

## The role of teachers in unity formation among secondary school students

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### Abstract

The Ministry of Education Malaysia often emphasizes the issue of unity. Teachers have become the bridge to connect government policy to students. The role of teachers is very important in the formation of unity among high school students. This study was conducted to examine to which extent teachers play a role in the formation of unity among secondary school students. This is a qualitative study, using a case study method and using interviews and observations as the study instrument. A total of 6 students and 3 teachers were taken as samples from 3 secondary schools with multiracial students. Findings show that teachers play a high role in the formation of high school students' unity. Various efforts involving teachers form the basis for the formation of unity. The role of teachers in the classroom, outside the classroom and the role of teachers as role models to students are among the aspects studied. The data were collected as a result of interviews and observations and then analyzed to obtain a conclusion. Therefore, it can be concluded that the unity among students becomes a responsibility of schoolteachers with infinite teacher involvement. This study can explain that teachers can realize the aspirations of the country from the aspect of unity.

**Keywords:** The Role of Teacher, Formation of Unity, Secondary School Students

### Abstrak

*Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia sering menekankan isu perpaduan. Guru adalah sebagai penghubung di antara dasar kerajaan dengan pelajar kerana guru memainkan peranan penting dalam pembentukan perpaduan pelajar. Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji peranan guru dalam pembentukan perpaduan dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah. Kajian berbentuk kualitatif ini merupakan kajian kes dan instrumen kajian yang digunakan ialah protokol temubual dan pemerhatian. Seramai 6 orang pelajar dan 3 orang guru dipilih sebagai sampel dari 3 buah sekolah menengah yang terdiri daripada pelajar yang berbilang kaum. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa guru memainkan peranan penting dalam pembentukan perpaduan dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah. Pelbagai usaha yang melibatkan guru menjadi asas kepada pembentukan perpaduan. Peranan guru di dalam kelas, di luar kelas dan peranan guru sebagai role model kepada pelajar adalah antara aspek yang dikaji. Data yang diperolehi daripada hasil temu bual dan pemerhatian dianalisis untuk mendapatkan hasil kajian. Sehubungan dengan itu, perpaduan di antara pelajar menjadi tanggungjawab guru yang penting dan kajian ini menjelaskan bahawa guru mampu merealisasikan aspirasi negara dari aspek perpaduan.*

**Kata kunci:** Peranan Guru, Pembentukan Perpaduan, Pelajar Sekolah Menengah

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the issue of racial unity often been the subject of discussion by various parties. The expectation for teachers to play a role in emphasizing the spirit of unity has increased rapidly. Almost all Malaysian Prime Ministers have given priority to the issue of unity. This issue was also raised by the Chairman of the Student Volunteer Foundation (YSS) Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye in a press conference that the primary school is the starting point of unity and inculcation of the values of racial harmony (Siti Hajar Yusof, bh news, Mac 31, 2019). Although the Malaysian education system has now undergone various changes, racial unity is still given priority.

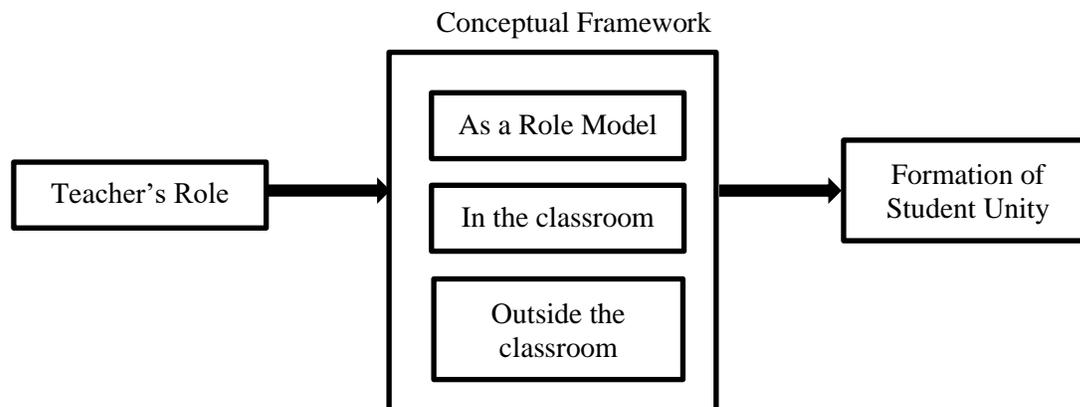
Unity comes from the practice of patriotism that is embedded in the psyche of an individual. Rukun Negara is the lifeblood of the nation's philosophy and symbol of racial unity where the people adhere to the same principles regardless of ethnicity, culture, and race (Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman et al., 2019). Fostering the spirit of patriotism must be given attention regardless of age. It can be seen in the willingness of a person to sacrifice for the country (Mohd Mahadee Ismail et al., 2016).

According to Abdul Said Ambotang and Norhayati Bayong (2018) the role and responsibilities of teachers has become more challenging with the implementation of various reforms in education system. Whereas Tan (2018) found that knowledge of a teacher in terms of content is an important quality for future teachers of Malaysia. They should expertise in various field. Thus, teachers also play an important role in determining the unity among students. A teacher's teaching can make a citizen aware of his responsibilities and maintain national harmony. However, there are various incidents which involve teachers in affecting student unity.

This study focuses on the role of teachers in the formation of unity among secondary school students. Only a quality teacher can build future human capital to acquire knowledge and skills while sculpting attitudes and cultivate positive values in the souls of students (Ikhsan Othman et al., 2019). According to Anuar Ahmad and Nelson Jingga (2015), teacher reinforcement and strengthening activities have a positive impact on students. It motivates students and draws student's attention towards teaching.

The practice of unity is instilled in students through classroom teaching, outside the classroom and the teacher himself becomes a role model to students. Activities such as the Independence Day celebration and co-curricular activities are among the activities that promote social integration among students. In addition, various activities in the classroom also encourage student unity. In the meantime, the teachers themselves are used as role models by the students in building a good relationship among their peers at school. Figure 1 explains the role of teachers as the agents of unity to students.

**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework of the study



## **PROBLEM STATEMENTS**

Unity has become an issue that is often given major attention by all parties. Unity is often associated with the spirit of patriotism. The practice of patriotism is not something new for school students. The value of patriotism is embedded in the subjects taught so that students with a patriotic spirit can be born. In this case the teacher has always been an important person in the application of the practice of the spirit of patriotism among students starting from primary school again. Teachers become agents in the formation of racial unity by forming awareness among students (Yong et al., 2018). Teachers in Malaysia have a responsibility in individual development and the maintenance of a united, democratic, progressive, and disciplined society (Ikhsan Othman et al., 2019). However, teacher concentration always lies in exam results and student performance and neglects the responsibility of teachers as socializing agents.

Although the role of teachers in the formation of unity is seen as important, there are still a handful of teachers who do not show responsibility as agents. This study is to examine to which extend teachers carry out responsibilities in the formation of unity among students. Accordingly, the role of teachers needs to be studied in the formation of unity among students. In general, the role of teachers is to provide formal education to students in the classroom and informally outside the classroom.

This study aims to examine to which extend a teacher play role inside and outside the classroom in shaping unity among high school students. This study is important to plan appropriate steps in the formation of unity among secondary school students. this study is also important to help teachers identify their weaknesses in unity-oriented classroom management. Whereas Foziana Jamaludin et al., (2018) and Hanita Mohd Yusoff and Norzaini Azman (2018) also recommend that training is required for teachers in classroom management.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this study has been following specific research objectives, which are:

1. The role of teacher inside the classroom in the unity formation of students.
2. The role of teacher outside of the classroom in the unity formation of secondary school students.
3. The role of teacher as a role model in unity formation of secondary school students.

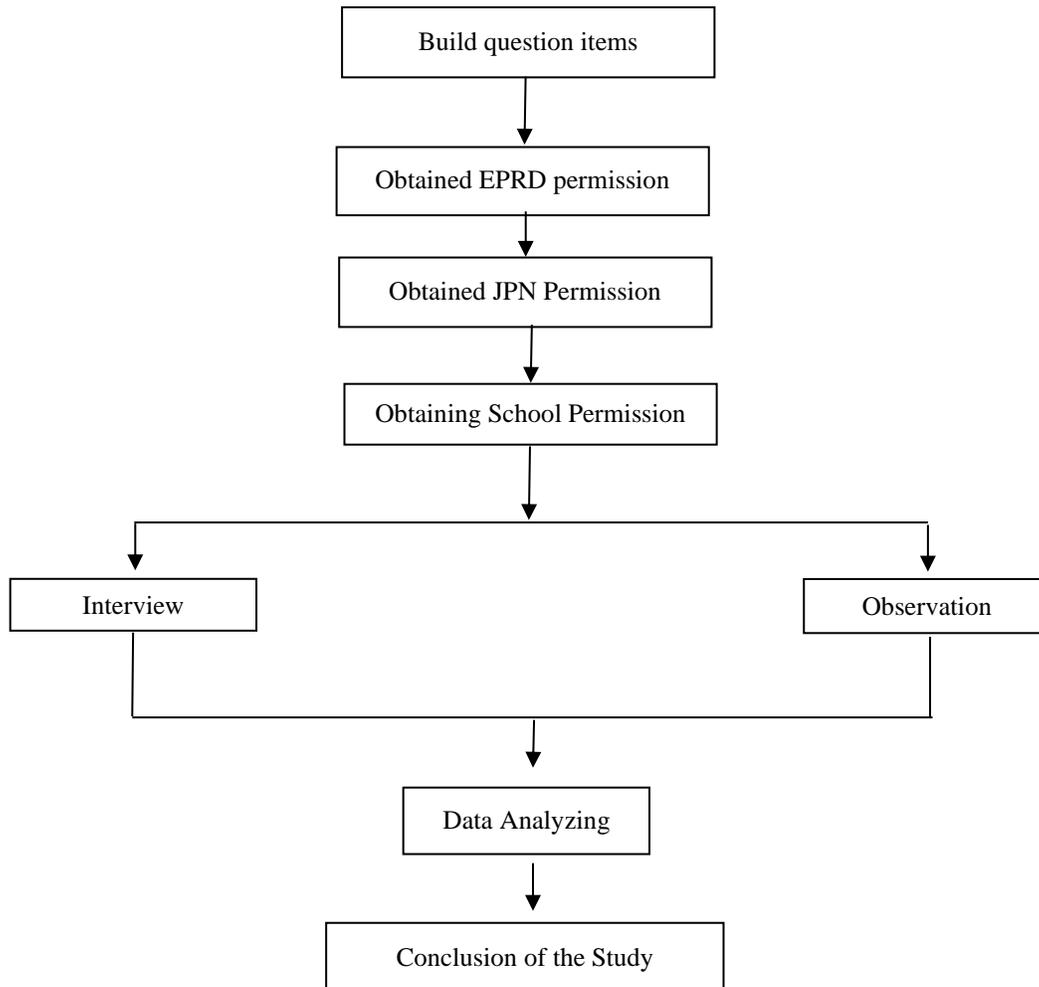
## **METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative study that uses a case study design. According to Yin and Robert (2018) in case studies, researchers can pay close attention to the case. Whereas Kabir (2016) thinks that case study is a study to analyze and understand human nature and do it intensively. A case study is an intensive research on a specific case that may involve an individual, an organization, an event in a society and so on (Howitt, 2019). The interview questions of this study were adapted from interview questions Kamoo (2013). The research started after getting permission from Educational Planning Research Division (EPRD) and then from State Education Department (JPN). 3 secondary schools with multiracial students were selected to help the research. Interviews were conducted with the permission of the school and the guardians. Interviews were conducted on 9 study sample consisting of 6 students and 3 teachers. Observations outside the classroom were also performed and data were recorded to aid the study.

However, interviews are the main data collection method in this study. Interviews and observations are two forms of research instruments used by the researcher. According to Merriam (2009) qualitative data is the result of information from observations, experiences, and knowledge from interviews. Word-shaped data are presented in qualitative studies. After collecting the required data

through interviews and observations the researcher coded the data obtained. Next, the researcher compares the data obtained from interviews and observations. Then researcher made an interpretation of the information obtained. The process of data analysis, reduction, and coding to form meaningful patterns is difficult (Kalman, 2019). Finally, the researcher made a report from the findings of the study. Flowchart 2 shows the research process undertaken by the researchers of this study.

**Figure 2:** Research Process Flow Chart



## **RESULTS**

The findings of the study were analyzed from interviews and the results of observations made outside the classroom. The teacher's approach is studied from three aspects namely the teacher's role inside the classroom, the teacher's role outside the classroom and the teacher himself is seen as a role model. Table 1 lists the role of teachers in the classroom, outside the classroom and the role of teachers as role models.

**Table 1:** List of teacher roles inside, outside the classroom and as role models

Inside the classroom	Outside the classroom	As a role-model
1. Through the teaching of Malay Literature (KOMSAS).	1. Independence month celebration activities.	1. Way of socializing.
2. Through the teaching of History subjects.	2. Co-curriculum activities.	2. Involvement in school activities.
3. Group teaching and learning activities involving all races.		

**a) In the Classroom**

Teachers are often seen from the angle as mentors and educators to children. Behind these views the role of the teacher is also as an inculcator of values including the spirit of unity in students. The application of these values exists because of teacher teaching. Malay Language teachers and History teachers play an important role in this case.

The findings of the study show that students know the Rukun Negara and its meaning, but it is only because it is taught in school. Therefore, the function of teachers is found to be very important here as an inculcation of values and practices of patriotism among students. The five principles of Rukun Negara include the patriotic and moral values that every citizen must have. Apart from Rukun Negara, the National Anthem is a song that needs to be memorized by all Malaysians and given respect when it is song.

The role of teachers in the application of unity is seen from the aspect of students being educated about their association with other races. Students in high school tolerate each other creating a harmonious atmosphere which is also a step in the formation of unity. The following statement of a student prove the practice:

*“... There has never been a racist issue at this school.... all friends at this school.”*

The findings from the participants’ interview also explain the importance of solidarity that is applied in Malay Literature taught by teachers such as KOMSAS. This is clear with the opinion of the teacher that ‘KOMSAS’ is a subject, where the values of unity are inserted. Obviously, the part of teachers in the classroom instils the value of unity among students. In addition, the teaching of History subject is an important aspect that helps teachers in explaining the importance of unity in society.

The role of the teacher is also considered important when conducting group activities. Students are divided equally so that each group consists of all races. It helps students to interact with each other. This helps in fostering unity among students. However, there are student participants who say that they do not have friends of other races in school. There were study participants who chose their own national friends and did not want to associate with students of other races. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers play a key role in the classroom. However, the mentality of students to accept students of other races is not commendable.

**b) Outside the classroom**

Various activities are conducted by teachers outside the classroom. Among them are extracurricular programs that involve all races, independence month programs and co-curricular activities. Findings of interviews and observations conducted during independence programs and co-curricular activities conducted in schools show that students move in groups of multiracial students. These findings are also supported by photographs taken during the activity. Students show full commitment to the activities

carried out in school. These statements also prove that students are attracted to extracurricular activities conducted by teachers and would participate wholeheartedly. In addition to the independence month program, activities throughout the year conducted by schoolteachers are one way to foster unity among students. Such activities foster inter-racial understanding, which is an important aspect in fostering the spirit of patriotism.

The result of observations made outside the classroom on the study sample show that students move in their own racial group. Table 2 explains that teacher's attendance affects student unity. Students were found to show interest in associating with students of other races when teachers were present in the situation. Table 2 summarizes the movement of students outside the classroom.

**Table 2:** Summary List of Activities and Effectiveness of Unity

Activity	Unity elements can be seen
1. Independence month competition	
i. Kolam competition	/
ii. Quiz	/
iii. Cycling	/
2. Co-curriculum activities	
i. Uniformed body	/
ii. Group activity	/
3. After school activity	X
4. While at canteen	X

**c) As a role-model**

Students always see the teacher as a role model because the teacher is the person in front of their eyes. Teachers can form unity by being a living example to students. The results of the interviews of study participants 1, 2 and 3 explained the role of teachers not only in teaching students inside and outside the classroom but also teachers as role-models to students in forming unity. Among the statements of teachers who support this statement are:

“... We as a teacher must be shown as a good example. We have to show patriotic values to the students...”

In addition, the relationship between multi-racial teachers is emulated by school students. The activities conducted at the school make the supervising teacher as the captain of the group. Teachers who lead the group indirectly emulate the group members. This can be seen through the observations conducted during co-curricular activities and independence month programs organized by the school.

**DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION**

The role of teachers is considered important in the formation of unity among high school students. Findings of Nur Ayuni Nusaibah Husin and Amir Hasan Dawi (2018) support the findings of this study that teachers play a role as implementers and apply unity in students. Their findings also explain that teachers become role models to students by showing good examples in fostering unity.

The study of Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman et al. (2019) also supports researcher that social participation facilitates the social integration of this country. A youth life that respects the culture and beliefs of other communities always ensures a peaceful life in the country. In addition, Kaviza et al., (2018) in their study found that teaching methods are one of the aspects that influence and attract students'

interest in the subject of History. The study of Chew and Nurmaziah Majelan (2019) also supports the findings of this study that unity can be applied through subjects taught in schools such as KOMSAS. In this study, the study participants also emphasized about KOMSAS in the formation of unity among students.

This study found that teachers play an important role in the classroom. Teaching by applying the values of patriotism helps to improve the practice of the spirit of patriotism. The findings of Kaviza et al., (2018) supports this statement, that is the variety of teaching methods in teaching History subjects such as using History resources and gaining in-depth knowledge can attract students' interest to the subject. The findings of this study explain that activities outside the classroom such as involvement in programs organized by the school is one of the ways for teachers to inculcate good values and strengthen unity among students. The findings of this study are supported by Bity Salwana Alias et al., (2017) that is among the programs that can foster unity among students conducted in schools is the RIMUP program.

Unity is a crucial feature of shared interest, and studies must be done on a regular basis. One of the government measures that has been carried out is the PLKN camp. According to Mohd Mahadee Ismail et al., (2016) PLKN camp is a good step in fostering unity, but for some reason it is stopped forever. Such camps are advised to be held at the school level, with some modifications and changes, and administered by schoolteachers. This is due to the fact that schoolteachers have a greater understanding of their students.

## CONCLUSION

The role of teachers is very important in the classroom, outside the classroom and as a role model in the formation of unity among students. Teachers are government representatives in delivering all reforms and forming unity. The Ministry of Education Malaysia can pass on the policies formulated through teachers to its people. This is because students are citizens in the early stages of civilization, and they will represent the future government system. The formation of a country basically comes from the education of a teacher. Dedicated teachers can form citizens with a high spirit of patriotism.

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