

Challenges in Teaching and Learning of Nationhood Education in Malaysia

Nor Azlah Shamrambely, Mohamed Alihaniffa, RohaniAb Ghani, Zulhilmipaidi, Ahmad Shukri Abdul Hamid, Fahains Mohd Yusof

Abstract;: the main purpose of education in the nationhood is to instill in the nation the sense of loyalty and patriotism. Several higher education academic subjects such as Malaysian studies, nationhood studies, ethnic relations and national language have been implemented to achieve the goal in a Malaysian context. Malaysian study or nationhood studies is one of the compulsory courses offered by all Malaysian universities aimed at educating students with national values, patriotism and country affiliation. Past empirical evidence, however, shows that many students lack interest in learning such a topic. Therefore, students' views on teaching and learning towards the subject were investigated in the current study. The current study uses quantitative approach to categorize eleven elements representing the views of students on teaching method and seven aspects represent the views of students on their learning preferences for this subject. The mean score and percentage was obtained using questionnaires and SPSS software as the main tools in this study. It is concluded statistically from this study that the importance aspects of students' perspectives on teaching method for this course are the class will be more interesting if lecturers prefixed with current information, if more elements of interaction between lecture and students been implemented, and using the form of storytelling by lecturers during teaching dominant students' view. Meanwhile, for aspects that represent students' views on their learning preferences for this subject, highest mean goes to the importance of attending every session of this course, second they appreciate high values on the knowledge delivered through this course followed by their views that it is very importance to get involved in class discussions and the followed by learning session that have been implemented attracted them to this course. This study therefore suggests that lecturers play an important role in establishing the best ways of teaching and learning this topic. It is very important to specifically appoint the expertise in this field to teach the subject. In addition, lectures should build on excellent relationships with students and create an attractive and enjoyable environment for dynamic involvement of students in classroom activities and For enthusiastic and efficient learning of the Malaysian nationhood studies.

Keywords: Malaysian nationhood studies, students' views, teaching method, learning preferences.

Revised Manuscript Received on May 28, 2019.

Nor Azlah Sham Rambely, School Of Languages, Civilization And Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok Kedah, Malaysia

Mohamed Alihaniffa, School Of Languages, Civilization And Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok Kedah, Malaysia

RohaniAb Ghani, School Of Languages, Civilization And Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok Kedah, Malaysia

Zulhilmi Paidi, School Of Languages, Civilization And Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok Kedah, Malaysia

Ahmad Shukri Abdul Hamid, School Of Applied Psychology, Social Work And Policy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok Kedah, Malaysia

Fahains Mohd Yuso, School Of Education And Modern Languages, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok Kedah, Malaysia

I. INTRODUCTION

Nationhood Education is the government's top priority throughout the world. For example, national education is recommended to be part of the national school curriculum in the United Kingdom and Australia (McKenzie, 1993). National education is embedded in the official philosophical foundation known as Pancasila in Indonesia. In a Malaysian context, in the national philosophy known as Rukunegara and constitutional law, the importance of nationhood education can be seen. Nationhood education "is important not only for its effects on politics and government, but also in relation to community and voluntary activities, and social and international harmony (McKenzie, 1993)". One of the common strategies to foster the spirit of patriotism and nationalism within students, Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia are required to provide core courses as compulsory courses for their students. These courses which come in the form of nation-building is a compulsory university course under the university core course components. It is meant to make sure students get to know the facts about the country's history and development and understand them. In terms of educational outcomes, the students will be able to convey the facts about Malaysia aside from analyse it. At the same time, the objective of this course is to produce graduates who are mature, knowledgeable and have the spirit of patriotism and nationalism. The question of nationalism and patriotism is very important because this group is a next generation to the national leadership. In other words, the future of Malaysia lies in the hands of this young generation or so-called Y Generation. It is actually the end product or the final goal for Malaysia Nationhood Education. In accordance with the goal of attracting students to Malaysia Nationhood Education, a new approach to teaching and learning process should be examined in order to achieve the educational goals.

Kerr (2005) surveyed 6,400 students from 237 secondary schools and 50 colleges, 238 heads of schools and college and 876 teachers and college tutors in England where the study found that the development of citizenship dimensions among young people was influenced by a variety of interrelated factors and influences including school, family, peer groups, community, teachers, parents, friends and educational processes. The study also highlighted possible influences among participants of socio-cultural factors on the dimensions of citizenship.



Hence, this research will attempt to investigate contributing factors from students' views on the method of teaching and their learning preferences towards Malaysian Nationhood Education. What are their perspectives in terms of the teaching method of this subject and what are their learning preferences on this subject and what are the challenges for educators to keep students interest sparks towards the Malaysian Nationhood Education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In Malaysia, nationhood education curriculum is delivered in a number of topics including History, Civic Education, Ethnic Relations, General Studies, Nationhood Studies, and Malaysian Studies. The 1990 Malaysian Private Higher Education Act states that studying and passing the subject of Malaysian Studies is mandatory for all students. Because of this regulation, all students studied the subject of Malaysian Studies or Nationhood Studies at public universities and private universities. It is designed specifically to provide the knowledge about the country and the nation in addition to establishing the national identity and to inculcate patriotism and nationalism among them. The question of nationalism and patriotism is very important because this group is a next generation to the national leadership. In other words, the future of Malaysia lies in the hands of this young generation or so-called Y Generation . There is no doubt that the spirit of patriotism and nationalism among them are increasingly faded from day to day (Utusan Malaysia,2010; Ramlah, 2005). For example, the involvement of youth in unhealthy activities which are growing by day is a worrisome scenario and need to be addressed. To achieve the educational goals, a new approach in the teaching and learning process should be examined in accordance with the purpose of attracting students to Nationhood education. Why is patriotism and nationalism among the youngster, not only in Malaysia but throughout the countries in the world is importance? According to Ku HasnitaHaizam Samsu & Mohd Nor (2009), the country needs a generation that has a strong sense of patriotism and they are the real safeguard or bulwark of national security from any threat whether it is a military attack or even the cyber threats in this globalism era. In all education systems across the globe, elements of patriotism and nationalism has been applied either specifically or cross the curriculum. This matter should be addressed in order to provide new approach to Malaysian Nationhood Education (Rohani, et al, 2012). In other words, the approach in Teaching & Learning (T&L) also needs for new value added to rise up the passion towards courses that related to history subject or any other courses in the form of the nationhood development. (Rodzi, 2009).

Regardless of the country's importance of this topic, empirical evidence indicates that most students lack interest in studying this topic (Nor Azlah Sham, 2004 ; Ahmad Faisal, 2012). Daily experience of dealing with students and interacting with them revealed that most students have given less priority to Malaysian Studies or Nationhood Studies. As a result, most students gained low marks for this topic, which affects their cumulative academic grade points simultaneously. Extensive past studies suggest that the attitudes of students towards academic subjects and their overall achievement are closely

related (Mohd Mahzan et all, 2013). Literature review in this area reveals that psychological and sociological factors are two major contributing factors to the academic achievement of students. Psychological factors refer to the individual's inner elements, including emotional and cognitive domains, while sociological factors refer to external factors such as socio-environment and friendship. Both factors, however, are interrelated and reliable. In a specific context, most of the past studies tended to discuss the topic. For example, Ariffin's (2007) academic achievement study focused on the learning style of the individual and how it affects his/her academic achievement. Although learning style has a close connection with the personality and intellectual capabilities of a person, environmental factors such as educational support provided by peers and teachers also influence the selection of learning styles. Although previous studies found that there is a positive relationship between the interest of students in academic subject and their performance, the classroom environment and their existing knowledge of the subject matter also play major roles (Mohd Mahzan et. al, 2013). Moh Mahzan et. al. (2013), attitudes or interests of students should be of enormous importance to educators, since affective arrangements are powerful predictors of the subsequent behavior of students.

In a related study, Mohd Mahzan at.al. (2013) found that the attitudes of students towards modern learning technologies and their academic achievement have a positive relationship. The use of modern technologies positively increases academic achievement. The attitudes of individuals towards education and their academic performance and commitment are strongly associated. Students with negative attitudes to educational activities have challenging behaviors including anti-social and off-task behaviors (Awang, Jindal-Snape & Barber, 2013).

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used the survey method because it is an effective approach for analyzing large samples (Konting, 1990). It also enables respondents to indicate their point of view without being influenced by others (Konting, 1999; Ghaffar, 1999). The respondents were asked to answer five-point Likert-scale questionnaires where the five-point score represents the highest level of agreement, while one is the strongest disagreement. Questionnaire contains two sections of views of students on teaching method and preferences of learning towards Malaysian Nationhood Education. The survey was conducted, involving a total of 452 respondents, randomly selected from university and private universities. Using SPSS, data collected were then analyzed by focusing on descriptive statistics.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students's Views On The Teaching Method Of The Malaysian Nationhood Education

Table. 1. Students's Views on Teaching Method of Malaysian Nationhood Education

List	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Reading is a method of learning that suits the subject	2.9556	.86133
2	I can imagine a more interesting method of teaching for this course than the existing method	2.8241	.99900
3	I would be more excited if involved more actively in learning for this course	2.9756	.90867
4	I'm more likely to study this course if I'm in a group rather than alone	3.1022	.89951
5	This course is more interesting if it is made in the form of storytelling	3.3022	.74752
6	Lecturers should have more interaction with students	3.3667	.70395
7	Students should have more interaction with lecturers	3.3756	.68962
8	This course will be more interesting if it is prefixed with current information	3.4311	.64079
9	To me, learning this course online is more effective than lectures	1.9710	1.075941
10	I am not excited every time I attend this course	1.9265	.99841
11	Many activities can be planned to make the course more interesting	3.2450	.80878

Table 1 shows students' views on method of teaching Malaysia Nationhood Education subject. There are 11 elements representing students' views on method of teaching this subject. Overall, the students' views this course will be more interesting if it is prefixed with current information achieving the highest level of mean which is 3.4311. The is followed by students' view that they should have more interaction with lecturers with the mean value 3.3756. Most of the students also "agree" with their views that lecturers should have more interaction with students with the mean value 3.3667. Moreover students too "agree" that storytelling by lecturers during teaching is very significant to the method of teaching for this subject with the mean value 3.3022. While group learning and many activities occupy the fifth and sixth lists of teaching method with the mean value is 3.2450 and 3.1022. Meanwhile, other items such as reading method, teaching method in other form scores level of mean around 2.9. The two lowest mean values are online learning which is 1.97 and 1.92 mean value

for students view they are not excited every time attending this course.

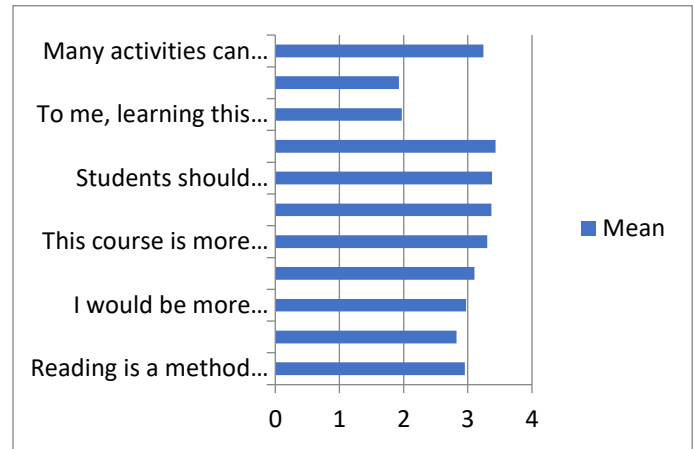


Fig.1 Mean Score regarding students' views on Teaching Method towards Malaysian Nationhood Education course

Figure 1 shows that effective and interesting teaching methods are the important aspects of Malaysian Studies education from the student's point of view. The results show that 96.6% of respondents agreed that this course will be more interesting if it is prefixed with current information. This is in line with the study of the students' perceptions toward the educational issues by Siti Mariam Aini (2009), overall, students' perceptions towards the educational issues were at high level of mean. On top of that, Ahmad Faisal (2012), who wrote on "UiTM students' sensitivity to current issues and general knowledge" suggested that students should be encouraged through "critical approach" learning styles where they should be encouraged to discuss rather than "memorize" approaches or simply expose students to factual facts. Every fact is still to be disclosed to the students but the "why" and "how" of the fact happen that should be emphasized. Hence, students are not only exposed to history or formation but more importantly, they understand every aspect of Malaysia.

Another results shows that 93.1% students agreed that this course is more interesting if it is made in the form of storytelling. This is relevant with the study by Abrahamson, Craig Eilert (1998) Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool in Higher Education who quotes Kieran Egan (1989) article entitled "Memory, Imagination, and Learning: Connected by the Story", emphasize that storytelling is an important technique in the process of learning and understanding. Individuals gain a better understanding of each other by using concrete examples rather than vague abstractions and generalizations that have no relation to the experiences of life, since sharing experiences through the device of storytelling allows individuals to build a bridge of understanding between themselves.

The results of this study too shows that the interaction element is an important aspect that affects the student's view. 95.5 % students "agree" they should have more interaction



Challenges in Teaching and Learning of Nationhood Education in Malaysia

with lecturers while 94.7% "agree" lecturers should have more interaction with students. A study found that positive school ethos and good teacher relationships are associated with positive student behavior (Awan et al., 2013). According to Mohd Mahzan et al. (2013), lectures agreed by students in their study respond well if they have fun during the lesson. Such activities help them attract the attention of students, and the students would also ask the lecturer more questions. For that reason, two parties should be involved in the teaching process in the classroom between teacher and student. Ahmad et al. (2013) found another view that the creativity and ability of teachers to use textbooks will encourage the participation of students in classroom activities. If teachers only use syllabus that emphasizes process over aspects of the history of appreciating and applying two-way interaction, it can cause this loss of focus. As a result, students will lose interest and consider history as a burdening subject (Long, 1982).

Another point of view of element of interactions during lessons, as finding shows that students' views 91.8% agree many activities can be planned to make the course more interesting and 85.7% agree they more likely to study this course if in a group rather than alone. Study by Mohd Mahzan et al. (2013) revealed that most students are very fond of the lecturers who were adept at organizing fun activities in class. The lecturers also endorsed this statement. They felt that using teaching aids not only reinforces the understanding of related concepts by the students, but also provides effective and fun learning. Unfortunately, students claimed that most lecturers do not use teaching aids during the teaching process, thereby reducing students' interest in the subject and therefore students assume that Malaysian study content is uninteresting. Past empirical study has also shown that a happy learning atmosphere is needed to attract student attention and learning commitment (Mohd Mahzan et al., 2013).

Respondents are still interested in learning Malaysian studies as a final point in this study based on the above percentage. Therefore, teachers can manipulate the medium to fit the latest technologies in terms of teaching method in history and can be accessed at any time as it is important to attract students to the subject's history. Using modern technology, including robotic technology and computer technology, is found to be effective strategies to promoting student engagement in academic subjects learning (Mohd Mahzan et al., 2013).

However, what makes students enjoy learning Nationhood Education in this study is still unclear. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to explore the aspiration of students for joyful learning.

Students' views on their preferences of learning towards Malaysian Nationhood Education course.

Table. 2 shows the views on the learning preferences of the Malaysia Nationhood Education.

List	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The learning session implemented attracted me	2.9071	.78807
2	Each time I attend this course I am satisfied with learning something interesting	2.9690	.73489
3	Curiosity is always high every time I attend this course	2.9115	.78294
4	I always try my best to attend every session of this course	3.1195	.79011
5	I always try my best to get involved in every discussion session in the classroom	3.0398	.78127
6	I put high values on the knowledge delivered through this course	3.0708	.76471
7	To me, learning in the classroom is sufficient	2.5410	1.02414

The table shows that there are seven aspects that represent students' views on their learning preferences of this subject. The highest level of mean which is 3.1195 is the opinion of the students who expressed their willingness to attend a lecture. This is followed by students preferences that they put high values on the knowledge delivered through this course with the mean value 3.0708. Most of the students also 'agree' to have more involvement in class discussions with the mean value 2.9690.

Students' too views that learning session that have been implemented attracted them to this course with mean value 2.9071 and the last items with mean value 2.5410 shows students view that the learning aspect in the classroom is sufficient.

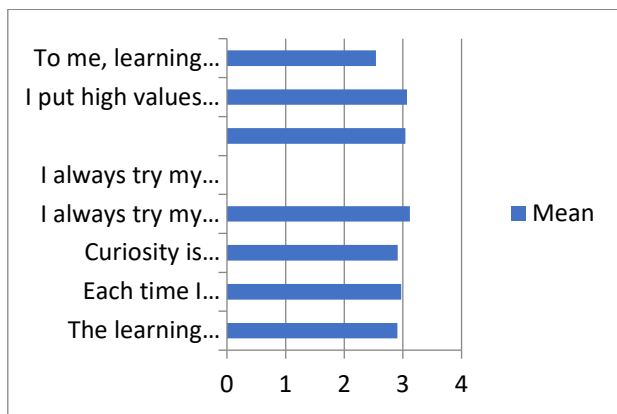


Fig. 2 Mean Score regarding students' views on their preferences of learning towards Malaysian Nationhood Education course

Figure 2 shows that good attitude will affect students learning process in the subject. The results shows that 88.1% prefer to attend every session of the class, while 89.9% put high values on the knowledge delivered through this course. Followed by 87% willingly try their best to get involved in every discussion session in the class and 83.4% satisfied with learning something interesting in the class. The good attitude will therefore affect the ability to master the subject. Research shows that students' attitude in learning Malaysian studies will affect their achievement. The discussion also shows that the attitude of the student also affects the learning styles of the classroom. Students should therefore be exposed to an interesting class environment. Comfortable learning environment creates a good attitude and decreases bad attitudes (Mohd Mahzan et. al, 2013).

Furthermore, lecturers need to identify the students' real attitude and thus be able to find a way to help and attract students to this subject. Generally, students who prepare and review often get good results. Similarly, Mohd Mahzan et.al. (2013) from the point of view of the lecturers, students who did not prepare, review and write notes on the topic may think that Malaysian studies are not an important topic. Based on the percentage above in this study, we can conclude that respondents still show positive attitude in learning the subject of Malaysian Studies. However history educators should not forget that there is ascenario that most young people were not interested in history as history was "boring" (Ahmad Faisal, 2012). Perhaps a more popular approach or more suitable to the young in social media, for example, animation-animations featuring national history can be generated and can be uploaded on Youtube's website to attract young people. Without a past history, Gen Y should know that there is no development today. History should be studied and understood so that in the past we will not all make the same mistake as other ethnicity colonizes.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study highlighted the views of students on the teaching method for the course of Malaysian Nationhood Education. Overall data suggest that participants indicated that effective and interesting teaching methods are the important aspects in learning the subject. For example, lecturers teach with current information and adapt a storytelling approach to make this course more interesting, participants emphasize important technique in the process of learning and understanding. Therefore, the creativity of lecturers and their skills in knowledge of pedagogical content are imperative. For this subject, teaching and learning should be more meaningful if the lecturers integrate many elements into the content of the subject or approaches. Results of this study too indicated that interaction element is an important aspect that affects the student's view on method of teaching. Two parties between lecturer and student should be involved in the classroom teaching process. A good rapport with lecturers will bring positive behaviour in students.

Another result regarding students' views on their preferences of learning towards Malaysian Nationhood Education course, indicated that students good attitude will affect students learning process in the subject. Overall data suggest that most participants have a very positive attitude towards Malaysian Studies. Most students highlighted the importance of good attendance as the most effective way, putting high values on the knowledge provided through this course, and satisfying with learning in the classroom. Hence it is vital for lecturers to organize this academic subject in an attractive manner.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is part of FRGS grant research entitled "Malaysian Nationhood Framework (MY1N): Towards Sustainable Nationhood Education for Generation Y and Higher Educations", Code S / O 13221.

REFERENCES

1. Abrahamson, Craig Eilert, "Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool in Higher Education" *Education*, 118(3). pp 440-451, 1998.
2. Ahmad Faisal Mohamed Fiah, "Kepekaan pelajar UiTM terhadap isu semasa dan pengetahuan am", Conference: Seminar Kebangsaan Mengubah Destini Anak Bangsa, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, 2012.
3. Awang, M. M., Ahmad, A. R., Wahab, J. L. A., & Mamat, N., "Effective teaching strategies to encourage learning behaviour", *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(2), pp 35-40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.9790/0837-0823540>, 2013.
4. Awang, M. M., Jindal-Snape, D., & Barber, T., "A Documentary Analysis of the Government's Circulars on Positive Behaviour Enhancement Strategies", *Asian Social Science*, 9(5), pp 203-208. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n5p203>, 2013.
5. Kerr, D., "Citizenship Education in England – Listening to Young People: New Insights from the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study", *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education*, 1(1), pp 74-96, 2005.
6. Konting, M. M., *Educational Research Methods*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 1990.



Challenges in Teaching and Learning of Nationhood Education in Malaysia

7. Ku Hasnita Ku Samsu & Mohd Haizam Mohd Nor, "Semangat Patriotisme Dalam Kalangan Mahasiswa bukan Melayu di Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Sekitar Lembah Kelang", *AKADEMIKA*, 75 (Januari-April), pp. 85-100, 2009.
8. Long, A. *Pedagogy – Teaching Methods*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1982
9. McKenzie, H. (1993). Citizenship Education in Canada. BP-326E. Retrieved June 20, 2013, from <http://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/bp326-e.htm#B>
10. Mohamad Rodzi Abd Razak, "Pembinaan Negara Bangsa Malaysia: Peranan Pendidikan Sejarah dan Dasar Pendidikan Kebangsaan. *Jurnal Jabatan Sejarah UKM (JEBAT)*. Pusat Pengajian Sejarah, Sains Politik dan Strategi, UKM, pp. 90-106, 2011.
11. Mohd Mahzan Awang, Abdul Razaq Ahmad, Nora'asikin Abu Bakar, Sayuti Abd Ghani, Asyraf Nadia Mohd Yunus, Mohd Asrul Hery Ibrahim, Jaya Chitra Ramalu, Che Pee Saad & Mohd Jasmy Abd Rahman, "Students' Attitudes and Their Academic Performance in Nationhood Education", *International Education Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 11, pp 21-29, 2013.
12. Ramlah Adam, (2005) "Kajian Tahap Pemahaman, Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Rukun Negara di kalangan Pelajar Institusi Pengajian Tinggi", *Jabatan Perpaduan Negara*.
13. Rohani Hj. Ab Ghani et al., "Tracer Study on National Service Trainees (PLKN): The Analysis Towards Implication of Module and Training Among ex-Trainee in UUM", University Research Grant, Research and Innovation Centre Management. Sintok: UUM, 2011.
14. Siti Mariam Aini, "Kepekaan Terhadap Isu Semasa Pendidikan Dalam Kalangan Pelajar Fakulti Pendidikan", BA Tesis, Fakulti Pendidikan, UTM, SKUDAI.UTM, 2009.
15. Utusan Malaysia, "Orang Muda Buta Sejarah!", 29 Oktober 2010.