand the importance of living in a multiethnic society. The positive integration among the Malays and Chinese will strengthen a sense of belonging among the Malaysian youths. This study concludes that civic education in this country is important as the foundation for unity and the construction of a dreamed nation-state.

Keywords: Civic education, civic education approach, nation-building, youths, youth groups in Malaysia

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Generally, the nation-building in Southeast Asian countries has started fifty years ago (Gungwu, 2005), particularly among the newly independent states- to build new nations in order to accomplish the political and social needs of the citizens. As highlighted by Arasaratnam (1974), many countries in the Asian region put great effort in creating their own national identity and enhancing national integration. Mustafa (2002) stresses that the nation-building process involves the formation of a national identity, which is the main issue for many countries, especially Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Singapore. In the Malaysian context, the formation of national identity is very important in order to eradicate the problems related to multiethnic relationship.

As a multiethnic society, Malaysia also faces ethnic-relation problems. The Federal Constitution records that there are more than 40 ethnic groups in Malaysian society which comprises several categories of races or tribes, each with their respective characteristics. As reported by the Department of Statistics in Malaysia, the *Bumiputra* (69.1%) forms the largest ethnic group, followed by the Chinese (23.0%), Indians (6.9%), and others (1.0%), a population totaling 32.4 million. Most of the Malays, Chinese and Indians are settled in Peninsular Malaysia, and several other dominant tribes especially the *Bumiputras*, such as the Kadazan, Murut and Bajau are located in Sabah, while the Iban, Dayak, Bisayah, Kalabit and Melanau are situated in Sarawak, East Malaysia region (Syed Hassan, 2005). This diversity has colored the Malaysian socio-politics. The Malays together with the natives of Sabah and Sarawak are collectively recognized as *Bumiputra* (sons and daughters of the soil) (Noor, 2009), while Non-*Bumiputra* mainly consists of the Chinese and Indians.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ethnic Relations among Malaysian Multi-ethnic Societies

The variances of the Malays, Chinese, Indians and other indigenous people have affected inter-ethnic relations among the Malaysian multiethnic societies due to the diversity of identities, customs and traditions, as well as beliefs and lifestyles. The Malays, who are Muslims, faithfully observe the fundamentals of Islamic teaching in their dressing and food as governed by the religious beliefs and other cultural norms (Husin, 1984). The Chinese follows either Buddhism or Taoism beliefs and adhere less strictly to these teachings and their religious beliefs do not seem to strictly govern their daily lives, especially in the rural areas. On the other hand, the Indians are strongly held by the teachings of Hinduism. All these ethnic groups are proud of their own language namely, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. Undoubtedly, the huge gap and differences become the main factor for the emergence of the ethnic conflict in Malaysia that is repetitive in the Malaysian political scenario (Singh, 2001).

The Article 153 in the Malaysian Constitution provided "special rights" for the Malays and the *Bumiputras* in Sabah and Sarawak in terms of the positions of public services and scholarships, exhibitions and other educational training privileges or special facilities that were given or accorded by the Federal Government and any permit or licence for the operation of any trade or business (Haque, 2003). All these rights are to be protected by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong* (the paramount ruler or the King). However, the 'special rights' received by the *Bumiputras* became the vital source of dissatisfaction among the Malays and non-Malays (Guan, 2000). This is because the Malays feel that it is inadequate as compared to what is given

to non-Malays while the non-Malays believe that the special right is an indicator of discrimination (Lee, 2000; Haque, 2003). Hence, this is the reason why 'special right' issues became one of the most sensitive matters among ethnic relations until today.

Peh (1986) indicates that the Malaysian multiethnic society still has limited consensus on values or a lacking in a collective value systems in the society. The main feature lies rather prominently in ethnic relations, discrimination based on skin color, cultures and religions. These scenarios gave negative impacts on the Malaysian national integration and unity which is not based on the mutual respect principles and salutations of diversity (Embong, 2006). For instance, major localized incidents such as the 'bloody history' of 13th May 1969 Tragedy, Rawa Village Tragedy in March 1998, Medan Village Tragedy in March 2001 and tension that occurred after Moorthy @ Muhammad Abdullah Tragedy in December 2005 had spoiled the ethnic relations in Malaysia. These tensions reinforced ethnic boundaries and had increased the gap among the individuals thus had affected the spirit of patriotism and nationalism among all Malaysians. In fact, the Malaysian government has highlighted the importance of the younger generation as a national asset who will develop the nation in the near future (Samsudin & Pawanteh, 2009). The government recognizes the need to utilize the potential of youth groups (Rashila, 2005) in order to realize the formation of *Bangsa Malaysia (Malaysian nation)* and to achieve the status of a fully developed country by the year 2020. The progress shows the government's concern for the younger generation to be the future of Malaysia.

In Malaysia, there are about 14.33 million youths who are aged between 15 to 40 years in 2015 (Rurallink Kementerian Pembangunan Luar Bandar, 2018) and this population is estimated to be steadily increasing from year to year. Due to the needs with strong and well-prepared generations of youth, the Malaysian government has commenced a multi-dimensional approach to the development of youth (Rashila, 2005) and gives special attention to the efforts to inculcate civic awareness especially in the spirit of patriotism and nationalism with love for and devotion to the country (Hussain, 2005), enhancement in the spirit of unity among the multi-racial communities, education in tolerance, instilling the spirit of caring and volunteerism, and developing positive characteristics among the generation of youths. Unfortunately, the current phenomenon of social problems among youth groups in Malaysia show an increase every year (Mohamed, 2002) which indicates a worrying picture. Thus, the appreciation of the spirit of patriotism to be an important strategy towards the nation-building goals.

Embong (2006) stresses that inter-ethnic relations among Malaysian youths is unsatisfactory and the level of unity among Malaysian youths in the globalization era has decreased as compared to the early stages of independence. The attitudes and behaviors of the older generations concerning ethnic and religious issues are more open than the young generations of today. The new generation is observed to be insensitive, lack respect (Abdul-Lateef, 2009), closed-minded and intolerant in their everyday life (Embong, 2006). This is due to the isolation in the socialization process, which grow up with friends in the same ethnic groups, and a lack of interaction with other ethnic groups. According to Sivamurugam (as cited in Baharom, 2006), many young people set certain limits in their relationships with friends from different ethnic groups. These attitudes, in the long term, have ruined the inter-ethnic relations and integration in Malaysian multiethnic society.

2.2 Nation-Building Concept

Nation-building is a process of constructing a strong sense of national identity. This approach which is taken by the government is considered as an attempt to achieve social unity and racial integration, to secure a sovereign independent state (Mustafa, 2002), as well as to improve loyalty (Penrose, 2009), economic prosperity and political stability in an inclusive and democratic way of life. The nation-building process not only takes a long time but is very complicated to accomplish.

The nation-building process incorporates political organizations and political ideals (Heywood, 2000) and encourages uniformity in the society, as well as distinguishes national identity and improves loyalty (Penrose, 2009). In order to achieve independence for Malaya, there was strong cooperation and consensus among the different ethnic groups through the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) (Ruslan, 2003), which indicates the importance of the formation of a united nation. However, a study by Banks (2017) indicated that many ethnic and religious groups are denied their structural inclusion into their own nation-state. The Malaysian multiethnic society, diversity and differences have caused the process of nation-building towards the formation of nation-states or a new *Bangsa Malaysia* not only challenging but also complicated to accomplish. With respect to these issues, there are many factors to be considered and various challenges that need to be addressed, particularly with the emergence of various sentiments such as prejudice, chauvinism, ethnocentrism, discrimination, and narrow understanding among religious and ethnic groups (Embong, 2006) which will trigger an ethnic conflict.

Moreover, to neutralize the ethnic conflict the Malaysian government emphasizes on civic awareness or civic consciousness, especially the spirit of patriotism and nationalism, through nation-building campaigns, programs and policies. Nation-building is an approach or action that is taken by the government in an effort to create unity and racial integration, and to secure a sovereign, and independent state (Mustafa, 2002). Accordingly, Mustafa (2002) refers nation-building to “a process of constructing national identity that can accommodate ethnic pluralism while simultaneously inculcating an overarching sense of nationhood” (p. 101). On top of that, “a new *Bangsa Malaysia* that is united, dedicated and sovereign should be based on *assabiyah* spirit or high spirit of friendship (refer to Ibnu Khaldun) and love without feeling the differences in terms of races, descendants and skin colors” (Jamil, 2005, p. 29). He emphasized that the application of civic awareness, especially through the spirit of patriotism and nationalism amongst all citizens especially the youths can be cooperated, and be obedient to the country because a successful country depends on a harmonious environment among its people.

2.3 Civic Education Approach

The term ‘civic education’ has been illustrated in various opinions by researchers which carry broad meanings. Civic education is also called citizenship education and democratic education (Brahm, 2006); political education, moral education, political literacy, political indoctrination, and nationalistic education are used alternately (Thomas, 2005) in educational areas to explain the approach or effort in inculcating “patriotic pride and critical democratic patriotism” (Brahm, 2006, p. 3). The most acceptable terms for civic education are described by Print (as cited in Barone, 2002) where the emphasis is on learning about people’s responsibilities and rights, the rule of law, the government, the constitutions and the institutions. Hence, the civic concept is related to the notion of nation-state, citizen and citizenship. According to Antal and Easton (2009), in schools, the ‘civics’ curriculum has been given special attention, and teaches the academic concept of authority and the institution in comparative studies whereas Djerassimovic (2018) emphasized the civic education concept based on supranational citizenship and peace education programs. In addition, Claes, Hooghe, and Stolle (2009), note that in schools, civic education is an instrument to promote social integration and to solve social problems. This opinion is related to the progressive perspectives of civic education that is highlighted by Parker who stresses that civic education involves public issues in discussion and “a focus on problem solving and community action” (as cited in Barone, 2002, p. 2). In addition, civic education can be considered as conscious social reproduction (Guttman &

Ichilov as cited in Pettersson, 2003) to preserve the tradition, to increase the competency and to maintain stability in social, economic and political areas through the formation of a knowledgeable new generation. One of the important facts about civic characteristics is that it can be nurtured at a young age.

There are three crucial components of a good civic education, namely: civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions (Barone, 2002; Branson & Quigley, 1998). The first essential component of civic education is to enhance civic knowledge, which is related to the content (subject matter) where citizens need to understand (Branson & Quigley, 1998), particularly on the principles and practices of democracy such as citizenship, civil society, human rights, law matters (Brahm, 2006) and democratic values (Galston, 2004). Thus, “civic knowledge can be defined as cognition of politically and civically relevant facts especially cognition of the rights and responsibilities that came with the legal status as a citizen” (Tor, 2009, p. 51). This means civic knowledge is important in providing clear perspectives for a citizen to participate in society, especially in the socio-political context. It assists citizens to understand their rights as individuals and as society members (Brahm, 2006); thus they can survive and adapt to the issues, problems, and challenges in their society and become more open minded and more participative in public matters (Galston, 2004). Based on this scenario, youths comprehend how the socio-political system works and know their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, the function of civic knowledge is to perform civic intellectual skill or civic disposition in facilitating citizens to participate and engage in civic life.

The second important aspect of civic education is to develop civic skills. In fulfilling the rights and responsibilities as members of the self-governing societies, every individual not only needs to obtain civic knowledge but is also required to have the ability to think and participate with proficiency (Branson & Quigley, 1998). Civic skills will enable individuals to integrate their knowledge with public issues, political matters and civic life (Brahm, 2006). Civic skills also encourage individuals to work in groups, to respect the views of others, and to reach a consensus in harmony.

The third vital element of civic education is to instill civic disposition (values and attitudes). The notion of civic disposition is very strongly related to the concept of a “good citizen”. This means individuals who have good civic disposition will be able to assess the balance between personal and public interest based on ethical and wise deliberations. According to Branson and Quigley (1998), civic disposition refers to the characteristics of an individual or community (private and public character) which is important in preserving and improving constitutional democracy. The nature of personal character, such as self-discipline,

moral responsibility and respect to the pride and dignity of others, is very significant. Experience gained at home, in school, as well as in public and from organizations will gradually lead to the development of civic dispositions. Civic disposition is associated with social life, shared values, the feeling of belonging, such as a sense of responsibility to the others and the community as a whole for mutual benefit, and will inspire individuals and groups to work for the common purpose.

Civic education is a concept that focuses on the methods or approaches needed to teach, expose and provide a strong understanding about citizens' rights and responsibilities to their country. In addition, civic education has also been used as a mechanism in promoting social integration and solving problems (Claes et al., 2009). Antal and Easton (2009) stress that civic education provides a comprehensive insight into improving the tendency to engage in civic behaviors and develop positive attitudes. There are three main components of civic education, namely, civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions. These three components are very important and need to be nurtured in every individual, especially within the youth groups, in order to realize the establishment of a strong nation. Thus, civic education is an essential channel to citizenship and for peaceful nation-building, particularly in inculcating national identity (Levine & Bishai, 2010).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed quantitative approach through a survey technique by using questionnaires. This study took a sample of youth groups from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) with a focus on Malay and Chinese youths. About 431 respondents have participated in this study where 241 are Malays and 190 are of Chinese ethnic origin. This study employed the data analysis technique based on descriptive statistical approach to describe data related to the patterns and levels of civic education. Data were analyzed using percentage where the researcher can compare and contrast the intensity of civic education among the Malay and Chinese respondents.

Intensity is a form of measurement which used to determine the respondent's level of appreciation for a given thing. What is meant by intensity is "the quality of being intense", "the quality of being very serious and having strong emotions or opinions"; and "the quality of being felt strongly or having a very strong effect" (Cambridge Dictionary). Hence, this study has categorized four levels of appreciation in order to determine the levels of intensity. A measurement scale was established from a high level to a low level, as shown in Table 1 below.

The respondents' civic education level is categorized into four stages, namely, high, moderately high, moderately low and low level.

Table 1: Scale of analysis for civic education level

Level of Civic Education	Percentage (%)
High	76 - 100
Moderately High	51 - 75
Moderately Low	26 - 50
Low	0 - 25

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 2 below, more than 80% of the respondents have a high level of civic education intensity. Specifically, 94.6% of Malay respondents and 83.7% of Chinese respondents have a high level of civic education intensity. The study also shows that no respondents, either Malay or Chinese, are at a low level of civic education intensity. Relatively, the intensity of civic education among the Malay respondents is found to be higher by 10.9% as compared to the Chinese respondents. Although there is a small number of respondents who are at a moderate level of civic education intensity, particularly among the Chinese respondents which is 16.3%, but it can be noted that the civic education approach in Malaysia is effective and has succeeded in achieving most of the targeted goals.

Table 2: Overall level of civic education intensity

Youth	Intensity	Ethnic	
		Malay (%)	Chinese (%)
	Low	0	0
Overall Respondent	Moderate	5.4	16.3
	High	94.6	83.7
Total		100	100

This study has found that the civic education among youths, which is patterned by national interest, has been cultivated within them. Basically, there are three dimensions of civic education measurement, namely civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition, and the display of positive developments. As the three dimensions are found at a high level of intensity, this study discloses that the civility element has been practiced among the respondents and this

scenario shows that they possessed a high level of civic awareness (Ismail & Mohd Noor, 2013). This development remains as one of the main factors that determine the sustainability of the well-being and harmonious multiethnic community in Malaysia. This can also be the reason why the Malaysian youth does not show any form of ethnic conflicts openly. Consequently, this study debunks the claims by Embong (2006) who has described the younger generation today as less patriotic, closed minded and less tolerant in their everyday life.

Specifically, the level of civic knowledge of the Malay and Chinese respondents are found to be high i.e. more than 80%: in matters concerning government affairs and national administration, national identity, federal constitution, democratic principles and international relations. Meanwhile, Table 3 shows that the respondents' level of civic knowledge on the development of national history and current issues are found to be moderately high. These high levels of civic knowledge directly affect the pattern of civic skills and individual civic tendencies (Galston, 2004).

Table 3: Level of civic knowledge level

Dimension	Level of Intensity (%)
National History	58.7
Government and National Administration	81.8
National Identity	87.7
Federal constitution	85.1
Current Issues	72.2
Democratic principle	82.6
International Relations	85.5

In the context of civic skills, this study indicates that there is a fluctuating pattern for selected sub-dimensions where the majority of the respondents, regardless of ethnicity be they Malays or Chinese, possess good skills in personal management matters yet moderate in community affairs (Table 4). This pattern of uneven civic skills demonstrates that the intensity of civic skills among the Malay youths is better than the Chinese even though they face the same educational system and process (Table 4).

Table 4: Level of civic skills efficiency

Dimension	Ethnic	
	Malay (%)	Chinese (%)
Analysing	85.4	70.5
Problem solving	85.4	77.8
Decision making	95.5	91.1
Co-operation with others	95.4	92.6
Community involvement	41.2	41.6
Group leadership	79.5	70.8
Volunteerism	86.8	68.9
Influencing	72.0	63.6

In terms of civic disposition, all measurable dimensions show a high intensity for the two ethnic groups of respondents (Table 5). Specifically, the level of civic disposition of the Malay youths has a higher intensity than the Chinese. This can be seen through the dimensions of the tendency to think civically, critically and openly, equality of rights and fundamental freedoms, being involved in the communities, sharing state values, embrace feelings of unity, perseverance, courage, concern, honesty and sincerity, as well as the tendency to negotiate and to be tolerant (Table 5).

Table 5: Level of civic disposition

Dimension	Ethnic	
	Malay (%)	Chinese (%)
Civic, Critical And Open Minded	91.8	79.8
Equal Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	97.9	95.7
Community Life	94.3	78.4
Sharing of State Value	97.1	87.4
Feeling of togetherness	87.7	77.3
Fortitude, Perseverance and Courage	91.6	81.5
Concern, Honesty and Sincerity	90.5	82.3
Negotiations and Compromises	95.8	88.4

The study has also found that the intensity of civic education among the Malay youths is better than the Chinese. However, the researchers have found that the element of ethnicity has not influenced the level of intensity in civic education. This is because all the measured sub-dimensions are not based on ethnic factors but is based on common factors. The difference may be due to the level of acceptance of the civic education among the Malay youths to be better than the Chinese. Among the key factors that need to be reviewed is the usage of the Malay language in the delivery system and the learning methodology.

Based on the above findings, in general, the civic education approach among the youths in Malaysia is still in the middle stage which focuses more on the development of the spirit of patriotism and to increase loyalty to the nation through high civic awareness as highlighted by Janowitz (1983). This idea has been stated by Barone (2002) that the civic education approach in Malaysia emphasizes more on the inculcation of societal values and norms, as well as religious and moral education as opposed to the opportunities that are afforded to the students to practice democracy, discussing governmental policies and evaluating the role of democracy. The importance of civic education in Malaysia has not yet been fully implemented towards the development of democracy, namely, democratic education and citizenship as expressed by scholars such as Brahm (2006), Branson and Quigley (1998), Bratton, Alderfer, Bowser, and Tamba (1999), Carothers (1997), Diamond (1995), Finkel (2002), Finkel, Sabatini, and Bevis (2000), Print (1999), and Quigley (1999). The importance of civic education in democratic education and civil society is more centralized in Western countries but it is still in its early stages in Malaysia. The same scenario has attracted Print (1999) who emphasizes that most countries in the Asia-Pacific region must be conscious before reaching the level of democracy and civil society, in particular regarding the awareness of civic education which is essential in playing the role of developing democratic citizenship and civil community improvement.

Even though the civic education approach in Malaysia is still centered on the sense of patriotism and loyalty, and lacks emphasis on democratic practicality, however, the civic education element has been successfully nurtured in youths (Husna & Ismail, 2018). It is undeniable to say that some elements need to be improved such as community involvement skills, leadership skills and abilities to influence others, but the overall application of the civic education process has been achieved. This situation is due to the fact that the respondents in the study are among the youth groups who are pursuing their studies at higher institutions. They are the selected youth groups who have received a complete education and have been exposed to the continuous civic education elements. Additionally, the experience of ethnic cross-cultural interactions in everyday life such as a campus community certainly strengthens the

civility element within themselves. Therefore, it is not surprising why the level of civic education intensity among the respondents is described as satisfactory. What is more encouraging is that the growth in civic education has had a significant impact on political knowledge (Finkel & Ernst, 2005; Niemi & Junn, 1998).

This progress is the result of the effectiveness of the education system that has been implemented in Malaysia. In particular, it is the success of the civic education program that has been implemented since the introduction of the modern education system. The emphasis on the curriculum and the civic education element in the Malaysian education system shows the continuity of education from the lowest level to the highest level. This is because the education system which is implemented by the Ministry of Education through the Primary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSR) and the Integrated Curriculum of Secondary School (KBSM) has embarked on Civics and Citizenship Education subjects in the pursuit of holistic and integrated individual development, with emphasis on good values and sense of patriotism. This subject has been considered as a fundamental subject for all level 2 students (Year 4 to 6) in the primary school and for the Form 1 students in secondary school. There are three main elements that outline the Curriculum and Citizenship Education syllabus including civic knowledge, civic skills and civic values that are in line with the basic concepts of civic education itself. This new syllabus has been introduced in 2005 which is previously known as *Pendidikan Tatarakyat*, *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*, *Sivik Rendah Baru* and *Sivik Menengah Baru*. This subject has been taught in schools since 1954 through the proposed Annual Report 1952 (Sidin & Aziz, 1992). Clearly, the civic education in Malaysia has been taught in schools prior to the country's independence. The early efforts were undertaken by the British with the aim of establishing good social relationships and interactions among the students from various ethnic groups (Sidin & Aziz, 1992). Thus, the basic goal of the introduction of civic education in the country is to achieve a comprehensive unity among its multiethnic communities towards the formation of a superior nation.

The civic education syllabus has been revised and updated every year to ensure its relevancy with the current needs and developments. This can be seen in the development of the National Education Policy where the civic education subject has been made compulsory in all schools. Through the Cabinet Committee Report, there are three main aspects that have been addressed concerning civic education. The first aspect is the civic education approach has expanded not only as an isolated subject but the civic elements have been applied to other appropriate subjects such as History, Islamic Studies, moral education, *Bahasa Malaysia*, Geography and so forth. Further advances can be seen in the upper secondary level such as in

the case of Form 6 students who are required to pass *Pengajian Am* which deal with the aspects of Malaysia. The second aspect is to promote civic activities outside of the classroom such as co-curricular activities, community-based activities and community development activities (Sidin & Aziz, 1992). In this context, the students are encouraged to participate actively in sports activities, uniformed bodies and club activities. Such activities not only stimulate the students' intellect, but also teach the meaning of leadership, increase their knowledge and experience, as well as enhance their social interactions with one another. The third aspect is to apply civic education in pre-service training courses and in-service courses (Sidin & Aziz, 1992). This approach is implemented in order to show the importance of civic education in Malaysia and should always be nurtured and enhanced consistently. Hence, the civic education elements are also applied in the courses of government services such as induction courses, promotion courses and so forth.

This scenario also led to the development of a complete political literacy among the youths. As indicated by Thomas (2005), the civic education, political education or political literacy are the approaches that share the same purpose. These three approaches focus on the disclosure, knowledge and understanding of a citizen on matters involving political, administrative and governmental affairs. In this context, the government should play a proper role in educating the people to understand the basic concepts such as the concept of state, government, political parties, political institutions, federal systems, democracy, justice and so forth. In western countries, the emphasis on various forms of civic education programs and approaches is in line with the democratization process in the country. In other words, the civic education is a mechanism to teach the meaning of democracy. According to Quigley (1999) and Finkel (2002), United States and most Western European countries believe that civic education is an attempt to learn and strengthen democracy and enhance the development of their nation building. In Malaysia, however, we have not yet fully reached that level, even though our country is heading towards the same destination.

Meanwhile, civic education has succeeded in enhancing the civic knowledge of every Malaysian citizens and thus promoting an increase in civic skills and influencing civic tendencies. The continuous emphasis on civic education is seen as a catalyst for the development of general knowledge and good civic knowledge among the youths in Malaysia. For instance, the students in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) are required to complete and pass *Kenegaraan Malaysia* and *Hubungan Etnik*, subjects that are the prerequisite for their graduation. The subjects exposed the students to the development of national history, political affairs, government and administration as well as to guide towards building better ethnic

relations. This development has become one of the better factors of fostering civic education and the best foundation in the process of building Malaysian nation.

The findings support the study which shows that the Malaysian education system has successfully and effectively instilled civic education in the students. This education system uses a model that emphasizes and nurtures the basic norms and values of the local communities that can bind each individuals (Barone, 2002). Thus, the civic education approach in Malaysia has succeeded in collaborating the values of society into the majority of youth regardless of ethnic differences towards being a responsible individual, more open minded and engaging in public interest activities. This development is ideally positive in realizing the formation of a united Malaysia as has been suggested by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad through his Vision 2020.

With the implementation of the civic education approach, the dream of a Malaysian nation is almost constructed. There exists a new generation who shares the experience of living together in various aspects of life so much so that they began to regard themselves as 'Malaysian children' and accept the idea of *Bangsa Malaysia* (Embong, 2006). The accepted nation of Malaysia is in the form of a nation-state which binded all the indigenous multi-ethnic communities as a whole population. Each minority ethnic groups that exists in Malaysia has a relatively significant to the majority groups through an integration of orientation across ethnic groups (Mohd Noor & Baharuddin, 2005). They are integrated through various structures that are inherent in society such as socio-cultural, economic and political structures. The concept of nation-state is acceptable as every ethnic group is given the rights and freedom to maintain its respective ethnic identity. At the same time, there are some core elements in shared societies that form a stronger national bond.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The civic education that is implemented through educational institutions starts since the primary and secondary schools as well as in higher level institutions shows a fairly positive progress in the development of civility elements within an individual. This is proven through research findings that youths have high levels of civic education intensity. This finding illustrates that the elements of civility have been embodied in their identities: they have high civic consciousness and understand the importance of living in a society. This development has opened a wider space of interaction and integration within the Malaysian multiethnic society. They have shown willingness to work with the others, to be tolerant, to make good and bad judgments as well as have the consciousness to engage in community activities. This

development will generate a sense of togetherness in a society that will ultimately strengthen the process of Malaysian nation's development. In this context, civic education approach is one of mechanisms in achieving goals of nation building in Malaysia. Moreover, the civic education approach fulfills the processes for the formation of nation building which has been implemented by the Malaysian government since independence. This study has successfully proven that the civic education was the effective approach in educating civic consciousness through civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition. Thus, the government should maintain the civic education approach as one of the efforts to recognize the nation building goals.

The overall findings show a high level of civic education intensity among the youths who are to be a major factor in the formation of a united nation-state in Malaysia. However, the results only represent a small number of the community who are pursuing studies in higher institutions. The results do not represent the demographic of youths outside the higher institution or the population as a whole. Thus, a future comprehensive study should be conducted among the youths who are not exposed to the university environment in order to cover the full description of all youths in Malaysia. The study on civic education approach in Malaysia is important as the foundation for unity and the construction of a dreamed nation-state. The process of building the indigenous nation-state involves the society as a whole from all social status and not only focusses on youths. Nonetheless, these highly educated youths can be the catalyst for the future of the country as well as the foundation for unity and the construction of a dreamed nation-state.

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