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## PATRIOTISM MODEL FOR MULTI-ETHNICS SOCIETY IN MALAYSIA

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**Abstract** : Malaysia is a multi-racial country comprises of diverse lifestyles, cultures as well as religions. This situation requires a different approach in developing the strong values of patriotism in order to preserve the harmony and strengthen the nation's identity of Malaysia. The construction of this patriotism framework relies on Malay culture and Islam as the official religion of the country as well as not disregards other ethnic cultures and religions. The goal of patriotism in the context of Malaysia leads to the enrichment of pride values as Malaysian, loyalty to the King and country, have a sense of belonging, has a level of discipline and obedience towards the laws of the country and becoming a competitive and productive society. In order to make this aspiration a reality, various attempts have been made in myriad number of schools, higher education institutes and education as well as community which is driven by the government, private organizations as well as NGOs. Apart from that, a detailed discussion on issues related to the challenges in establishing racial harmony which is a major factor in the formation of Malaysian patriotism framework as well as the suggestions to enforce patriotism among Malaysian nation are also incorporated.

**Keywords** : patriotism framework, national pride, loyalty towards the king and country, sense of belonging and productive

### INTRODUCTION

The colonialism background has witnessed the changes on the citizens' demographic landscape when the British brought in immigrants to Malaya in order to fulfill their economic interests since the 18th century. This situation leads to the establishment of multi-racial communities comprises of indigenous people which majority of them are from Malay ethnicities as well as the presence of other ethnics including Chinese and Indians (Chamil Wariya, 2007).

After the establishment of Malaysia dated 16 September 1963, the acceptance of Sabah and Sarawak leads to the increment in the ethnics' number which categorized as Sabah and Sarawak indigenous ethnics. The implementation of divide and rule policy by the British during the colonial era have separated ethnic groups based on occupation and settlements, where Malay ethnic and aboriginals groups remain in traditional agriculture in rural areas based on plantation and rice cultivation, while the whereas the Chinese manage the mine areas which eventually developed into cities while the Indians conscripted as laborers in the farm and settle in estate areas.

After the country achieve its independence in 1957, the government took an action to change the settlement and occupation landscape via education and economy development, however, this situation can not be fully accomplished where the Malays and Indians are still lagging behind in economic development and education as compared to the Chinese communities. The majority Malays tend to work in the public sector, while the Indians are still focuses on labor-based economic activities while only small part of them have successfully improve their living



standards. These factors have been identified as the main cause of the racial relationship rift in our country.

However, the fundamental reason which leads to the difficulties in embodying the spirit of patriotism among Malaysians is the retention of vernacular schools founded by the colonizers which result to the absence of interaction and a sense of belonging among students since childhood because of the existence of schools based on race.

### **PATRIOTISM VALUES INCULCATION THROUGH HISTORY EDUCATION**

Appreciation of patriotism value through education is an important element contained in the national philosophy of education. It aims at producing a balanced and harmonious individual in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual based on trust and obedience towards God (Malaysian Education Act, 1990). Education and values application are intertwined with each other and could not be separated as knowledge without practice will be meaningless (Mohamad Khairi & Asmawati 2010). Through good values, it will influence the way people think, behave and act which shapes the culture and norms of a society. In line with this philosophy, a History Education subject has been introduced for primary school students since 2014 which main aim is to promote a high appreciation of patriotism value among young citizens by understanding and learning from series of significant events in the world. In addition, students will be able to understand the differences in people, understanding a person's experience and indirectly recognize themselves as individuals and members of a society. Furthermore, History education is a platform which will be harnessed by government in their goal to promote patriotism and generate a cosmopolitan generation which would not be influenced by foreign disrupting agenda.

It has been publicly discussed that teenagers nowadays were seen to exhibit unpatriotic behaviour such as vandalism and delinquencies (Mohd Mahzan et al, 2013). Furthermore, there are also issues and concern towards a rising number of young people who involved with misconduct such as illegal racing, stealing motorcycle as well as stealing public properties including electric cable which is a highly disturbing negative phenomenon. This behavioural concern urges a solid platform to shape the future generation. As appreciation of patriotism value is a vital aspect in constructing a virtuous nation, the implementation of this value at its earliest is imperative to ensure the production of untainted generation. Hence, History education is a perfect medium to attain this objective.

Wilbinah (2013) stated that students can recognize their own national conditions, cultivate a love towards the country, respect the country's sovereignty and create a spirit of unity among the races when studying and practicing the lessons learnt from History. Furthermore, students can also appreciate the principles enshrined in the National Principles when studying history (Awang Had Salleh, 2009). According to Norrizan (2003), elements of patriotism and lessons from history can also be seen in various forms such as the title, formulations, and the information found in textbooks. However, the effectiveness of History Education subject is a vital role played by History teachers (Omar Mohd Hashim, 2013). Thus, envisioning of pedagogical skill in teaching History is no longer an option but a *de rigueur* factor that need to be mastered by teachers. Despite these aspects, many researches that were conducted on patriotism in Malaysian context were solely focusing on secondary school students possibly due to the longer implementation of this subject at secondary level. Thus, this research will provide a comprehensive overviews and fundamental data on the effectiveness of History subject based on primary school level.

One of relevant studies on History Education and patriotism practice in primary school was carried out by Dullah Yute Said & Ambotong (2014) who did a survey on teachers in one of the



states in Malaysia to find out that the implementation of the teaching History in primary schools and discussed on the level of teachers' preparedness in conducting History lesson during teaching and learning process. In this study, several aspects including teachers' competencies in teaching history was also reviewed in investigating the effectiveness of History lesson. Thus, this research acts as one of the main literature references which results also support the importance of the present study.

Standard document of Primary Schools' Curriculum and Assessment (2014) from Ministry of Education Malaysia is served as a solid reference to discuss History Education subject in primary schools as a whole. The transformation of primary schools' national curriculum was conducted as a requirement to cope with future challenges. Therefore, in line with this transformation, national History Education curriculum is observed as a holistic change of process involving the alteration of form, pedagogy, organization, content, assessment methods, allocation of time, materials as well as curriculum management in schools.

In addition, a study carried out by Ahamad Rahim (2010) examines the role of education to improve the existing efforts towards integration of ethnic groups in Malaysia. The study also looked at the problems in the History Education subject and has proposed a number of appropriate measures in order to make the subject capable in applying the values associated with relations between different races in Malaysia, namely strengthening the lesson content in order to integrate the attitudes of tolerance, patriotism, citizenship values in achieving the goal to produce a cohesive society. According to this study, History curriculum is a definite answer towards strengthening the unity among citizens due to its cognisant properties in informing the differential of racial backgrounds and helping the students to perceive differences among individuals. This is the core pillar of acceptance and promoting unity.

### **PATRIOTISM KNOWLEDGE IN HISTORY EDUCATION**

Interpretation of the mean score is based on the following categories which is adapted from Nunnally (1994); Dissatisfactory (1.00 – 2.00), Moderate (2.01 – 3.00), Quite Satisfied (3.01 – 4.00), Satisfied (4.01 – 5.00).

Results revealed that the students' knowledge of patriotism via History Education is at a satisfactory level. Table 1 shows detailed-components of patriotism knowledge investigated in this study.

**Table 1** Students patriotism knowledge in History subject

| <b>Patriotism Knowledge Components</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Standard Deviation</b> | <b>Interpretation</b> |
|--|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Proud to be a Malaysian                | 3.15        | 0.72                      | Quite Satisfied       |
| Loyalty to the country                 | 4.36        | 0.66                      | Satisfied             |
| Sense of belonging                     | 4.51        | 0.52                      | Satisfied             |
| Disciplinary                           | 4.53        | 0.54                      | Satisfied             |
| Hardworking and Productivity           | 4.34        | 0.62                      | Satisfied             |
| <b>Overall</b>                         | <b>4.18</b> | <b>0.51</b>               | <b>Satisfied</b>      |

Table 1 shows the level of patriotism knowledge is at a satisfactory level. This finding is consistent with the findings from Nazri and Jamsari (2004) which revealed that History subject in school was observed to be relevant in an effort to foster community values, intellectual, and social development in order to shape the personality of an individual towards patriotism. The



level of being disciplined is the highest followed by the sense of belonging and loyalty to the country. The result also shows that the level of hardworking and productivity is at a satisfactory level. The lowest score is for the component of proud to be a Malaysian. This highlight the issue of national identity among school students. Overall findings of this study revealed that the appreciation of patriotism value among primary school students via History Education is positive and satisfactory. This results concomitantly implies that History Education plays a significant role as it provides a solid platform for students to obtain knowledge on historical values which further promotes their patriotic behaviour. Students may also gain values from historical events based on their learning contents (Abdul Razaq & Mohd Mahzan, 2016). Thus, this study supported previous study conducted by Haminah Suhaibo (2010) which indicated high percentage of patriotism knowledge in History among Malaysian students (Haminah Suhaibo 2010).

### **PATRIOTISM PRACTICE IN HISTORY SUBJECT**

A detailed analysis on patriotism practise shows a mixture of levels in term of patriotism practice in school. Table 2 displays detailed result for each construct tested in this study.

**Table 2** Patriotism Practice of Students in History Subject

| Patriotism Practice   | Mean | Standard Deviation | Interpretation  |
|---|------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Stand upright and often feel encouraged when listening to National Anthem | 4.46 | 0.66               | Satisfied       |
| Will defend the country   | 3.29 | 0.84               | Quite Satisfied |
| Respecting and following the wisdom of previous leaders                   | 4.38 | 0.71               | Satisfied       |
| Obey the National Principles.   | 4.33 | 0.80               | Satisfied       |
| Tolerating among my friends with different racial backgrounds             | 4.32 | 0.76               | Satisfied       |
| Celebrate Independent Day together every year                             | 4.37 | 0.78               | Satisfied       |
| Will never move to another country  | 4.35 | 0.76               | Satisfied       |
| Visiting multi-ethnic neighbours  | 3.28 | 0.87               | Quite Satisfied |
| Respecting my parents and teachers  | 4.48 | 0.73               | Satisfied       |
| Study hard to be successful   | 4.42 | 0.69               | Satisfied       |



|   |      |      |                 |
|---|------|------|-----------------|
| Good manner in daily life   | 3.27 | 0.81 | Quite Satisfied |
| Make Malaysia proud in international level                        | 4.38 | 0.74 | Satisfied       |
| Proud with the uniqueness of Malaysia                             | 4.42 | 0.70 | Satisfied       |
| Communicating with all Malaysians regardless of their ethnicities | 3.27 | 0.74 | Quite Satisfied |
| Voluntarily involved in national service                          | 4.27 | 0.79 | Satisfied       |
| Overall   | 4.10 | 0.56 | Satisfied       |

Overall, the results demonstrated that patriotism practice among primary school students in History subjects is satisfactory. There are four items which displayed low mean scores namely: defending the country, visiting multi-ethnic neighbours; portraying good manner in my daily life; and communicate with all Malaysians regardless of their ethnicities. This means that even though the level of patriotism among students is positive, more efforts need to be carried out in order to ensure that all students are going to practice patriotic behaviour effectively. So, understanding students' voices are important as Campbell (2007) found the implication of people language on the determination of their patriotism value. This result also indicated that students require more exposure and we do believe that if they are given continuance exposure, all students will practice patriotic behaviour.

Results from the current study also demonstrates that learning history in primary schools play a great role to promote patriotism and citizenship values. It will also be a transmission mechanism which aimed at shaping the future generation in order to ensure the continuity of culture (Bisin and Verdier 2001). Cultural continuity meant referring to the values of patriotism which tried to be nurtured through history education to ensue the goal of producing citizens who are proud and passionately loyal to the country. The implementation of the values is imperative to produce patriotic citizens which always defending the country's sovereignty, independence and national development in the future. The findings of this study also further supported the finding by Haminah Suhaibo (2010) which showed that the level of high patriotism among students is a result of teachers' commitment and perseverance attitude in achieving history curriculum objective which to nurture students' patriotic behaviour.

### **MALAYSIA-MOLDED PATRIOTISM**

To construct patriotism according to Malaysia's mold in unifying various ethnic groups in Malaysia, the principles that lead to the development of Malaysian patriotism has being implemented at various levels, through education, culture and economy. Education is a basic agenda in developing patriotism while economic and cultural are the aspects to enforce the developmental agenda of nation patriotism.

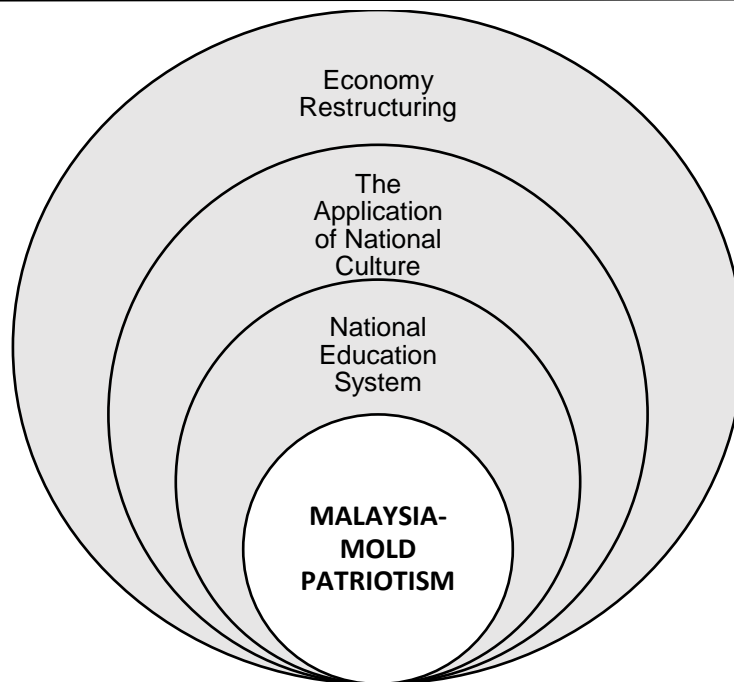


Figure 1 **Malaysia-mold patriotism**

The features of Malaysia-mold patriotism is covering the following aspects: (a) enrichment of nation pride values which make every citizen always practiced the spirit to develop the country and figure out what contribution can they make towards the country, (b) loyalty to the King and Country which becoming the core of Malaysian nation and a legacy that continues to be maintained as a symbol of national sovereignty. Malaysia is unique because it has nine Sultans who became the Head of the states and the election of the King as the Head of the country, (c) have a sense of belonging, which has an affiliated value and always feel togetherness as a community, (d) have a level of discipline and obedience towards the laws of the country as well as (e) becoming a competitive and productive society.

#### **i. EDUCATION AND PATRIOTISM**

Educational approach is as observed in the National Education Ordinance 1957, which is based on the Razak Report 1956. This Razak Report has provided clear guidelines to ensure the success of the education role as an agent of for racial unities through the usage of uniform curriculum which makes the Malay language as the language of instruction and the establishment of type-based school namely National School / National Secondary School. The curriculum has been implemented in a centralized form to ensure the uniform implementation throughout the country (Kamaruddin, 1999).

The History subject in Secondary School level have been implemented since the beginning of independence, which also introduced in primary schools but still focuses on orientalist's view which hides the actual facts and consider the independence fighters as rebels instead of the real fighters (Khoo Kay Kim, 1992). However, after the independence, many attempts have been made in strengthening History curriculum based on Malaysian Centric where the freedom fighters which



previously considered as rebels has been reappointed as a hero in the history of Malaysia and correcting the facts that had been long hidden.

The efforts to strengthen the History curriculum in implementing patriotism began drastically when the New Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (ICSS) was introduced in 1985 with the integration of culture elements and values that drive patriotism among students. History curriculum that was introduced at this stage is only taught in secondary schools which involving two categories: History of World Civilization and History of Malaysia to educate Malaysians on the historical existence of the nation in the outside world and how the developmental aspect of the civilization can be applied for the country's development. It is expected that the students will learn about the global values to be instilled in their open mind.

On the other hand, the application of patriotism based on Malaysia history is associated with the local value by strengthening the students' knowledge on the history of nation building, the vagaries for the establishment of the nation and the challenges and threats as well as its relationship with the civilization of other nations in the world (History Syllabus, 2000). For this purpose, the fighting spirit of the national heroes in the struggle for independence until the emergence of radical nationalism and via political parties have being raised to increase the awareness on the value and the price of freedom which is achieved through struggle and sacrifice. In addition, the role of other ethnic groups in Malaysia history is also highlighted for the purpose to establish the sense of equality and creating a sense of belonging to show that every ethnic plays a vital role in creating a sovereign and harmonious nation country.

The goal for the establishment of World History and History of Malaysia curriculum is to produce a generation that values the identity in the spirit of localities, which love the race and country without neglecting the universal patriotism value learnt in World History in order to produce Malaysia nation which are not to obsessed on their own races and lead to the hatred towards other races. In this context, the underlying aspect for a harmonious country is not only limited to the local-based patriotism but also involving the global patriotism which have to be appreciated in order to contribute to the harmony and universal prosperities (Abdul Razaq Ahmad & Anuar Ahmad, 2011).

The patriotism values which are based on local and global spirit in order to make students to be more mature in deeply appreciating patriotism appreciate towards the local values as well as respecting other countries. This aims to make the established universal patriotism is not only for ensuring the security within country but also for global peace. This is the mold that wanted to be applied among Malaysians. However, the aspiration is still in the process which has many challenges and obstacles to serve effectively as an agent to strengthen patriotism because the knowledge of history is only studied for examination purposes and not to be applied and practiced to shape the patriotism values. Ahmad Razaq (2011) found that majority of students are less interested in studying History subject due to its compact contents only learning the subject for the purpose of passing the examination. Abdul Razaq Ahmad & Anuar Ahmad (2011) on the other hand, recognizes the occurrence of this situation is due to the lack of skills and competencies of history teachers in implementing the patriotism spirit in the classroom because the teaching approach is also emphasizing on the examination requirements rather than to develop patriotism.

To reinforce this effort, the Ministry of Education has required the pass status of History subject for Malaysian Education Certificate examination since 2013 where the students who failed History subject history can not pursue higher education institutions. Apart from that, the History subject has also been reintroduced in Phase II (Year 4-6) primary schools, which have been neglected for so long. This is because the early stage of child development is an important stage



for strengthening the patriotism because children are relatively easier to accept and live the values of applied patriotism. These subjects were also introduced in National-Type Chinese and Tamil School. In addition, to further strengthen the appreciation of patriotism, the civics and citizenship subject was also introduced at the secondary school level in which the concept of appreciation of the Constitution and National Principles has also been emphasized to educate and strengthen the value of patriotism among students.

For the continuation of patriotism, the core subjects at all higher education institutions, namely the relationship between ethnicity, citizenship, TITAS (Islamic and Asian Civilization) are also taught. It aims to provide a high intellectual understanding among students in order to understand the history of ethnic relations in Malaysia, civilization and nations culture in order to avoid misunderstandings and prejudices which are often driven by emotions and the absence of facts that gave rise to the conflict and lead to the estrangement of racial relationship and thus retarding the process of strengthening patriotism of Malaysian nation. This higher education level is more focused on the facts and research-based data which are scientific and regularly debated openly. This is the highest process in producing a nation of mature minded, open and respecting other ethnic principles, which can strengthen the values of patriotism and values of global peace that can be translated into the development of patriotism at the community level.

## **ii. ECONOMIC AND PATRIOTISM**

Economic approach is also becoming an important government agenda to bridge the economic gap between races. According to the study conducted by Hamidah Abdul Rahman, et al. (2002), the economic gap can make people always tenuous and lead to the dissatisfaction toward other races as well as frequently looking for a variety of offenses to other races which result to all efforts that can be implemented through education will delay the formation of patriotism among Malaysians.

To overcome this problem, the Government has restructured the economy as soon as the independence through the establishment of New Economic Policy (NEP) to help the indigenous communities that have been left behind from economic development during the phase 1970 to 1990 as well as conducting various efforts and measures to help the Indians to bridge their economic disparities with other ethnic groups. This policy has also been successful in bridging the economic gap between the three main ethnic groups, resulting in a lack of quarrel and conflict between races. This is also a vital factor in supporting the development of patriotism in education field. Nowadays, the Malays and Indians have also dabbled in business and entrepreneurship, which previously monopolized by the Chinese. Professionalism field also involves various races regardless of their background. However, the gaps are still existing in the field of employment and the economy in which the Malays and Indians are mostly working in the public sector while the Chinese working in the private sector and business. Noraini et al, (1996) pointed out that this situation leads to a lack of inter-ethnic interaction in everyday life which also reduces the ethnic relations. Interaction and ethnic relations in everyday life is imperative to understand each other and create a sense of belonging to strengthen the values of patriotism among Malaysians.

Therefore, the restructuring of job placement is to create a balanced economic dominance among all races. If the aspiration in creating strong patriotism want to be realized in the real life of Malaysians as envisaged in Vision 2020, hence this economic restructuring is a vital aspect. Vision 2020 highlighted Malaysia as a developed nation with loyal nation towards the country through the productive economic activity which not only focuses on self-interest merely but also





boasts Malaysia in the international arena. It is hope that eventually, Malaysia will becoming the new model of patriotism which is unique to Malaysia nation and can serve as a guide and benchmark for other nations comprises of ethnic diversity.

### iii. CULTURE AND PATRIOTISM

The race riots that happened and broke out on May 13, 1969 has provoked the government reflection to think about the basic philosophy of the country that need to be internalized by every citizen in order to avoid a similar conflict to happen, because all ethnic groups share a same country and hence there is a need for dominant step to maintain its stability. Thus, in 1970 National Principles has been proclaimed as the National Philosophy that should be practiced by all people regardless of race, each covering 5 principles:

1. Believe in God
2. Loyalty to the King and Country
3. Supremacy of the Constitution
4. Rule of Law
5. Good Behavior and Morality

National Cultural Policy (NCP) was introduced in 1974 through National Cultural Congress is led to the consideration of patriotism establishment among Malaysians. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin (2012) stated that Malaysia is still deemed as country without a nation. This means that each ethnic have their own sense of belonging and practice their respective lifestyle, culture and believe which seen as segregations such as the Chinese which still practice their way of life, as well as the Indians and Malays. To overcome this problem, implemented NCP has highlighted three principles to unify the culture of Malaysia nation, namely:

1. Culture is based on Malay culture and original people from this region.

Malay culture which is founded since the Malay Sultanate era in Malaya continue to remain as a preserved heritage and roots of nation's identity and Malay modesty value will become an important tool in strengthening the relations with other races.

2. National culture based on Islamic values

Malaysia nation has also accepted Islam as the official religion which spread the values of kindness as an effort to strengthen Malaysia's civilization that which is in moderate level and not driving towards extremisms.

3. Receive other non-conflicted cultural elements

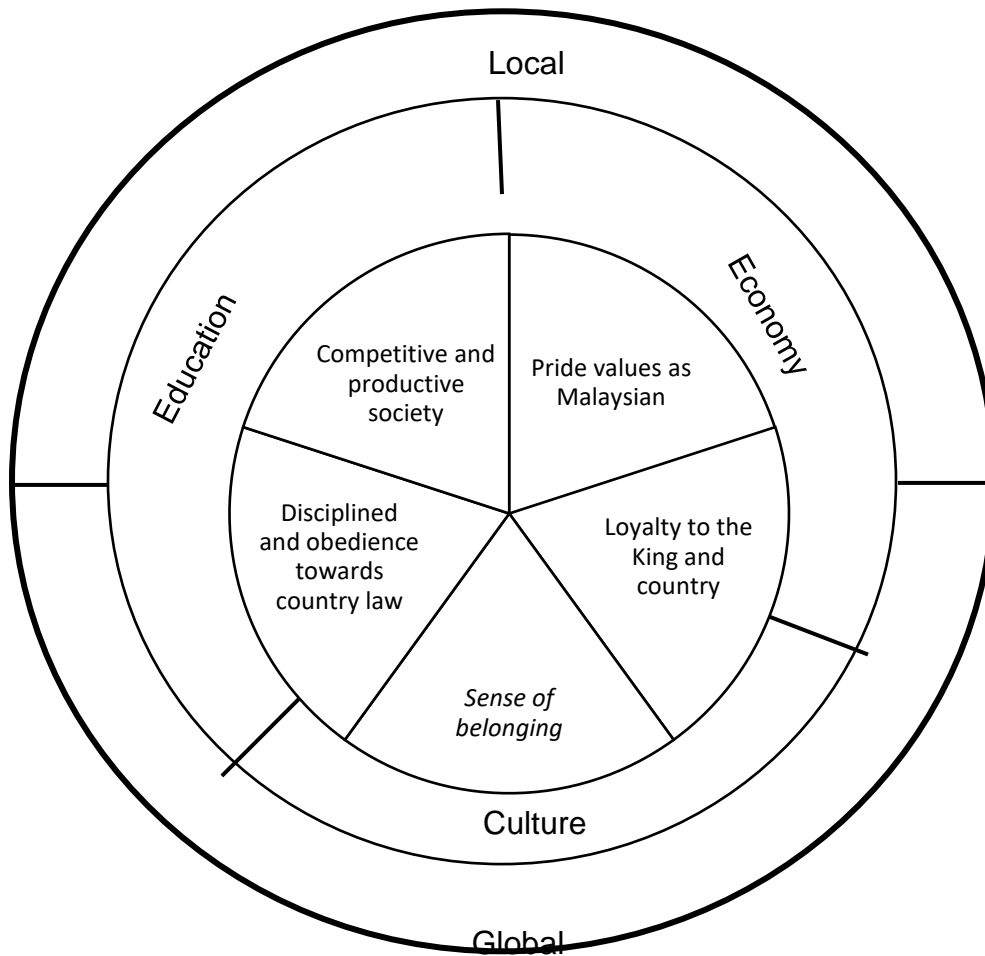
To ensure harmonious relations between races as well as to maintain stability, the ethnic element is also taken into account in establishing the basis of National Culture Policy. In other words, each ethnic is required to have mutual acceptance and respect towards each other.

To apply the appreciation of the belonging values which leads to the Malaysia nation patriotism, various efforts have been conducted related to the culture of various ethnic groups in Malaysia by organizing community activities as well as yearly races celebration as a national agenda. Apart from that, NGO's also held volunteerism- based activities to establish a strong belonging relationship to inculcate the patriotism values among various races as the foundation of a sustainable nation. Various ethnic groups in Malaysia are continuously encouraged to highlight the respective identity and diversity of their cultures to be accepted as the cultural heritage of Malaysia involving the arts, dance, dress, food, festivals as long as it is not contradictory and disturbing the sensitivities of other races. A range of activities was organized to develop patriotism through various approaches according to myriad situations and circumstances via open activities, individual and even social media.



### MALAYSIA-MOLDED PATRIOTISM FRAMEWORK

Malaysia-molded patriotism framework can be summarized as figure below:





### Figure 2 Malaysia-Molded Patriotism Frameworks

The discussion about the history of Malaysia nation patriotism development lead to the development of local and global characteristics to create a generation of Malaysians who have pride and love towards the country in a broad perspective, mature and rational as well as having global-level thinking, understand the rule and the principles of foreign countries which intertwined with the harmony and universal peace. This is vital in order to create the world that has a patriotism which is more open and respectful towards each other as well as can be used as a basis to curb extremism agenda and today's fundamentalist as a result of conflict and distorted foreign elements which carries agenda beyond the limits of humanity.

Malaysia-Molded Patriotism Framework as depicted in figure 1 above is based on a discussion regarding to the approach used in Malaysia to develop Malaysia Nation patriotism which uses educational approach as the main agenda for the realization of the application and practicality of patriotism values in shaping the national identity which later supported by economic and cultural approach. To further strengthen the patriotism values which is based on five aspects namely: to make Malaysia nations applying the patriotism based on strong local values and not easily influenced by foreign elements as well as making Malaysia nation to be matured and open towards other races and countries which are interdependent in creating global security. These patriotism values are very important to prevent the excessive obsession attitudes and hatred towards other races which can result to global conflict and it can also be used as an alternative model that can be expanded up to the world

### SUMMARY

Malaysia nation patriotism is a prolonged process that has faced many twists and turns as well as challenges as a result of the colonial divide and rules policy executed by the British and leads to several conflicts between ethnic groups in Malaysia. The conflict has make Malaysia ethnics to be more matured in seeking understanding and tolerance in order to maintain inter-ethnic harmony in which the values of belonging, loyalty to king and country, obedience to the law and becoming a competitive and productive society are the patriotism values that can be used as the most important basis in the agenda of relationship development and the harmony of all races. These efforts have to be reinforced at times using a variety of continuous approaches. Despite being in a relatively long process, the impacts and results of the efforts and approaches have slowly becoming visible in order to make 1 Malaysia aspiration of One Nation One State becoming a reality.

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