

## Citizenship Education: Challenges and Possibilities in Malaysia

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### Abstract

This article explores Citizenship Education in Malaysia as a cultural discourse in Malaysia. The conception of citizenship is problematic because it is a product of social fragmentation that carries legal and sociological meanings. Citizenship in this article refers to the learning and teaching as an educational process to improve or achieve the aims inherent to the legal meaning. The objective of this article is to pull together citizenship and education as central themes, not legal but the sociological aspects, with 'nation-of-intent' as a conceptual framework. Nevertheless, the present effort of citizenship education in Malaysia is based on a particular form of 'nation-of-intent' (Bangsa Malaysia). As nation-building in Malaysia is a state without a nation, the present effort does not include ideas to the nation when promoting citizenship education- the notion of 'equality in diversity' and not only 'unity in diversity'. The concept of citizenship and citizenship education in Malaysia is prompting only one form of 'nation-of-intent' available in the country, whereas there are other nations as well, apparently. An implication of it is that the concept of citizenship and thus, nation-building in Malaysia is still fraught with confusion. The presence of plurality of 'nation-of-intent' in contemporary Malaysia demonstrates the fact that dissenting voices are present and heard, within and without government. Hence, in the context of challenges and possibilities, there is a need to clarify and explore the meaning of citizenship in diverse and democracy in a nation-state, the multiple views of citizenship and the dimensions of citizenship education in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Citizenship Education, Ethnicity, Diversity, Nation-of-Intent, Malaysian Nation

### Introduction

The current global challenges are transforming how people live, work, and communicate in society. Government, education, and trade are being reshaped, and in short, every aspect of peoples' lives. However, while global changes have the potential to transform the society positively, the technologies may have negative consequences if society does not think how these can change them. The innovations in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, robotics, and other emerging technologies will redefine what it means to be a Malaysian and how every

person is to engage with one another in society. The multi-ethnic identities and capabilities of the Malaysian society evolve along the technologies that are created. Key societal areas are affected by these challenges and the combination of technology, education and politics together need to be ensured that they do not create disparities and inequality that hinder the social cohesion of the Malaysian society. As example, issues of cultural diversity and citizenship have been part of the educational agenda of Malaysia. Hence, this agenda comes in part from the recognition of the need to address cultural diversity and citizenship when addressing challenges and possibilities in Malaysia. The meanings and values attached to both cultural diversity and citizenship have changed over time, and educational policies and programs in Malaysia have reflected these changes. The current period, characterized by attention to the fundamental notion of social cohesion, provides an opportunity to unite and strengthen the work in both citizenship education and nation-building. Unavoidably, education is one of the sectors to energize the greater development when nation-building is an objective. Malaysian political agendas are unity and nation-building. It involves the process or steps taken in bringing together citizen of different races and languages, and molding their orientations towards a new nation, which had previously existed only physically.

### **Literature Review**

'Idea of the nation' is often used by political leaders and policymakers in Malaysia, but often these discussions are mainly top-down nature and conceive of culture in an excessively cohesive way. It is also suggested that the Malaysian nation needs a more explicit citizenship education and a clear-cut statement of intent about its vision and direction of citizens towards upholding the principles of the current '*Keluarga Malaysia*' concept. However, the recent Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 does not apply to the '*Keluarga Malaysia*' definition of shifting from tolerance to appreciation to acceptance. This is an important dimension because even within a homogeneous and mono-cultural setting there can be an opportunity towards multi-cultural dimensions. The challenge in this paper is to find ways of addressing, re-addressing, and theorizing unconscious ideas in divergent patterns of the nation, especially in Malaysia, which can be fragmented and contradictory and which cut across the traditional fault lines of race and ethnicity. In a way, there is an opportunity for the concept of 'nations-of-intent' to be explicitly organized around ideas, identification and patterns which are recognizably multiple and sometimes, unstable, with visible contradictions in the Malaysian citizens „personal locations“ in the process of nation building. Moreover, there is a newly focused understanding of the constructive nature of the process undertake socially and personally as citizens find their place in an identity grouping and explore the understanding of themselves and the social order which this can bring. In principle, therefore, the concept of 'nations-of-intent' is well attuned to the needs of the Malaysian socio-political landscape; as politics becomes more concerned with subjectivity, it more than ever needs a language in which to talk about interrelationships between the consciousness of the idea of the nation and social positioning. The concept of 'nations-of-intent' could, again in principle, supply such a language; it could make sense of the complex business of creating and re-creating 'identities' and building a nation, and of filling these out with content, as well as exploring the intense 'investments' which citizens hold in them, and the deep aggression to which they often give rise. At this point, it is essential to understand citizenship in Malaysia by focusing on the concept of 'nations-of-intent' at once personal and political- of citizenship generated by the institutional influences of education, mass media and new communication technologies, modernity, and post-modernization.

A systemic account of citizenship in Malaysia might be identified by the self-construction of the Malaysian subject as a citizen as a new way of arranging life strategies. What is at stake here is not the conventional connection between government policies and the Malaysian solidarity as a means of confronting the social disparities of late capitalism, but rather the reflexive scanning of the Malaysian at those nodal points in which identification, citizenship, social networks, and administrative systems are looped. This may be of course and often doing, take the form of the individual Malaysians as citizens in the sense of social systems, for example, education. This important aspect, however, is that participation in such systems constitutes individuals, as subjects at once of the administration and regulation subsystems, and therefore bearers of individual rights. Individualization can be taken to mean 'do-it-yourself citizenship', as numerous governmental and collective institutions, including the education system, welfare networks, and the labor market, push Malaysians to invent new ways of life and interaction. In these circumstances, the personal or subjective aspects of citizenship are applied to the second power.

Shamsul (1996) conceptualized a 'nation-of-intent' as a vision of territorial entity, a set of institutions, an ideal-type citizen, and an identity profile that a group of 'social-engineers' have in mind and try to implement. It will often be an idealistic form shared by several people who identify themselves not only with one another, but with a whole nation whose other members they hope will join their vision. A nation-of-intent can be the idea of statesman wishing to unite different groups under his government's authority, of opposing party, a separatist group, a religious or other community. The concept of 'nations-of-intent' depicts an idea of a nation that still needs to be constructed or reconstructed. It is employed as the basis for a platform expressing dissent or a challenged to the established notion of a nation. It promises the citizens an opportunity to participate in the process of nation building. It further confirms this highly fluid notion of nationality. The discourse of the nation can be constructed in many different forms. This suggests that the form and content of national identity can be defined and redefined through dialogue and democratic decision. Individuals experience their nationality very differently. Thus, the concept of 'nations-of-intent' refers to the various aspects such as of ethnic, class and gender, and are sources of identity that are transcended by the primary identity of nation.

The idea of a modern large-scale republic must appeal to the understanding of shared history, common solidarities, and ideas of self-determination and autonomy which underlie national identity. However, the use of national identity as the foundation of citizenship involves several challenges such as of that national identity in any single case is associated with a particular history and a past which may be exclusive, especially of those potential new citizens who now seek membership. National identity can never be 'innocent'.

As Renato Rosaldo (1999) argues, citizenship is concerned with „who wants to be visible, to be heard and to belong“. Similarly, this article has sought to argue that citizenship is more about the ability in a shared Malaysian context to engage in the polity while being valued and not reduced to an 'other'. Citizenship in Malaysia is becoming a challenge for a communicative community that is fearful of the threat of normalization, exclusion, and silence. All these features aim to investigate how cultural diversity in Malaysia fosters a sense of overlapping and disputed 'nation-of-intent'. The impact of competing 'nations-of-intent' and social cohesion in Malaysia, the way it is influencing citizenship and citizenship education, hence

nation-building is then discussed. Debates on questions related to citizenship and citizenship education in Malaysia have tended to overlook the 'idea of the nation' amongst the citizen of a diverse society are indicated. While these discussions invariably discuss topics related to notions of the political community, participation, and individual rights, they are frequently ignored when dealing with more complex specific cultural backgrounds and political traditions of thought. Most of these accounts fail to analyze ideas relevant to a host political practice and range of contextual features such as forms in which the public sphere is built in the context of daily life.

Citizenship has been understood as citizenship in a nation-state for at least three centuries. The concept of nation-state is still dominant in the political discourse as well as the understanding of most citizens, although there has been a discussion about the sense of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century-type nation state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for some years. The concept of citizenship in nation state must be examined since the nation states were formed based on homogeneity. The question is whether a new concept of citizenship is needed in a new state model such as a republican state. The concept of nation state becomes questionable, not only by an increasing diversity but also by increasing transnational migration that does not lead into a new citizenship. Nation-states have learned to cope successfully with the model where migrants come into the state and become citizens so that in the second and third generation, they have fully accepted citizens in their new state. This model does not function with those who take part in transnational migration. Malaysian nation of citizenship since decolonization have been developed within the framework of a permanent state of anxiety about the survival of the state. The political leadership has repeatedly emphasized the need for citizens to be mutually dependent upon each other because their nation is surrounded by agencies whose principles and activities, whether deliberately aggressive or not, would lead to their destruction unless they were resisted at every turn. The continued progress of Malaysia as a nation-state is explicitly and consistently described by its political leadership as being solely due to the good results of its policies and activities. Admirable political leadership within this context is therefore implicitly defined as being any course of past action that has resulted in inappropriate outcomes. Thus, there is no explicit requirement that the process of national policy making should be an expression of, or be informed by, a previously articulated set of moral, social, religious, or humanitarian values. Political reputation and worthiness can then be constructed based on what is retrospectively defined as 'success' and therefore any acts that have contributed to it are automatically validated as acceptable and good. As moral and political decisions can only be taken on past events in this context, the Malaysian political atmosphere is not one within which meaningful, defensible judgments can be formed concerning the desirability of any proposed future activity. The value of the activity can be considered only post-hoc. Indeed, political activity acquires the capacity to embrace judgment only after it has run its course. Consequently, the definition of citizenship within this arena does not accept Westernized conceptions of active democratic involvement, least of all dissension, and in several ways makes such activity unhelpful, irrational, and even meaningless.

It is entirely in line with the political rationale in Malaysia that its program of National Education Policy emphasizes the need for young people to establish a converging way of thinking about what it means to be citizens and to be prepared to accept instrumental

conceptions of their role as a citizen. As a state agent, the education system in Malaysia is seen as having a strong and vital role to play in the social construction of a citizen. Individual service and fidelity to the nation have been promoted in Malaysia as being of paramount importance, and each citizen must continue to demonstrate this fidelity in both public and practical ways. Individual citizenship is described and presented as something that must be constantly re-validated in civil society. In most Western democracies traditional forms of citizenship can be encapsulated by the term of liberal individualism, which gives priority to the civic, political, and social rights of the independent individual and thus to the expansionary and emancipator. Some commentators argue that citizenship thus viewed can pose problems both nationally and internationally as citizens prefer to assert their rights and then withdraw into their own privacy ignoring the society, the national, and international public spaces. Some note that since the 1970s many democracies have experienced a crisis in the preservation of citizenship status as established by the erosion of standard state provisions. This is not the case in Malaysia, where democratic citizenship is mainly seen as a vehicle to serve the interests of society and the state. As a natural consequence of the discussions and critiques of these ideas in recent years, several alternatives have been proposed and produced in the sociological literature to address the changing context of citizenship in terms of national interests and issues of globalization.

One of the notable discussions in the literature is the civic republican conception of citizenship proposed by Oldfield, which firmly opposes 'welfarism' and which gives priority to the interests of collectivist activity over those that give priority to the needs and desires of the person. In Malaysia, the notion of democracy is related to a non-liberal socialist philosophy in which the interests of the individual are subordinated to those of the state. The relationship between education and national unity can be observed in The Fifth Economic Plan. For example, among the objectives of the First Malaysia Plan 1966-1970 was to further consolidate the educational system to foster social, cultural, and political unity; enhancement the standard of education and the spread of educational opportunities throughout the country to correct the gap between urban and rural areas; and the diversification of educational and training facilities by increasing such facilities in vital fields especially those relating to agriculture and industrial science and technology. Among the objectives of the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975, was the consolidation of the educational system to promote national integration and unity; the implementation in stages of the Malay Language as the medium of instruction in schools; closing the gap in educational systems of East Malaysian with the national system. Meanwhile, the Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980 contained objectives to strengthen the educational system by promoting national integration and unity through the continued implementation, in stages of the Malay language as the main medium of instruction at all levels; to narrow the gap in educational opportunities between the rich and poor, and among the various regions and races in the country through a more equitable distribution of resources and facilities; and to improve the quality of education to reduce wastage and increase its effectiveness for nation-building. The coinage of a multicultural nation-state is relatively challenging and there is an inherent tension between the two parts of the expression because the classical nation-states of Western Europe typically indulged in cultural homogenization. Not all of them achieved equal success, but the „ideal" was to create a collectivity of citizens within common cultural attributes so that their ultimate loyalty was to the state. In this scheme, citizens are at once active agents (through collective determination) and subjects (who have rights and duties)



of the nation-state. As agents, the citizens are entitled to certain rights from the nation-state, and as its subjects, they are obliged to adhere certain duties to sustain the structure they have created. The bundle of rights and duties could be internalized through a set of consensual citizenship values.

In Malaysia, the tendency on the part of the dominant majority community, usually a combination of attributes, to claim that it is the 'core of the nation' persists. Hence it is crucial to recognize the lack of fit between citizenship values (attributes associated to one's notion of nation) and multiculturalism, a process of nation building in Malaysia phenomenon. The colonial situation gave birth to 'plural societies' wherein different segments, usually of racial collectivities, one national (the colonized) and the other ethnic (that of the immigrant colonizer), coexisted uneasily. The postcolonial states emerged when the colonizers retreated. In most of these states the political and cultural boundaries did not coincide as exemplified by the South Asian and African states. Often nations were divided between two or more states. However, these new states accepted the crucial political, economic, and socio-cultural institutions and values of colonizers leading to the coexistence of alien and native cultural elements.

However, citizenship is not a widely recognized term in Malaysia. People do not have a good understanding of what it means to be a person, rather than one of the subjects of the monarch. Citizenship is not so much a term that has played a central role in Malaysia's political past. Citizenship in diverse Malaysia needs to consider a few issues – the 'explicit ideal' of inclusive citizenship needs to be developed for diverse Malaysians. Diversity must be given public status and integrity, and Malaysia needs to establish a modern social and cultural agenda capable of cultivating or nurturing ethnic identities. The dichotomy between 'Malaysian' and ethnic minority must be overcome and 'Malaysian' must be perceived as possessing ethnic minority cultures and societies. Minorities are an integral part of Malaysia, they have as much to offer, and they owe as much allegiance to society as the majority do. Minority and majority groups in Malaysia must both have space for development, but in relation to each other. This suggests that the form and content of the 'official nation-of-intent' can be defined or redefined through dialogue and democratic decision- thus indicating that it is a highly fluid notion. Perhaps, it can be described that the main elements in the revitalization of the Malaysian notion through an 'open debate' of its national identity and its redefinition to accommodate cultural and territorial minorities.

However, if nationality is simple to be determined politically, what differentiates it from citizenship? With regards to the Chinese and Indians in particular, there is a sense in which the past always constraints the present- present identities are built out of the materials that are handed down and not started from scratch. Thus, there is an existing of different nations-of-intent in which: those who want to insist that membership of a national community is not an open choice versus those who seek to form an understanding of nation as a matter of choice. However, Malaysia's national identity is deeply rooted in its political culture, established over decades. But the point is surely that many of the key institutions that make up of the Malaysian culture, such as the monarchy, Parliament, and the Constitution, are simply incompatible with, and indeed are in opposition to the suggestion of an 'open debate' on the Malaysian identity. Citizenship education has been an undisputed

feature of Malaysia's education in diverse subjects and under different titles. Different methods are used in teaching democracy, but also in different styles of schooling. Citizenship education through Civic Education as a subject in schools lacks acceptance and interest by students, other teachers, and parents. Civic education suffers not only from a difficult structure but also from a general weariness with politics, which is evident in an unwillingness to become engaged in political actions. The fact that there is no continuity in Civic education due to changes of the subject from primary school to the different forms of secondary school, and that Civic Education is now often part of a subject-field consisting of several subjects formerly taught, may be considered as a reason for lack of interest in it. There are two things that this chapter would like to highlight: first an overall comprehension of the programme is important if it is to be applied in a practical manner as planned. This suggests that in this situation, the instructors who carry out the programme must thoroughly understand the substance and the spirit of the curriculum. Secondly, it has been pointed out that the implementation of the national curriculum is both philosophical. Philosophically, the programme must be simply perceived and accepted. As far as educators are concerned, they must establish and develop a learning situation in which teaching processes include both the development of expertise and the acquisition of citizenship values. The intended curriculum would fail if the commitment towards the expressed citizenship values is absent among educators. The method of changing the curriculum thus includes all the processes and frameworks of the education system. There must be a synergetic drive towards the accomplishment of the popular, starting with its preparation and development, distribution, execution, and the process of assessment, which includes the flow of cooperation, and which does not occur in any conflicting trend along the way.

As such, citizenship in Malaysia can be regarded as exclusive as well as inclusive. While the Malaysian citizenship remains closely tied to the nation-state, such exclusion is inevitable. However, this relationship is becoming increasingly problematic as globalization challenges the boundaries of states. In its liberal form, citizenship claims to embody the ideal of universalism. All Malaysians who can legitimately claim to be citizens of the state are supposed to share equally the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. For some critics, however, ironically it is this very claim of universality that acts as a powerful exclusionary discourse. A notion of universal citizenship, it is suggested, simply cannot be sustained in the context of Malaysia's plural society. In addition to individual rights, special group rights such as of the Malays are therefore required to ensure that some individuals are not excluded from the benefits of citizenship because of their gender, race, or any other aspect of their identity. Apparently, there are different notions of citizenship that have different implications for education. Education for citizenship, with its limited understanding, requires only an introduction into fundamental comprehension of institutionalized laws on rights and responsibilities. Full interpretation includes education that builds analytical and reflective skills and encourages capacity for self-determination and mutual autonomy to evolve. In Malaysia, education for citizenship is receiving little serious attention and it is identified a threat to democracy in an increasingly commercial society, where insecurity and a sense of isolation and powerlessness become the everyday experience of growing numbers of individuals, and asked whether we are, as a society, creating conditions of the „mass society of mutually antagonistic individuals, easy prey to despotism. The difficulty of traditional science understanding citizenship in terms of the interaction between individuals and the state from both a sub-national (local) and a supra-national (global) viewpoint. First,

from a sub-national viewpoint, it is evident that membership in a nation-state often means nothing to its members relative to other types of sub-national societies in which they associate and carry out their demands and obligations. In certain cases, the groups that people identify, the claims and responsibilities that they recognize can be very loosely defined, confined to their immediate relatives, family, lineage, and neighbors. In some, the feeling of connectivity transcends immediate and primordial identities and is consistent with mutual histories of inequality or empathy with those who face oppression, such as oppression. This is a 'societal' understanding of people as someone who belongs to various categories of collective organizations and determines their identity by participating in events connected with these types of membership. Whose sense of membership rests in the degree to which they engage in this social existence and in the forms of an organization that they are allowed to practice. And whether they are only allowed to join on very limited terms or are refused complete entry, citizenship applies to their efforts to question their exclusionary practices and bring about change. Although the capacity to act as an entity at the individual level can be a significant precondition, it is the collective struggles of the marginalized communities that have traditionally guided social transition processes. There is a tendency to ignore the way Malaysian society is marked by structural race and social economic disparity, and the way in which Malaysia's education system is defined by distinctive exclusionary and unequal activities. In Malaysia, there is also a divisive nature of citizenship and conflict, for example in finding a balance between person and collective rights, in identifying shared principles that underpin democratic and diverse communities, and in ensuring that all Malaysian people have a true sense of belonging to society. Apart from that, there is also a lack of attention to the debated and frequently elusive existence of basic values such as diversity and inclusion.

Even though cultural pluralism is recognized, educational responses can sometimes fall into traditional trends. Simplistic views of culture and stagnant conceptions of ethnicity can refuse to approach culture in anything other than romantic or ossified ways and reinforce, rather than question, bias. In Malaysia, the creation of national identity and citizenship could be frustrated unless the framework is prepared to incorporate a genuine exploration of history in the formal curriculum. The instability in contemporary plural and global states is best countered by a genuine analysis of the beliefs and expectations shared by constituent populations than by an effort to preserve an imaginary state unity or 'nation state' mythology. The diverse essence of society, the nuanced dynamics of racial identity and the influence of latent manifestations of discrimination need to be thoroughly understood. Thus, the path forward in the education sector undoubtedly has less to do with the discovery of a broadly applicable model of inclusive education and more to do with a genuine informed effort on the part of all education to work toward ethnic myopia, biases, and drawbacks in all fields of education. This explicitly suggests a permeation of educational activity and policy with principles that foster empathy and fairness. A lot of conversation these days is about the states-nation and its challenges and the transformation of the nation. The notions of country tend to be wrapped up in the modes of theorizing in which the catchword is that of 'mission.' The 'mission' of the country is the creation of a nation. In the Malaysian sense, however the perception of nation-building is represented by the different ethnic groups building their own conceptions, their own personal and social status, and their own position in the order of things. It is such restless self-activity that removes the ascriptions of a specific type of nation of intent. Nation building is very concerned with national identity as an end in



itself; however, people are free to choose the kind of concept and notion of nation, but the imperative is to get on with the 'formal' challenge and to accomplish it. It is evident that citizens' autonomy and well-being are promoted when they are able to collectively determine the future shape of their society. Malaysia is a case of a territory inhabited by a kaleidoscope of groups with competing cultural identities, stemming from the period of colonization and long-standing country's history. In such a case, it will either mean allowing the dominant group to impose its cultural values on dissenting minorities in the name of nation building. Or on the other hand, it will justify minority groups in their struggle for autonomy, a struggle which in the nature of things is liable to cause the nation instability. The competing notions of nation have drawn the very underlying aspects of citizenship that are used to support the task of nation-building. It is then suggested that the varied 'idea of the nation' must be explored and draw distinctions between different ways in which ethnic and political communities may be culturally divided. As such, the national identity would probably "run into trouble". However, on the other hand, it can guide towards political arrangements that meet the cultural demands of more than one group. The mere fact of cultural pluralism does not undermine the 'official notion of the nation' as it all depends on the character of the pluralism. It follows that in principle a multi-ethnic society can have a common national identity and enjoy national self-determination in a relatively straightforward manner. Although ethnic identities may give rise to political demands, they are essentially cultural identities whose field of expression is civil society, and they can be combined with overarching national identities.

Quite frequently, citizens do not have a good understanding about what it means to be a person, rather than one of the subjects of the monarch. Citizenship is not so much a term that has played a key role in Malaysia's constitutional history relative to the concept of the ruler's people. The definition of citizenship appears to be a bit unsettling. Citizenship in different parts of Malaysia must consider a few problems, articulate, and specifically state the notion that 'multicultural citizenship' needs to be developed for a diverse Malaysia. Diversity must be granted public status and integrity, and Malaysia needs to establish a new social and cultural agenda capable of promoting or fostering ethnic identities. This history has connotations which may be unacceptable to some groups who are often the victims of that past national history. Citizenship has been understood as citizenship in a nation-state for at least three centuries. The concept of nation-state is still dominant in the political discourse as well as the understanding of most citizens, although there has been a discussion about the sense of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century-type nation state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for some years.

The concept of citizenship in nation state must be examined since the nation states were formed based on homogeneity. The question is whether a new concept of citizenship is needed in a new state model such as a republican state. The concept of nation state becomes questionable, not only by an increasing diversity but also by increasing transnational migration that does not lead into a new citizenship. Nation-states have learned to cope successfully with the model where migrants come into the state and become citizens so that in the second and third generation, they have fully accepted citizens in their new state. This model does not function with those who take part in transnational migration. Malaysian nation of citizenship since decolonization have been developed within the framework of a permanent state of anxiety about the survival of the state. The political

leadership has repeatedly emphasized the need for citizens to be mutually dependent upon each other because their nation is surrounded by agencies whose principles and activities, whether deliberately aggressive or not, would lead to their destruction unless they were resisted at every turn. The continued progress of Malaysia as a nation-state is explicitly and consistently described by its political leadership as being solely due to the good results of its policies and activities. Admirable political leadership within this context is therefore implicitly defined as being any course of past action that has resulted in inappropriate outcomes. Thus, there is no explicit requirement that the process of national policy making should be an expression of, or be informed by, a previously articulated set of moral, social, religious, or humanitarian values. Political reputation and worthiness can then be constructed based on what is retrospectively defined as 'success' and therefore any acts that have contributed to it are automatically validated as acceptable and good. As moral and political decisions can only be taken on past events in this context, the Malaysian political atmosphere is not one within which meaningful, defensible judgments can be formed concerning the desirability of any proposed future activity. The value of the activity can be considered only post-hoc. Indeed, political activity acquires the capacity to embrace judgment only after it has run its course. Consequently, the definition of citizenship within this arena does not accept Westernized conceptions of active democratic involvement, least of all dissension, and in several ways makes such activity unhelpful, irrational, and even meaningless.

It is entirely in line with the political rationale in Malaysia that its program of National Education Policy emphasizes the need for young people to establish a converging way of thinking about what it means to be citizens and to be prepared to accept instrumental conceptions of their role as a citizen. As a state agent, the education system in Malaysia is seen as having a strong and vital role to play in the social construction of a citizen. Individual service and fidelity to the nation have been promoted in Malaysia as being of paramount importance, and each citizen must continue to demonstrate this fidelity in both public and practical ways. Individual citizenship is described and presented as something that must be constantly re-validated in civil society. In most Western democracies traditional forms of citizenship can be encapsulated by the term of liberal individualism, which gives priority to the civic, political, and social rights of the independent individual and thus to the expansionary and emancipator. Some commentators argue that citizenship thus viewed can pose problems both nationally and internationally as citizens prefer to assert their rights and then withdraw into their own privacy ignoring the society, the national, and international public spaces. Some note that since the 1970s many democracies have experienced a crisis in the preservation of citizenship status as established by the erosion of standard state provisions. This is not the case in Malaysia, where democratic citizenship is mainly seen as a vehicle to serve the interests of society and the state. As a natural consequence of the discussions and critiques of these ideas in recent years, several alternatives have been proposed and produced in the sociological literature to address the changing context of citizenship in terms of national interests and issues of globalization. One of the notable discussions in the literature is the civic republican conception of citizenship proposed by Oldfield, which firmly opposes 'welfarism' and which gives priority to the interests of collectivist activity over those that give priority to the needs and desires of the person. In Malaysia, the notion of democracy is related to a non-liberal socialist philosophy in which the interests of the individual are subordinated to those of the state. The relationship

between education and national unity can be observed in The Fifth Economic Plan. For example, among the objectives of the First Malaysia Plan 1966-1970 was to further consolidate the educational system to foster social, cultural, and political unity; enhancement the standard of education and the spread of educational opportunities throughout the country to correct the gap between urban and rural areas; and the diversification of educational and training facilities by increasing such facilities in vital fields especially those relating to agriculture and industrial science and technology. Among the objectives of the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975, was the consolidation of the educational system to promote national integration and unity; the implementation in stages of the Malay Language as the medium of instruction in schools; closing the gap in educational systems of East Malaysian with the national system. Meanwhile, the Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980 contained objectives to strengthen the educational system by promoting national integration and unity through the continued implementation, in stages of the Malay language as the main medium of instruction at all levels; to narrow the gap in educational opportunities between the rich and poor, and among the various regions and races in the country through a more equitable distribution of resources and facilities; and to improve the quality of education to reduce wastage and increase its effectiveness for nation-building. The coinage of a multicultural nation-state is relatively challenging and there is an inherent tension between the two parts of the expression because the classical nation-states of Western Europe typically indulged in cultural homogenization. Not all of them achieved equal success, but the „ideal" was to create a collectivity of citizens within common cultural attributes so that their ultimate loyalty was to the state. In this scheme, citizens are at once active agents (through collective determination) and subjects (who have rights and duties) of the nation-state. As agents, the citizens are entitled to certain rights from the nation-state, and as its subjects, they are obliged to adhere certain duties to sustain the structure they have created. The bundle of rights and duties could be internalized through a set of consensual citizenship values.

In Malaysia, the tendency on the part of the dominant majority community, usually a combination of attributes, to claim that it is the 'core of the nation' persists. Hence it is crucial to recognize the lack of fit between citizenship values (an attribute associated to one's notion of nation) and multiculturalism, a process of nation building in Malaysia phenomenon. The colonial situation gave birth to 'plural societies' wherein different segments, usually of racial collectivities, one national (the colonized) and the other ethnic (that of the immigrant colonizer), coexisted uneasily. The postcolonial states emerged when the colonizers retreated. In most of these states the political and cultural boundaries did not coincide as exemplified by the South Asian and African states. Often nations were divided between two or more states. However, these new states accepted the crucial political, economic, and socio-cultural institutions and values of colonizers leading to the coexistence of alien and native cultural elements.

### **Research Questions**

The national education policy, being the foundation for most educational development plans, therefore, forms a crucial and key element with regards to building a nation. The idea of citizenship and citizenship education in Malaysia has been concerned with issues much related to the competing notions of the nation. The cultural conception of citizenship is concerned not only with formal procedures, such as who is right to vote and the preservation

of an active civil society but also crucially with whose cultural practices are marginalized, stereotypical, and made invisible.

Citizenship in Malaysia is becoming a challenge for a communicative community that is fearful of the threat of normalization, exclusion, and silence. All these features aim to investigate how cultural diversity in Malaysia fosters a sense of overlapping and disputed 'nation-of-intent'. This article would discuss issues raised by citizenship education in Malaysia with regards to challenges and possibilities, followed by a debate on the qualitative discourse, interpretation, and explanation regarding the field in the context of the contested notion of the existence of many 'nations-of-intent' as a framework. The impact of competing 'nations-of-intent' and social cohesion in Malaysia, the way it is influencing citizenship and citizenship education, hence nation-building is then discussed. Debates on questions related to citizenship and citizenship education in Malaysia have tended to overlook the 'idea of the nation' amongst the citizen of a diverse society are indicated. While these discussions invariably discuss topics related to notions of the political community, participation, and individual rights, they are frequently ignored when dealing with more complex specific cultural backgrounds and political traditions of thought. Most of these accounts fail to analyze ideas relevant to a host political practice and range of contextual features such as forms in which the public sphere is built in the context of daily life.

Questions and issues surrounding ideas of the nation become political in a new sense. There is a need to learn to balance the 'authority defined' and 'everyday defined' of being a Malaysian citizen at the same time. This indicates a type of citizenship education that addresses the 'occasional placeless-ness' evident in some groups of community with regards to citizenship while seeking to encourage fluid and complex understandings of the Malaysian nation. This perhaps only becomes possible through movements and educational settings that mutually seek to explore more democratic arrangements and a mutual sense of interconnectedness within the multicultural Malaysian society. Citizenship and citizenship education in Malaysia needs to be redefined as of a 'form of theory' that seeks to establish democratic public spaces while simultaneously promoting a sense of living in connection with a number of diverse and overlapping cultures in time and space. It will also be important to balance the demand for self-reflection with the understanding that Malaysian citizens reside within overlapping cultures with which they are likely to encounter different levels of connection. The colonial era of Malaya, the attainment of independence, the radical commodification of Malaysian culture, and the continuing 'work-in-progress' of building a Malaysian nation- all these mean that citizenship and citizenship education must be re-addressed in terms of a new collection of coordinates that can continue to connect citizens with the practices of the democratic community in process of nation-building. If there is no clear vision of a 'Malaysian nation' and without an attempt to re-imagine how all citizens may learn and find community with another one another in the age of globalization, thus radical possibilities of transformational need to be re-thought. The two ideas of state and nation, which are the basis for the exclusionary aspects of citizenship, come together in notion of the nation state. This fusion is above all a legacy of the French Revolution of 1789, which was to have deep consequences for the future of citizenship. David Miller argues that citizenship is an empty idea without its association with the nation. It is contended that Miller's defense of nationality is coherent, and that the nation is an appropriate foundation for citizenship. Citizenship must be attached to the state and the cultural idea of nation- capable

of uniting diverse groups within increasingly plural societies. Miller further claims that nationality matters because people consider it to be significant. Any philosophy of citizenship must therefore accept this fact because it is nationality, described as mutual heritage, political culture, and common sense of destiny, which gives us a sense of duty to our fellow citizens. Without this bond, we are left only with 'strict reciprocity' between self-interested individuals. For Miller, this can only provide for a very weak citizenship and minimal state: "Given the possibility of private insurance, we would expect states that lacked communitarian background such as nationality provides to be a little more than minimal states providing only basic security for their members". The core aspects of the revitalization of patriotism will be the same everywhere an inclusive discussion on national identity and its redefinition to include ethnic and geographical minorities. Nevertheless, while it is true that nationality has been an important identity that individuals have often been prepared to privilege over self-interest, it is not the only identity that has led to self-sacrifice and altruism. History show that individuals have been prepared to make ultimate sacrifice in the name of many causes such as religion, class, gender, and the protection of the environment. Furthermore, it is not possible to assume that nation-states possess a degree of homogeneity that clearly does not exist anywhere in the world. As Kymlicka (1995) notes, there are around 600 languages and 5000 ethnic groups in the world today but approximately 180 states. This means that in practice, all states are in fact multinational, containing as they do have many competing cultural and ethnic traditions.

## **Results**

The dichotomy between 'Malaysian' and ethnic minority must be overcome. The 'Malaysian' must be seen as having ethnic minority cultures and groups. Minorities are an important part of Malaysia and have as much to give and owe as much loyalty to civilization as do the rest. Minority and majority groups in Malaysia must both have room to grow, but in relation to each other. However, there are, of course, several logistical problems that can arise: racial rivalries may make collaboration within the state impossible, national identity may contain cultural aspects that certain ethnic groups find objectionable, and the country may find itself being threatened, either physically or metaphorically. In Malaysia, the idea remains strong that its ethnically separated population will engage in a common project of self-determination through a clear and succinct conception of citizenship and citizenship education.

The most evident aspect is that the concept of a nation in question coexists within a common governmental unit, while at the same time each portion has maintained its own distinct cultural features. However, the blueprint for good nation building in Malaysia requires more than just political integration plus cultural differences. It is proposed that facets of education in particular citizenship education, play a key role in communicating the notion of being 'Malaysian.' Citizenship education is a significant but challenging topic because of its diverse elements, its engagement difficulties, and its connection to diversity. Diversity in the community adds to these challenges, as it turns out that citizenship education is still tacitly committed to homogeneity but must deal with the highly diverse school population in Malaysia.



The 'Shared Prosperity Vision 2030' is a government blueprint released in 2020 by the Government of Malaysia to increase the incomes of all ethnic groups. It is a further example for the role of values with regards to economy embedded within the state. There is no doubt about different values existing in different ethnic groups, but the main question to be posed - are these values compatible within these groups? If the construction of a nation in Malaysia is perceived as a value orientation that encourages coexistence and the protection of a multiplicity of cultural cultures within the territory of a state, the question of national self-determination is not a matter of nation building. At any rate, the relation between nation-building and national self-determination is the product of the chaos wrought by the confrontation between one state and several nations. The Chinese and Indians for example have become major occupants of the territory to which they have migrated during the colonial period and gradually became nations through the process of national self-determination. Further pertaining to the question of values, do political discourses in Malaysia as an ethnically diverse state for example, mainly highlight cultural values instead of democratic ones that would challenge students to participate in the state? For a long time, universal values (democratic, human rights, civil societies, non-discrimination) have been used to frame conceptually political discourses in Malaysia. It is necessary for a multi-ethnic country blessed with cultural diversity to examine the impact, relevance, and usefulness of the universal values as they are embedded in the different ethnic/cultural context. For instance, the Malay Muslim would understand and accept human rights not as a something supreme to human being because they have a Supreme Being guiding them, namely, The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. and Allah the Almighty. Therefore, the universal values are always embedded and coloured by local/ethnic/cultural values.

Participation is another key term in citizenship education since it is in an ethnically diverse community. Participation is only feasible on an even basis. Citizenship is important to offer democratic equality and therefore political participation to all classes. Political equality does not however, guarantee institutional, economic, and social inclusion, although on the other hand, economic participation is possible without political equality. Both students are faced with involvement and its preconditions. It makes sense, thus, to deal with incorporation and assimilation as considerations in the process of participation. The first language of minorities is rarely considered when it comes to participation or incorporation. Unfortunately, the linguistic and cultural knowledge of non-Malays, which may be of value to Malaysia, is often less emphasized. The appreciation of these values plays an important role in the debate of the life of several nations of purpose. Participation ensures that people are not only able to take an active role in social and political life, but also to give their own expertise, which in turn, should be accepted by society at large and thus promote inclusion. This is a method that can be taught and observed at school, while maximizing the impact of citizenship education.

Besides, though the question presented by plurality for citizenship education can perhaps better be grasped in terms of conflicting notions of the country as a public policy. On the other hand, too much focus on the identification of various nations of purpose could contribute to a circumstance in which schools celebrate disparities and strive to preserve distinctive languages, faiths, and cultural traditions. This could be helpful to personal and social identities and help to develop the self-esteem of minority students, but it could mean neglecting the other roles of education-impacting practical skills and information and providing the foundation for social inclusion. Clearly there is a need for a balanced approach that aims to

promote both cultural acceptance and social inclusion. Who in exchange, needs proper preparation, special teacher training and sufficient funding? Any education system influenced by diversity, such as Malaysia, has had to cope with these problems. The responses differed considerably and were influenced by larger historical perspectives and social agendas related to national identity and citizenship.

Citizenship education in Malaysia means creating a sense of social solidarity and patriotism and a sense of responsibility and duty to the society and to one's fellow citizens. It also includes the consistency of the initiative and the desire to participate. But the production of these civic qualities was sluggish. Part of the reason for this was the challenge of resolving the resistance of subservience required by the colonial regimes. In part, post-independence governments have acknowledged the possible ambivalence of successful citizenship education. For the process can undermine the very political cohesion it is designed to promote. Politicians have been very alert to difficulties of nurturing an effectively mature style of citizenship and have placed great faith in the power of education to accomplish this. However, the complexities of the problem have not always allowed the setting or achievement of clear objectives. Differences of emphasis have sometimes been evident as between politicians and educationists. Furthermore, practical difficulties have on occasion proved more impervious to the civic educational policies than the planners have anticipated. Whether complementary or mutually at odds, the total array of objectives in programmes of education for citizenship may be listed as: comprehension, integration, participation, and obligation. Malaysia's future lies in the willingness of its people particularly the younger generation, to recognize and trust in all Malaysia's ability to unite national unity without a shared culture is an exercise in futility. In the sense of Malaysia's plural culture, with a history of decades of uneasy co-existence, doubts and concerns as frequent companions, and each group mostly left to its own devices, national unity through a shared identity is difficult enough to conceive, let alone to accept with all its heart. According to some ethnic minorities, the new government's policies are seen to favor the Malay majority and therefore seek to separate rather than unite its people. Apparently, the new education system is nice as far as it goes, but still, it falls far short of the criteria for establishing a shared culture and a sense of being Malaysian. Ethnic minorities view the success of a nation established as soon as Malaysia has a programme of inclusiveness, justice and equality, and equal opportunities without barriers. As a nation seeks a common identity, the national education system is the only obstacle to national construction.

Moreover, if there are Chinese and Indian primary schools, for example, there is a huge challenge to build a sense of being Malaysian. Malaya is a national language and should be a language of instruction in all Malaysian schools. However, Malaysia's cultural heritage is significant. There is also a critical need to look at its utilitarian importance at education. It is assumed that if the education system is depoliticized and tackles the social, economic, and political needs of the country in a reasonable fashion, considering the cultural and linguistic interests of non-Malays, Malaysia would have a greater chance of breaking the ethnic trend and achieving national unity. The difference of language medium had led to differences of language medium had led to differences in attitudes among students. In East Africa for example, it had been shown that differences in school experience had resulted in differences in political views. The study also showed that differences in school experience between missions as opposed to government schools also led to differences in political views. As for

the Malaysian school system, it not only expects to produce students who graduate with technical competence, but also with a disposition relevant to the demands for national integration. The national medium was also able to make the non-Malays move in the direction of Malay values and attitudes. In a similar view, Shamsul commented that the plural, diversified and fragmented Malaysian society is being well reflected in of the education system. Nevertheless, after surviving for a period in the 'state of stable tension', it is currently described as experiencing the process of 'social cohesion' in which he suggested aspects of 'humanizing' the education system that would address specific circumstances of the nation-state.

Many critics often claim that national harmony in a western democracy is not based on a common identity, but rather on a shared fidelity to democratic values. According to Rawls (1973) pertaining to citizenship: "although a well-ordered society is divided and pluralistic...public agreement on questions of political and social justice supports ties of civic friendship and secures the bonds of association". From this point of view, the instruction of such universal values such as justice, equality and civility-citizenship education also form the basis for national reconciliation. Shared democratic values clearly help to preserve national harmony, but profound disagreement over fundamental principles can also contribute to disunity.

However, shared principles are not sufficient. Social unity then requires not only shared principles, but also a sense of shared membership. Citizens must have a sense of belonging to the same community and a shared desire to continue to live together. Whatever Rawls has drawn upon the question of different nations-of-intent is further raised. Are the political principles among them necessarily different? Rawls provided perspectives by giving a secular universal philosophical based moral principle without including different religious principles that apparently still divide people deeply, though at the secular level doing good is accepted as universal. This involves everyday life and the officially influenced social life structures in the political realm, people do not perceive things in terms of layers, secular and religious. Often dictated by ideology which drives the ultimate objective of that political existence- the ideology is then articulated in a political form which has content. Usually, the ultimate political form is the formation of a nation, before that could be a political party and before that a small political collective. Content could be whatever ideology that the group shares so in the construction of citizenship education, philosophical elements mentioned by Rawls are important universal values, but it is usually driven by nations-of-intent informed by ideologies.

## **Discussion**

Clearly, one of the big challenges facing educators in Malaysia is how to appreciate and understand community cultures and students' awareness while at the same time trying to create a democratic public community with an overarching collection of principles that will be dedicated to and identified by all students. In other words, the challenge is to create a citizenship education that can help to promote a fair and egalitarian pluralistic nation-state that is viewed as valid by both students and communities. This is a tremendous challenge but an essential task in a pluralistic democratic society. A significant goal of the tertiary curriculum should be to prepare students to provide the awareness, behaviors and skills required to help them build and live in a public society in which all communities should and will engage. The goal of citizenship education should be one that can create a civic education programme that

will be viewed by all students within the nation-state as being of broad public interest. And in this way will civic education be given that encourages national unity and represents the different cultures of the nation-state. This is a daunting but vital challenge in a culturally complex Malaysian state with many nations who are serious about developing and introducing democratic education. The topic of Malaysian education must be carefully examined in the sense of ethnic minority schools in nation-building.

A stronger democratic approach to the education sector, with its realistic ramifications, must be discussed in the epilogue to citizenship education in Malaysia. The strategy should be relevant and guided by the democratic principle of public equality; people from all racial groups should be viewed and treated as equal people, independent of caste, race, or religion. Civic freedom is distinct from less inclusive cultures. Citizenship education in Malaysia, which is publicly funded by education that is defensible in line with a democratic ideal, should teach the younger generation to be able to assume the privileges and correlative obligations of equal citizenship, including respect for equal rights for other persons. In brief, democratic schooling should convey and grow the potential of all people to be equal citizens. Citizenship education in Malaysian democracy will lead to the development of civic equality in two important ways: first by voicing the democratic principle of tolerating cultural differences between most Malays and the minority of non-Malays, compatible with civic equality; and second, by understanding the importance of cultural differences between the majority and minority groups. However, not all education that goes by the name multicultural in the Malaysian education system serves the ideal civic equality in one of these ways, but citizenship education can (and the researcher argues should) do so. Toleration and recognition of cultural differences, the researcher argues, are both desirable parts in citizenship education. If toleration and recognition of cultural differences among the different ethnic groups in Malaysia are both democratically desirable, then the stark contrast often drawn between a liberal politics of toleration and non-liberal politics of recognition represents a false dichotomy. Democracy in Malaysia should defend a range of civic education activities that demonstrate both appreciation and appreciation of cultural differences, based on the subject and social context in Malaysia.

Maybe, being seen as completely Malaysian by non-Malays and recognizing themselves as such, should not mean rejecting their ethnic heritage and identity. Rather, there is a need to take a plural view of Malaysian culture, to consider it as multi-level, complex and multi-identity. It is important to consider the beneficial significance of diversity and the value of each group. They also enjoy full citizenship, while injustice and prejudice must be combated, and constructive policies for fostering inclusion and a healthier diverse community must be created, including the pursuit of ideals and the virtues of equality and transparency. There ought to be universal enjoyment of fundamental rights. However, these need to be applied appropriately in different situations. Every individual, community and culture must share equitably in the Malaysian society's burdens and rewards. Essentially, all Malaysians must be willing, through a mutually respectful dialogue and acknowledgement of their rights and obligations, to contribute to the ideals of Malaysian culture and its social and political arrangements – in short, to form society and decide what it means to be Malaysian. It is not only a matter of a particular way of communicating about collective relations, but above all, of executing them. Malaysians need to learn to benefit from the plurality of resources through engagement and debate, to recognize commonalities and compromises, and to agree on

differences of opinion. It is also important to actively seek, through consultation, to find an equal, just, peaceful, and constructive way of preventing or resolving conflicts and problems. If this expectation is to be fulfilled, citizenship education must become a solid, changing, and enduring aspect of the curriculum experience of all students in Malaysia. The difficulties in doing this are substantial. If the goal of citizenship education to become deeply rooted in schools and to extend to the Malaysian community and society is to become a reality, these obstacles must be addressed in the coming years. These are too deep-seated and practical. Malaysia is characterized by deep diversity along with the dimensions of class, gender, region, age, culture, religion, and ethnicity. Hence, the ethnic communities, incredible differentiation is found within and between communities. The diversity in Malaysia is much greater than that involving the visible and sizable minorities. Significant features of Malaysia are of central importance to the analysis of citizenship, citizenship education and the contested notion of the existence of many 'nations-of-intent'. These include the position of the ethnic minorities including class, gender, region, educational background, and their shared experiences in history of the country.

Therefore, citizenship and citizenship education in Malaysia is the struggle for a democratic society that enables a plurality of people to lead reasonably meaningful lives that respect the creation of diverse hybrid identities, provide them with a protective social state and give them access to an education system that seeks to explore the possibility of living in a domain-free future. Being Malaysian citizens means engaging in deliberative arguments about what is ethical to become and considering how in specific cultural places and contexts we can lead virtuous and just lives. We need citizenship education in the complex Malaysian society that can make sense of contemporary changes and give young people the space to share and critically question the various experiences and practices, allowing them to consider how they can best ensure the flourishing of everyone as citizens. It would also mean that they are able to recognize themselves as Malay, Chinese, Indian or any other ethnic groups and of course, as interconnected Malaysian citizens that would contribute towards to process of building a nation. Such a feat would require, as this paper have sought to emphasize, not only the cognitive capacities to reason, but also a renewed sense of being 'Malaysian' as sympathetic and compassionate beings through citizenship education. It is citizenship and citizenship education, as this paper has insisted, thus far, is intimately connected with questions of competing notions of 'nations-of-intent' in Malaysia and will continue to be so in the future regardless of how the dominant institutions are designed and developed. As we shall see over the period of progress in achieving a 'built Malaysian nation', these ideals need to be radically re-interpreted to meet the complex challenges of the present. This leaves open several questions. The first issue concerns the ways in which plural identities and differences are more salient in Malaysia in the Fourth Industrial Revolution era, and how they can be accommodated and recognized in a democratic order. More specifically, it raises the question of whether the nation can provide a sense of common citizen citizenry, or whether the nation is an anachronism in today's world. An alternative possibility would be to develop a post-national citizenship which might allow different institutional processes, such as education to form ideas of democratic community and nation. The requirements of diversity and cultural citizenship are challenged by notions of citizenship in Malaysia, and there have been differences as to the unifying habits and attitudes of citizenship. Malaysia is a 'state without a country' and citizenship was fundamental to forming a democratic nation in the constitution of moral people from different ethnic groups who continue to express different nations of



purpose' along with citizenship education. The concept of 'nations-of-intent' further emphasizes the subjective and changeable aspects of nationhood and opens the possibility within the same nation of several co-existing or competing forms of identity.

### **Conclusion**

Nation-building in Malaysia is a state without a nation (and it has many nations-of-intent) and the present effort does not include ideas to the nation when promoting citizenship education- the notion of 'equality in diversity' and not only 'unity in diversity'. It is suggested that the Malaysian nation needs a more explicit citizenship education and clear-cut statement of intent about its vision and direction of citizens towards upholding the principles of the current 'Keluarga Malaysia' concept. While debates on diversity and multiculturalism have dwelt with the role of citizenship education in preserving democratic ideals, there has been little or no attention to the role of learning in relation to the nature of building a 'state without a nation' in bridging the 'authority-defined' and the 'everyday-defined' idea of a nation, where various social groups are able to voice their different 'nations-of-intent'. Apparently, the concept of citizenship and citizenship education in Malaysia is prompting only of form 'nation-of intent' available in the country, whereas there are other nations as well, apparently. An implication of it is that the concept of citizenship and thus, nation building in Malaysia is still fraught with confusion. The presence of plurality of 'nations-of-intent' in contemporary Malaysia demonstrates the fact that dissenting voices are present and heard, within and without government. Citizenship and citizenship education should therefore respond to the contextual challenges of multi-cultural groups within the Malaysian society, and to diverse multicultural societies, by supporting democratic deliberation within the society, among other important matters, about how the Malaysian education system can best educate all from different ethnic groups as civic equals. In conclusion, unity, and diversity in citizenship education in the Malaysian context therefore go together, like citizens and democracies do. Toleration and recognition of diversity, within principled limits, make democratic unity possible. Disagreements about the boundaries of diversity fuel the unity's imaginative and disruptive tensions. The more destructive the creative tensions overwhelm; democracy is then better, and the more constructive work Malaysian educators have done for the nation. These issues need to be delved deeper into its meanings and to focus and concentrate efforts on the development of individuals to become good and effective Malaysian citizens, as aspired. Taking care of these individuals as citizens of Malaysia benevolently through citizenship education with regards to all challenges and possibilities will transfuse goodness and well-being of society and the Malaysian nation at large.

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