# THE FORMATION OF A NATION STATE THROUGH HISTORY EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Abstract -** This article aims to identify and analyse previous studies on nation-state education in History education in Malaysia. Issues commonly raised are related to the concept of nation-state education and its relationship with History education. In general, there have been many nation-state education efforts implemented to improve Malaysians' understanding of the concept to boost their sense of identity, especially among Malaysian youths in educational institutions. Yet, there are still features and elements that are hindering efforts to develop a nation state for this country. Hence, to analyse the concerns identified in the literature review, a qualitative approach based on document analysis of secondary sources was used for data analysis. The outcomes of this analysis will be utilised to map out future research on nation-state education, with a focus on history teaching.

**Keywords -** Nation-State Education, History Education, Sense of Identity, Character Building, Education in Malaysia

## I. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this article is to examine previous studies and scholarly papers on nation-state education in history education in depth. It analyses debates and discussions on nation -state education in history education that have been put forward by scholars and authors. The article is divided into sections namely the definition of nation state and a review of literature on nation state, nation-state education and nation state education in history education.

The concept of 'nation' in modern times is specifically referred to as 'nation state' which is a form of political entity with its own geographical boundaries and is globally recognized. This statement is based on the explicit recognition of the existence of a sovereign state which is also the basis for the legitimacy of its political independence (Abdul Rahman Tang Abdullah & Wan Shawaluddin Wan Hassan, 2015).

Nation-state formation is the ultimate goal of every country as it is considered as the culmination of a nation's success and greatness. However, it is an arduous task to be accomplished. Malaysia is no exception as it is still struggling to build and shape itself as a nation state. Although various efforts have been made, there are still factors and elements that impede character building of Malaysian citizens.

In summary, this article examines available literature and past research on nation-state education to identify the main themes discussed and debated by prominent figures in the field.

## II. LITERATURE AND RESEARCH ON NATION-STATE

In Malaysian context, there are several authors and researchers whose work focus on the educational aspects of nation state. Among them are Rohani Ab Ghani (2016), Mohd Mahadee Ismail et al. (2019), Ibrahim Majdi Mohamad Kamil and Maliati Mohamad (2020) and Nazri Muslim and Rosadi Otong (2021). Rohani Ab Ghani's (2016) work discusses the basics and challenges in developing Malaysia as a nation state. Her work is driven by this ambition that will only become a reality when Malaysians are receptive to the vision and idea of one country and one nation. It is undeniable that the path towards this idealism is still far and challenging due to racial religious, and cultural diversities that exist in Malaysia. Rohani Ab Ghani (2016), stresses that the success of developing Malaysia as a nation state is highly dependent on the people's willingness to negotiate with and be tolerant towards each other. Such essence has long been nurtured and accepted by the early post-independence generation in an effort to shape the nation and *Bangsa Malaysia*.

Mohd Mahadee Ismail et al. (2019) in their study discuss the building of a nation state through Civics education. The respondents of the study consisted of Malays and Chinese adolescents. Their findings reveal that the respondents mastered a high level of civic consciousness and are even sensitive to the demands of living in a multi-ethnic society. In this context, it can be concluded that there is integration among the younger generation of ethnic Malays and Chinese in Malaysia. This confirms that civic education serves an important foundation for unity and the formation of a nation state in Malaysia.

Ibrahim Majdi Mohamad Kamil and Maliati Mohamad (2020) as well as Nazri Muslim and Otong Rosadi (2021) note the challenges and significant role of language in building a nation state in Malaysia. Nazri Muslim and Otong Rosadi (2021) emphasise that the position and role of the Malay language is the key significant element in ensuring the formation of a nation state becomes a reality. However, Ibrahim Majdi Mohamad Kamil and Maliati Mohamad (2020) acknowledge the various constraints that must be overcome in order to strengthen the standing of the Malay language for Malaysia to be a nation state.

## III. LITERATURE AND RESEARCH ON NATION-STATE EDUCATION IN HISTORY EDUCATION

There are also scholarly writings and research which focus on nation-state education in History education. Among those researchers and authors are Mohamad Rodzi Abd Razak (2009) and Mohd Ridhuan Tee Abdullah (2010). Mohamad Rodzi Abd Razak (2009), discusses the importance of history and History subject as a mechanism for strengthening the nation state of Malaysia, apart from achieving the goals of the National Education Policy. He is of the view that building a perfect nation-state is challenging for a country like Malaysia. Various related issues including ethnic diversity, historical, linguistic and cultural differences as well as different heritage sentiments have to be addressed. Despite the challenges, efforts in this direction should be continued in order to achieve the goal of developing Malaysia as a nation state. This is proven through experience and education, specifically History subject, which are able to be a tool to attain the goal of forming *Bangsa Malaysia* with a strong sense of identity and loyalty to the country.

Mohd Ridhuan Tee Abdullah's work (2010) is found to be different from the study of Mohamad Rodzi Abd Razak (2009). Mohd Ridhuan Tee Abdullah's (2010) study does not directly touch on nation-state education but focuses on the issues of inter-racial integration in Malaysia through socio-political agents such as history, family institution and education. According to him, studies on racial integration in Malaysia are quite complex. His study indicates that racial- based socio-politics give rise to racist sentiments. Racial integration has not been achieved because racial sentiments remain deeply rooted in Malaysia's multi-racial political culture. This is seen as the most significant challenge to nation-state education and accordingly to achieving the ideal and realistic nation state for Malaysia.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Some major conclusions can be drawn from the available literature and past research on nation-state education, particularly in history education. It is established that nation-state education is incorporated in history education. However, papers and studies that link the formation of a nation state or history education with character education are scarce. In a broader sense, this is an issue which needs to be addressed collectively by all of the stakeholders to ensure that the goal of a nation state can be attained for the well-being of Malaysia.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Malaysian Ministry of Education for funding through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) (FRGS/1/2021/WAB11/UMS/02/3).

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