

MALAY TEACHERS' SELF CONCEPT AND ATTITUDE  
TOWARDS EGALITARIAN EDUCATION IN  
MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY

BY

NIK MUHAMMAD HANIS BIN NEK RAKAMI

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Kulliyyah of Education  
International Islamic University Malaysia

SEPTEMBER 2020

## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted with manifold objectives which are to profile the acceptance of Malay teachers towards egalitarian education in a multiracial society, explore the attitudes towards egalitarian education, identify the level of Malay teachers' self-concept, establish whether the four proposed dimensions of attitudes towards egalitarian education were in fact construct valid, meaningful and interpretable, establish whether the four proposed dimensions of self-concept constitute meaningful and interpretable dimensions of self-concept, examine the significant difference in attitudes of egalitarian education on gender and school area, explore whether there is any relationship between the level of self-concept and attitudes towards egalitarian education and finally, identify the predictors of acceptance towards egalitarian education. The respondents comprised 793 Malay teachers from 15 states and federal territories in Peninsular Malaysia and the instrument used was a scale with total 61 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type categories on the attitudes towards egalitarian education and self-concept. The scale was developed based on extant literature and 4 focus group discussions involving 26 Malay teachers in four different regions. The results indicated that a majority of the Malay teachers believe in implementation of fair and just education for all races in Malaysia (52.7%) while (51.4%) believe that the government should implement fair and just education for Malaysians. The majority of Malay teachers are ready for the implementation of a standardized single school system for all Malaysians. The researcher found that the level of self-concept among Malay teachers was generally high. A series of independent samples t-tests returned non-significant difference between male and female Malay teachers in terms of the attitudes towards egalitarian education dimensions however, results for *national school system* showed a significant difference between the two groups with male Malay teachers reporting a higher score than female Malay teachers. Yet, the effect size of the difference was small (Cohen's  $d = 0.27$ ). In the context of school areas, the results of independent samples t-tests showed that all four dimensions of attitudes were found not significantly different between Malay teachers from urban or rural school areas. The procedures extracted four underlying dimensions of egalitarian education – which comprised Malay privileges, education funding, national school system and environmental support for least advantaged students. For self-concept scale, the PAF analysis explored four dimensions of Malays teachers' self-concept. The dimensions had met the proposed conceptual model with four dimensions earlier, namely self-efficacy, self-esteem, motivation and self-representation. The result of Pearson correlation coefficient showed a positive correlation between Malay teachers' attitudes towards egalitarian education and their self-concept. The MRA procedures indicated that Malay Privileges, Environmental Support for Least Advantaged Students, Education Funding and Self-Representation significantly predicted the acceptance towards egalitarian education. Given the findings, the study makes six important recommendations that the Ministry of Education may consider in order to provide fair education to all Malaysians. These include conducting activities that promote implementation of Just and Fair Education, empowering National Schools, abolishment of National Type Schools, preserving Malay Privilege, supporting of Least Advantaged Students and developing Self-Concept Module for Teachers.

## خلاصة البحث

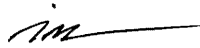
هذه الدراسة ذات أهداف متعددة ، وهي معرفة قبول المعلمين الملايو للتعليم المتكافئ في سياق المجتمع المتعدد الأعراق ، واستكشاف المواقف تجاه التعليم المتكافئ ، وتحديد مستوى مفهوم الذات لدى المعلمين الملايو ، وتحديد ما إذا كانت الأبعاد الأربعة المقترحة للسلوك نحو التعليم القائم على المساواة تتسم بالصلاحية، وذات مغزي، وقابلة للتأويل، وكذلك فحص الفروق الهامة في سلوك التعليم القائم على المساواة بين الجنسين والمجال المدرسي ، واستكشاف ما إذا كان هناك أي علاقة بين مستوى مفهوم الذات والسلوك تجاه التعليم المتكافئ، وأخيرا ، تحديد تنبؤات القبول نحو التعليم المتكافئ. وقد شملت العينة ٧٩٣ مدرسا من الملايو من ١٥ ولاية وإقليماً في شبه جزيرة ماليزيا ، والأداة المستخدمة هي مقياس مكون من ٦١ عنصرا ، تم تقييمها وفقا لمقياس Linkert المكون من ٥ نقاط لقياس التعليم المتكافئ ومفهوم الذات. وتم تطوير المقياس بناء على أدبيات الدراسة ذات الصلة، والمناقشة المركزة لأربع مجموعات شملت ٢٦ مدرسا من الملايو في أربع مناطق مختلفة. وأشارت النتائج إلى أن غالبية المعلمين الملايو يؤمنون بتطبيق التعليم القائم على العدل والمساواة لجميع الأعراق في ماليزيا (٥٢,٧٪) بينما (٥١,٤٪) يعتقدون بأن الحكومة يجب أن تطبق التعليم العادل والمتساوي لجميع الماليزيين. وأن غالبية المعلمين الملايو على استعداد لتطبيق نظام المدرسة الموحدة لجميع الماليزيين. وقد جد الباحث أن مستوى مفهوم الذات لدى المعلمين الملايو مرتفع بشكل عام. وأن عددا من الاختبارات المستقلة لعينات t أظهرت أنه لا توجد دلالة إحصائية بين المعلمين الملايو الذكور وبين المعلمات من حيث المواقف تجاه أبعاد التعليم المتكافئ ، وفيما يتعلق بالنظام المدرسي الوطني ، فقد أظهرت النتائج فرقا كبيرا بين المجموعتين حيث أظهر المعلمون الملايو الذكور درجة أعلى من المعلمات الملايو. ومع ذلك ، فإن حجم تأثير الفرق صغيرا (كوهين د = ٠,٢٧). وفي سياق المناطق المدرسية ، أظهرت نتائج الاختبارات المستقلة للعينات أن جميع أبعاد المواقف الأربعة لا تختلف اختلافا كبيرا بين المعلمين الملايو في المناطق الحضرية أو الريفية. وتضمنت الإجراءات أربعة أبعاد أساسية للتعليم المتكافئ - والتي تشمل الامتيازات المخصصة للملايو ، وتمويل التعليم ، ونظام المدارس الوطنية ، والدعم البيئي للطلاب الأقل حظا. وبالنسبة لمقياس مفهوم الذات ، فإن تحليل PAF لأربعة أبعاد لمفهوم الذات لدى المعلمين الملايو. وحققت الأبعاد نموذج المفاهيم المقترحة سابقا ، بأربعة أبعاد ، وهي الكفاءة الذاتية ، واحترام الذات، والدافع ، والتمثيل الذاتي. وأظهرت نتيجة معامل ارتباط بيرسون وجود علاقة إيجابية بين

مواقف المعلمين الملايو نحو التعليم المتكافئ ومفهومهم الذاتي. وأشارت إجراءات MRA إلى أن امتيازات الملايو ، والدعم البيئي للطلاب الأقل حظاً ، وتمويل التعليم ، والتمثيل الذاتي ، تنبأت بشكل كبير بقبول التعليم المتكافئ. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج ، قدمت الدراسة ست توصيات مهمة قد تأخذها وزارة التعليم في الاعتبار من أجل توفير التعليم العادل لجميع الماليزيين. وهذه تشمل إجراء الأنشطة التي تعزز التعليم العادل والمتساوي ، ودعم المدارس الوطنية ، وإلغاء المدرسة الوطنية النوعية ، والحفاظ على امتياز الملايو ، ودعم الطلاب الأقل نمواً ، وتطوير نموذج مفهوم الذات للمعلمين.



## APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Nik Muhammad Hanis Bin Nek Rakami has been approved by the following:



---

Nik Ahmad Hisham Ismail  
Supervisor

---

Noor Lide Abu Kassim  
Co-Supervisor

---

Nik Suryani Nik Abdul Rahman  
Internal Examiner

---

Azlina Kosnin  
External Examiner

---

Jazimin Jusoh  
External Examiner

---

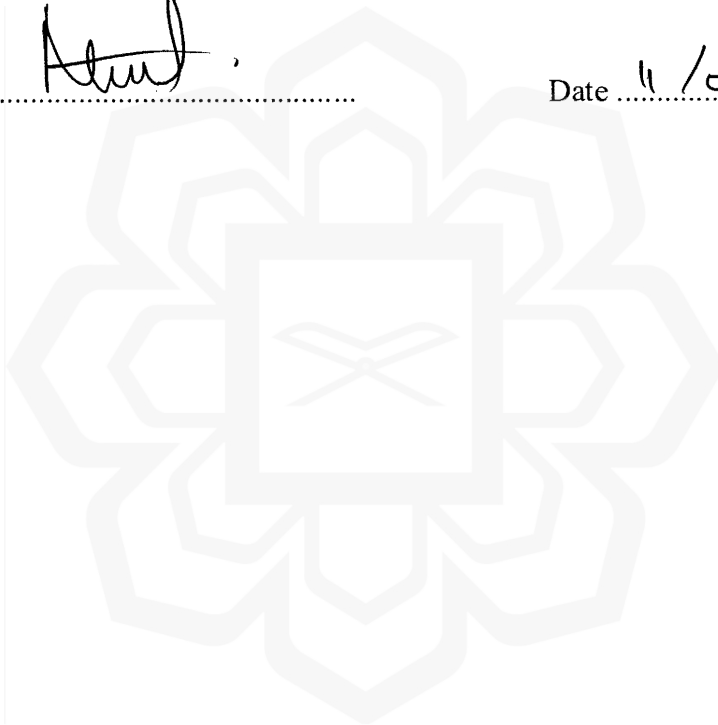
Imad Fakhri Alshaikhli  
Chairman

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Nik Muhammad Hanis Bin Nek Rakami

Signature .....  ..... Date 11/09/2020 .....



**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA**

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION OF  
FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH**

**MALAY TEACHERS' SELF CONCEPT AND ATTITUDE  
TOWARDS EGALITARIAN EDUCATION IN  
MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY**

I declare that the copyright holders of this thesis are jointly owned by the student and IIUM.

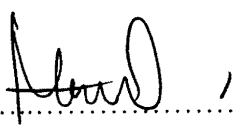
Copyright © 2020 Nik Muhammad Hanis Bin Nek Rakami and International Islamic University Malaysia. All rights reserved.

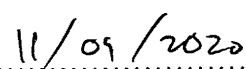
No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may only be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make and transmit copies (print or electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieved system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

By signing this form, I acknowledged that I have read and understand the IIUM Intellectual Property Right and Commercialization policy.

Affirmed by Nik Muhammad Hanis Bin Nek Rakami

  
.....  
Signature

  
.....  
Date

*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful,*

*To my mother, Nik Roihan Binti Nik Nor,*

*My father, Nek Rakami Bin Nek Rakami,*

*My lovely wife, Aisyatul Nadhirah Binti Mohd Sidek*

*And*

*My children, Nik Husna Mursyidah, Nik Ahmad Ihsan,*

*Whose love, companionship and inspiration*

*Made this piece of work possible.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds for giving me strength and opportunity to complete this journey.

This journey would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the following individuals, and I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to each of them.

Sincere appreciation to my wife, Aisyatul Nadhirah Mohd Sidek, my daughter, Nik Husna Mursyidah, and my son, Nik Ahmad Ihsan for encouragement and support.

Special thanks to my parents, Nek Rakami and Nik Roihan, as well as my in laws, Mohd Sidek and Khadijah, and family for encouragement and advice.

Thanks and appreciation to my supervisor and mentor, Prof. Dr. Nik Ahmad Hisham Ismail, for superb expertise in the research process, patience, giving of his time to advise, insightful input, knowledge, unwavering support, encouragement and mentorship. My Co-supervisor, Prof. Dr. Noor Lide Abu Kassim, who always help and support me in finishing this thesis.

It is extremely important to acknowledge Amin Idris and Akademi Magnet Sukses team for encouragement.

Thanks and appreciation to lecturers, Prof. Dr. Ainol Madziah Binti. Zubairi, Prof. Dr. Ismail Sheikh Ahmad, Prof. Dr. Dato' Sidek Baba, Prof. Dr. Dato Mohammad Sahari Nordin, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Burhan Ibrahim, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nik Suryani Nik Abd. Rahman, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Siti Rafiah Abdul Hamid, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Suhailah Hussien, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Arifin Mamat, Dr. Mohamad Ridhuan Abdullah, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Faizah Idrus who shared their knowledge throughout this journey.

To my colleagues, Bro. Wan Mahfodz, Dr. Adam Adessina, Dr. Azlina Mustafa, Azreen Syah Haron, Ian Rahki, Bro. Talal, thank you for assisting me till the end of this thesis. Thanks to *kulliyah's* staffs in Kulliyah of Education, Bro. Lokman, Sis. Fajariah, Bro. Firdaus and not to forget, Bro Mior, who so kindly assist me in this journey.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to International Islamic University Malaysia, the Garden of Knowledge and Virtue, where I spent my 10 years journey from my first degree till PhD in this beloved university with *jazakallahukhairankhatira*

Thanks.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Abstract in Arabic.....	iii
Approval Page.....	v
Declaration.....	vi
Copyright.....	vii
Dedication.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Figures.....	xv
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.3 Purpose of the Study.....	10
1.4 Research Questions.....	11
1.5 Significance of The Study.....	12
1.6 Theoretical Framework.....	14
1.7 Conceptual Framework.....	15
1.8 Operational Definition of Terms.....	17
1.8.1 Egalitarian Education.....	17
1.8.2 Teachers' Attitude towards Egalitarian Education.....	18
1.8.3 Teachers' Self-concept.....	18
1.8.4 National School System.....	18
1.8.5 Environmental Support for Least Advantaged Students.....	19
1.8.6 Malay Privileges.....	19
1.8.7 Education Funding.....	19
1.8.8 Self-efficacy.....	19
1.8.9 Self-esteem.....	20
1.8.10 Motivation.....	20
1.8.11 Self-Representation.....	20
1.9 Delimitation.....	21
1.10 Summary.....	21
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 Multiracial society in Malaysia.....	22
2.2.1 Education in Malaysia.....	24
2.2.2 The Quranic School.....	24
2.2.3 The Colonization Era.....	25
2.2.4 Post Independence.....	29
2.2.5 Post New Economy Policy.....	31
2.3 Egalitarian Education.....	36
2.4 Attitudes.....	47
2.4.1 Teachers' Attitudes.....	51
2.4.2 Malay Privileges.....	55

2.4.3	National School System.....	59
2.4.4	Education Funding .....	61
2.4.5	Environmental Support for Least Advantaged Students .....	65
2.5	Self-Concept.....	68
2.5.1	Self-Efficacy .....	72
2.5.2	Self-Esteem .....	79
2.5.3	Motivation.....	82
2.5.4	Self-Representation .....	83
2.6	Islamic Perspective.....	84
2.6.1	Treatment to Non Muslim.....	84
2.6.2	The General Rights of Non Muslim .....	89
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PILOT STUDY .....</b>		<b>91</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	91
3.2	Research Design.....	91
3.3	Population of the Study .....	92
3.4	Sample Size and Respondent Selection.....	93
3.4.1	Stratified Random Sampling .....	94
3.4.2	Purposive Sampling.....	96
3.4.3	Simple Random Sampling .....	97
3.5	Instrumentation .....	97
3.5.1	Development of Attitudes Towards Egalitarian Education Scale.....	98
3.5.2	Development of Self-Concept Scale .....	106
3.6	Pilot Study.....	108
3.6.1	Focus Group Discussion .....	109
3.6.2	Survey .....	116
3.7	Data Collection Procedures.....	117
3.7.1	Obtaining Permission Letter from the EPRD .....	117
3.7.2	Obtaining Permission Letters from School Principal.....	118
3.8	Training Enumerators .....	118
3.9	Data Analysis Procedures .....	119
3.9.1	Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) .....	119
3.9.2	Rasch Analysis .....	120
3.9.3	Independent Samples t-Tests .....	120
3.9.4	Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA).....	121
3.9.5	Pearson Correlation .....	121
3.10	Summary of Data Analysis Procedure.....	121
3.11	Chapter Summary.....	123
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS .....</b>		<b>124</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	124
4.2	Demographic Profile of Respondents.....	124
4.3	Acceptance Towards Egalitarian Education .....	126
4.4	Descriptive Analysis on Attitudes Towards Egalitarian Education .....	127
4.4.1	Malay Privileges.....	128
4.4.2	Education Funding .....	130
4.4.3	Environmental Support for Least Advantaged Students .....	132
4.4.4	National School System.....	134

4.5	Descriptive Analysis on Self-Concept.....	136
4.5.1	Self Efficacy .....	136
4.5.2	Self-Esteem .....	138
4.5.3	Motivation .....	140
4.5.4	Self-Representation.....	142
4.6	Differences between Male and Female .....	144
4.7	Differences between Urban and Rural School Area .....	147
4.8	Dimensions of Attitudes Towards Egalitarian Education .....	149
4.8.1	Preliminary Analysis.....	149
4.8.2	The Final Factor Structure.....	151
4.9	Dimensions of Self-Concept .....	159
4.10	Construct Validation.....	165
4.10.1	Preliminary research.....	165
4.10.2	The Final Construct Validity analysis .....	170
4.11	Correlation Coefficient .....	177
4.12	Multiple Regression Analysis .....	178
4.13	Summary of the Research Result .....	183
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....</b>		<b>187</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	187
5.2	Summary of Key Findings and Discussions .....	187
5.3	Limitations .....	197
5.4	Implications.....	197
5.4.1	Practical Implication .....	197
5.4.2	Methodological Implication .....	198
5.4.3	Research Implication .....	199
5.5	Recommendations .....	200
5.6	Suggestions for Future Research.....	203
5.7	Conclusion .....	204
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>		<b>206</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: APPLICATION TO COLLECT DATA .....</b>		<b>224</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: APPROVAL LETTER TO COLLECT DATA .....</b>		<b>225</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE .....</b>		<b>226</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: SAMPLE OF INTER RATER FORM FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (PILOT STUDY).....</b>		<b>233</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: SAMPLE OF CONTENT VALIDATION FORM .....</b>		<b>236</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: SAMPLE OF CONTENT VALIDATION FORM.....</b>		<b>237</b>
<b>APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF CONTENT VALIDATION FORM.....</b>		<b>238</b>

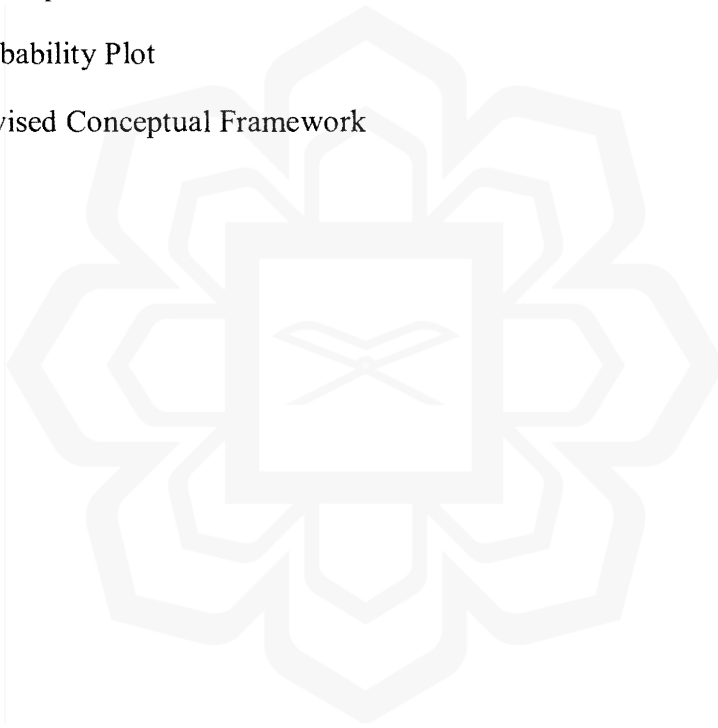
## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
3.1	Distribution of Malay Teachers in Peninsular Malaysia	93
3.2	Distribution of Proportion for each state and federal territory	96
3.3	Score of Content Validity on the form	102
3.4	List of Modified Items	103
3.5	List of Removed Items	104
3.6	Focus Group Discussion	110
3.7	The Participants' Testimonies	113
3.8	Result of Absolute Agreement	115
3.9	Cronbach's alpha for attitudes dimensions	117
3.10	Cronbach's alpha for self-concept dimensions	117
3.11	Summary of the Research Objectives and Data Analyses	122
4.1	Detailed Demographic Profile of Malay Teachers Respondents	125
4.2	Distribution of Responses to the Acceptance towards Egalitarian Education	127
4.3	Distribution of Responses to the Attitudes on Malay Privileges	129
4.4	Distribution of Responses to the Education Funding	131
4.5	Distribution of Responses to the Environmental Support for Least Advantaged Student Items	133
4.6	Distribution of Responses to the Standardized School System Items	135
4.7	Distribution of Responses to the Self-Efficacy Items	137
4.8	Distribution of Responses to the Self-Esteem	139
4.9	Distribution of Responses to the Motivation Items	141
4.10	Distribution of Responses to the Self-Representation Items	143

4.11	Summary of Independent Samples t-Test Results	145
4.12	Summary of Independent Samples t-Test Results	146
4.13	Summary of Independent Samples t-Test Results	147
4.14	Summary of Independent Samples t-Test Results	148
4.15	The Items deleted	151
4.16	Item Communalities	154
4.17	The Four-Factor Structure	157
4.18	Item Communalities	160
4.19	The Four Factor of Self-Concept	164
4.20	Table of PTMEA Correlation	167
4.21	Item Fit Statistic MNSQ	169
4.22	MISFIT Items removed	170
4.23	Table of PTMEA Correlation	171
4.24	Final Item Fit	173
4.25	Person and Item Reliability	174
4.26	Person and Item Separation Index	175
4.27	Principal Component Analysis (PCA)	176
4.28	Correlation Coefficient	177
4.29	Collinearity Statistics	180
4.30	Model Summary	180
4.31	ANOVA Results	181
4.32	Regression Coefficients	181

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
1.1	Social Psychology	14
1.2	Conceptual Framework	16
4.1	Scree Plot	153
4.2	Scree Plot for Self-Concept	162
4.3	Scatterplot	178
4.4	Probability Plot	179
5.1	Revised Conceptual Framework	193



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Malaysia is a multiracial society. It has multi-ethnic groups with a population of about 32 million people (2018), where about 69.1 percent of people are ethnic Malays and indigenous people (Bumiputra), 23 percent Chinese, 6.9 percent Indians and one percent others (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). The country occupies three distinct regions, namely Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Malaysia is also known as “Truly Asia”, because it is the only one place where all colours, flavours, sounds and sights of Asia come together. The Tourism Malaysia (2019) claims that no other country has Asia's three major races, Malay, Chinese, Indian, plus various other ethnic groups in such large numbers like that of Malaysia. Nowhere is there such an exciting diversity of cultures, festivals, traditions and customs, all of which offer myriad experiences. No other county is "Truly Asia" personified as Malaysia (Tourism Malaysia, 2019)

However, its uniqueness has also come with challenges. The Malaysian society has been plagued by the many diversities and gaps in terms of economic, population distributions, as well as in terms of cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions. According to Khalid (2014) in his book, *The Colour of Inequality; Ethnicity, Class, Income and Wealth in Malaysia*, “The distribution of wealth by ethnicity showed that Bumiputra had the lowest wealth compared to the Chinese or the Indians” (p.120). The government must find a solution to close the gap and bring all the races on par, which is to ensure that there is no race left behind and all have equal opportunities to succeed in Malaysia.

The gap must be treated carefully as Malaysia has learned from previous history when an ugly confrontation erupted between the different ethnic groups, three days after the 1969 general election. Among the causes of the tragedy were the National Language Act (*Article 152*), the Special Position of the Malays (*Article 153*) 58 in the Constitution, and the Education Act of 1961. The gap must also be treated well to ensure the country preserves its harmony and stability.

After 50 years since the black day incident of 13<sup>th</sup> May, the current government of Malaysia has decided to strengthen the unity among Malaysians, regardless of race, religion; the Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has also shared his vision and direction for Malaysia, which is to ensure that the Malaysian people reap the fruits of shared prosperity and at the same time, resolve economic problems. The shared prosperity approach, said the prime minister, would see Malaysia continue its path of sustainable development in line with the equitable growth of each value chain, class, community and geography to create a sense of harmony and stability among the people by the year 2030.

“Shared Prosperity aspires for the rakyat to enjoy a fair and better distribution of wealth. Shared Prosperity is developed to ensure that it achieves 3 main objectives, to ensure that the Income and Wealth Gap of the people can be bridged. It means we intend to bridge the gap between wealth, class, region and supply chain to ensure communities who are left behind, are defended and empowered. (Mahathir, 2019, 9<sup>th</sup> May)

Among of the strategies to achieve the Shared Prosperity vision is to strengthen social wellbeing policies and programmes. Tun Dr Mahathir said that,

“The country has the responsibility to care for the less fortunate, marginalised and low-income groups. Policies and programmes for greater social wellbeing should be strengthened based on the principle of meeting the needs of the economy. We do not want to pursue prosperity at the expense of some people who may be left behind. But these efforts do not mean that we will “spoon-feed” the people but rather are aimed at helping them build their own capabilities so that they can lift themselves out of poverty and risky conditions.” (Mahathir, 2019, 9<sup>th</sup> May)

The Shared Prosperity Vision is a new target for Malaysia to become a developed nation and an example to the world after the Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad returned as Prime Minister for a second time, having won the 14<sup>th</sup> National Election in 2018.

Prior to this vision, in 1991, Tun Dr Mahathir had launched “The Way Forward Vision 2020”. In this earlier vision, the government of Malaysia aimed to have an advanced and integrated society by 2020 in support of Malaysia’s development objective. This vision required a serious and dedicated framework to prepare for a knowledge-based society in which by 2020, individuals would not be known by their racial status but merely as Malaysians. According to Mahathir (1991), there cannot be a fully developed Malaysia until the nine central strategic challenges that have confronted Malaysia from the moment of its birth as an independent nation have finally been overcome. The first of these is the challenge of establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny. This must be a nation which is at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony with full and fair partnership, and made up of one ‘Bangsa Malaysia’ with political loyalty and dedication to the nation (Mahathir, 1991).

Malaysia looks to education to not only bolster its status in the world community, but more importantly to strengthen national cohesion among the various ethnic groups, and to narrow the gap that has long plagued the society. The return of

education is highest for the poor or least advantaged, as they would be able to improve their societal and economical status with even a basic education. This shows that education is a key factor in increasing wealth for the poor and a significant factor in social mobility (Khalid, 2014).

Education is the interaction between individuals and other individuals or interactions between individuals and certain social groups (Mason, 1976). The purpose of the interaction is for individual development and subsequent development of society or country. In the context of the above, education is defined as a "socialization" process. Through this process, the education provided, whether planned or not, which is formally or informally regulated, is expected to shape the overall development of individuals and groups.

Education is very important in the formation of society, even more so in a multiracial country. Education should be fairly examined, in order to ensure that the balance of socio-economic status between the races can be balanced, thereby producing a harmonious, shared and united community output.

Under Article 26 of the declaration, it acknowledges that, "Everyone has the right to education. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups...". In fact, equality through education has been the pursuit of many political masters, educational experts, and practitioners since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948.

Nevertheless, how far this egalitarian movement has affected the education in Malaysia and how much attention is given to adopt this declaration in the Malaysian educational policies and planning, is still very much debatable. This is so, especially when it is interpreted together with the privileges given to the ethnic Malays according to the Malaysian constitution, which stipulates in Article 153 that the Yang

di Pertuan Agong has the responsibility of safeguarding the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the states of Sabah and Sarawak.

In addition, Malaysia's education policy is rather liberal, in that it does not force Malaysian people to follow the national education system which uses Malay as its medium of instruction. In 2003, the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in English policy (PPSMI) was introduced by the government. The PPSMI policy has been the subject of debate among academics, politicians and the public alike. However, on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009, the cabinet meeting agreed to abolish the implementation of the PPSMI policy and replaced it with the *Mermatabatkan Bahasa Melayu, Memperkukuh Bahasa Inggeris* (MBMMBI) Policy. Besides Malay and English lessons, which are taught in those particular languages, other subjects such as history, science, and mathematics are taught according to the vernacular system. The result of this policy is a division of schooling along racial lines within the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities. Students are separated at an early age and encounter different modes of learning. The vernacular schools are seen as segregationist, incompatible with a national culture and major obstacles to achieving equality of opportunity. Other nations contradict this approach, in fact, whilst the United States, Australia, Singapore, Indonesia and other Western countries are also multiracial, they still utilize a single language for their education systems (Bin Ali, 2003).

Undoubtedly, teachers are the front liners and key players in the implementation of education. The implementation of education will succeed whenever teachers are committed and fulfil their tasks well. Teachers are among the prominent stakeholders in education. Teachers do not just teach but they create memories in the minds of students. Each of what is taught will shape the personality of a student, giving the student experience and shaping their way of thinking. Teachers are also the

role models who have a profound effect on their students in determining good and bad things in his life. For example, if the teacher succeeds in attracting the attention of his students, the teacher will become their resource and guide.

Teachers are also leaders who influence followers towards positive behavioural outcomes or performance (Drucker, 1997; Maxwell, 1998; Drotter, 2003). Many studies have indicated that teachers have a major influence on student behaviour, whether positive or negative, with integrity or not (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Baker, Terry, Bridger, & Winsor, 1997; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Levin & Nolan, 2007). There are numerous examples of teachers inspiring students to excel and be successful in all aspects of their lives or influencing them towards failure.

According to Oskamp (1991), teachers' attitude is one of the most important factors to ensure better implementation of education; teachers' attitude to teaching can either help the students or hurt them. An attitude is a readiness to act; it involves both thinking and emotion. It is a tendency to respond in a particular way to an object, a person, a group, or even an idea. It is important to understand attitude because certain attitudes are expected to lead to certain behaviours (Baltus, 1988). For each individual, attitude determines what he will see and hear, what he will think and what he will do (Fanzoi, 2008). At the same time, teachers' self-concept is another part that also influences teachers in implementing education.

Recent research on self-concept and attitudes has indicated that these constructs play an important role in affecting individual's behaviour and performance (Åkerlind, 2012; Wang, 2000). For teachers, their self-concept is likely to influence the way they teach and the way they perceive their students' learning abilities. According to Devos, Dupriez and Paquay, (2012), teacher self-concept can be broadly

defined as teachers' self-perception of their own teaching effectiveness. Clearly it is important for teachers to develop a positive teaching self-concept, not only as a major goal in itself, but also as an important mediating factor that can have a positive impact on other desirable outcomes in education (Roche & Marsh, 2000).

Teachers' attitudes and their inner self in facing these situations in Malaysia are the answer to measure the level of implementation of education, whether it will be successfully achieved and contribute to the goals of nationhood, socioeconomic development and the enhancement of national unity and integration, or be otherwise.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Education is an important tool for building nation identity. As a multiracial country, Malaysia aims to change its diverse education system to an egalitarian education system; as the Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said,

At the beginning, we wanted to have just one national school system. However, some people insisted that they be allowed to follow their own culture, the culture of the countries they came from. We allowed that, so that resulted in three main streams – the national school where the medium is Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese schools with Mandarin as the medium and Tamil schools. This meant that different races go to different schools. They don't get to know each other and when they leave school, they go to work with people of other races with whom they have had little or no contact. This stands in the way of national unity. (Mahathir, 2019, 25<sup>th</sup> October)

Prior to this thesis, a mini exploratory study was conducted to explore the current pattern of Malay teachers' perspective on egalitarian education in Malaysia. With that purpose in mind, four focus group discussions were conducted in four different areas, Klang Valley, northern, southern and east coast of peninsular of Malaysia.

As shared in the interviews, the concern of Malay teachers on egalitarian education issues is very interesting. They described that based on their observations, vernacular schools should be abolished to achieve egalitarian education in our country. The vernacular school system leads to a bigger racial gap, and that this difference will continue to be nurtured among Malaysians. They also claimed that the facilities in the vernacular school system are far better than those in national schools, as the vernacular schools seem to get corporate funding more easily (Nik Ahmad Hisham, Faizah Idrus & Alfareez, 2019)

Previous studies have indicated the vernacular school system affected social integration and national unity (Bin Ali, 2003; Nik Ahmad Hisham, 2016). Although the purpose of having vernacular schools is good, which is to cater for specific ethnic and cultural communities in Malaysia, namely the Chinese and Indians who wish to have their respective languages and cultural values promoted in their schools, the result of this policy is a division of schooling along racial lines within Malay, Chinese and Indian communities. Students are separated at an early age and encounter different modes of learning. The lack of a comprehensive and coherent education policy which addresses the real needs of the society, contributes to communal distrust (Bin Ali, 2003).

The Malay teachers also raised the issue of Malay privileges in the focus group discussions. The privileges included the reservation of Malay lands, guaranteed positions for Malays in public services, quotas for places and scholarships for higher education and guaranteed permits and licenses that were required to conduct certain types of trade and business (Young, Bussink & Hassan, 1998). Some of them claimed that the Malay privilege has made the Malay community complacent and uncompetitive. Some of them said that the Malay privilege should be preserved as

there are a lot of Malays who are categorized as underachieving and under the level of B40. They questioned how an egalitarian education will affect Malay privilege (Nik Ahmad Hisham et al., 2019).

The Malay teachers also raised the issue of funding, in which they claimed that the vernacular school system gets funded easily and has a strong educational support from corporate sectors. In fact, they feel that Malays get less educational support from NGOs, GLCs and corporate sectors. According to Khalid (2014) in his book *The Colour of Inequality*, big Chinese companies and Chinese tycoons financed private higher educational institutions to support the excess demand of the non-bumiputera students.

The Malay teachers also expressed their worries on the issue of language. They claimed that although Malaysia has celebrated 62 years of independence, Malaysia is still affected by the 'Divide and Rule' colonial agenda, as most of the vernacular schools apply a different language according to their race, as the medium of instruction (Nik Ahmad Hisham et al., 2019). Although the Education Act of 1996 had endorsed the Malay language as the main medium of instruction, most of these schools continue to teach in their vernacular languages. As a result of this development, Malaysians have not been able to integrate with each other even during elementary school education. The vernacular schools in Malaysia are seen as segregationist, incompatible with a national culture and are the major obstacle to achieving equality of opportunity. Other countries like the United States, Australia, Singapore, Indonesia and other Western countries, whilst still being multi-ethnic, use a contrasting approach which employs a single language for their education systems.

Concerns regarding meritocracy, environmental support for the least advantaged and Malay privileges are among of the issues in preparing equal education