

The Role of Multiculturalism in the Policies of Malaysia to Achieve Unity in Diversity

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Abstract

Malaysia, a multiracial, multi-ethnic and multicultural country comprising different races, ethnic groups, religions, and cultures, has to be aware of the differences in building everyday living whilst preserving some of their origins and identity for its society. Multiculturalism can be understood as thinking and talking about differences by recognising, observing, tolerating, and actively engaging these differences in any society's social characteristics and governance problems. The Canadian Multiculturalism Model has successfully addressed multicultural issues, and Malaysia must have a Multiculturalism Policy Framework. Therefore, it is suggested that Malaysia adopt the Canadian Multiculturalism model as a guide as it is designed to improve the quality of intercultural relations among all cultural communities within the plural society. The methodology of this research approaches three programme components, namely the Cultural, Intercultural, and Communication components while comparing Malaysia's current practices and history in this area. A brief examination of Singapore in matters of Multiculturalism is also debated. A discussion is debated on how Malaysia can achieve these noble components through social, political, communication and cultural policies to achieve 'Unity in Diversity, to bring about a tolerant society that respects and engages all racial communities, major or minor.

Keywords: *Multiculturalism, social justice, unity, diversity, mutual acceptance*

1. Introduction

In the early stages of multiculturalism theory, the focus was on acknowledging minority cultural rights in liberal democratic institutions. Since the current politics of identity has been linked to and impacted by the notion of "recognising" the cultural claims of minority groups linked to and promoted since Charles Taylor's landmark work on Multiculturalism in 1994. Charles Taylor's original enquiry asks whether the structures of liberal democratic democracy allow the recognition of the value of diverse cultural traditions.

Today, Multiculturalism is generally connected with concepts of tolerance, acknowledgement, and acceptance of minorities' rights, even though every society might be recognised by its predominant culture or race [1]. Multicultural citizenship embodies a positive image of an inclusive, diversified society that aids minority groups. It may be

found within Multiculturalism, even if some assumptions are flawed. Therefore, the quest for equality and acceptance of the liberties of ethnic, racial, or religious groups are some of its most fundamental characteristics. In today's setting, Multiculturalism is defined as a political tolerance by the state or a dominant group of all minority cultures defined first and foremost by race, ethnicity, or religion [2]. Despite the widespread perception that Multiculturalism is a failed idea, there has been a continuing scholarly discourse on theoretical concepts of diversity. The discussions are primarily influenced by social changes [3].

Multiculturalism is a political ideology and programme that recognises the danger that liberal democracies pose by pressuring ethnic minorities to assimilate into the mainstream culture. For Multiculturalism to establish, the nation must recognise all the ethnocultural minorities in the country. Such includes their identities and practices, like how the majority groups are treated [4]. Regardless of its various variations, this notion is defended by Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism proponents favour minority groups' rights to protect and/or promote ethnocultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. It is to avoid the moral responsibility or expectation that minority groups will speak the majority's language or adopt its customs, losing their uniqueness. Since the 1970s, when the term 'multiculturalism' was popularised initially as part of a larger human rights movement that emphasised ethnic and racial diversity, it has given birth to an ever-expanding academic "multicultural library."

Multiculturalism calls for a complete approach rather than only tolerating cultural and religious diversity, as is required by the liberal-democratic right to freedom of association, conscience, religion, and speech. It entails promoting and accepting cultural groups underrepresented in a society, whether they face more difficulties surviving or flourishing or are given fewer benefits from government policy [5] comparing to the dominant race. This might be the case in many cases. Support and concessions for Multiculturalism are referred to as "multiculturalism policy." Multiculturalism has concentrated on how governments should promote and accommodate minorities since minority cultures seem more likely to meet these requirements than the more powerful or dominant cultures.

However, in the case of Malaysia, there exists a social contract that was officially consented to before independence day. The social contract is an agreement among the Malays, Chinese, and Indian leaders. Each race represented its political party in a Barisan Nasional coalition, namely UMNO, MCA, and MIC. It is an agreement among a multiracial society and its people, not just a particular leader or elite group. The consensus gained the support of the people. Such is evident in the victory of the coalition party in the first election held in 1955. This in itself required the people to understand the historical fact that the social contract was reached through consensus and deliberation. The non-Bumiputera minorities in the country are reminded that they should be grateful because they are given citizenship status by *jus soli* (Latin for the right to territory), which is citizenship status based on place of birth regardless of race and descent. Based on high tolerance from the original Malay population, other races have been advised to avoid disputing the rights of Malays and Islam [6]. The social contract is vital because it ensures that each community member is protected by a rule or agreement that encourages social engagement [7].

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which was passed in 1988, was the world's first of its sort. The federal government's commitment to establishing and maintaining a diverse and multicultural society was defined in legislation for the first time. Canadian Multiculturalism was presented as a driver for good development in the Act, which confirmed Canada's multicultural policy. By fostering a broad range of participation in the country's key institutions, it urged all government agencies to support and implement multicultural policy. In addition, a series of periodic reviews on Canada's multicultural policy's effectiveness and reach was adopted by the Act, which contributed to its strengthening. The Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship was created because of this initiative, and it focuses on removing obstacles to equal opportunity and integration. This is something that Malaysia can consider, although we may have a different approach based on our Constitution and Rukun Negara [8].

A multicultural nation like Malaysia, which is made up of people from various races, ethnicities, faiths, and cultures, must be cognizant of the distinctions to create a common existence for its people while still holding on to their "original" identities. Differentiation in every community may be recognised, observed, tolerated, and actively engaged in the social traits and governance issues that arise. Some nations have done a better job of settling or at the very least managing ethnic strife than others. Malaysia may be considered a nation that has survived the worst symptoms of ethnic strife by most metrics, but the work needs continuous effort and improvement [9]. Based on the Canadian model of Multiculturalism, Malaysia can adopt it as a policy framework to strengthen intercultural interactions among all cultural groups in Malaysia's pluralistic society. Approaching via three programmed components, namely Cultural, Intercultural, and Communication, the technique is to approach the three programme components simultaneously. Social, political, and cultural policies will be compared to see how Malaysia may attain these noble components via 'Unity in Diversity, tolerant society that values and engages all ethnic groups regardless of their size or prominence.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Multiculturalism in Malaysia

To describe how a society deals with cultural and ethnic variety, we use Multiculturalism. The idea that conserving, recognising, and even nurturing cultural variety benefits society is at the heart of Multiculturalism. It is built on the fundamental premise that people from different cultural backgrounds may live together in harmony. Political philosophers use the word "multiculturalism" to describe how countries devise and execute official laws to ensure that diverse cultures are treated fairly.

Malays, Chinese, and Indians are the three major ethnic groups that makeup Malaysia's multi-ethnic society. When paired with minorities and mixed populations, they make a diverse civilisation. Malaysia's population is expected to reach 32.7 million by 2021, with 106 men for every 100 women. The Bumiputras make up most of the population (69.8%), with Chinese accounting for 22.4 per cent and Indians and others accounting for 6.8%. Given Malaysia's demographic variety, it is difficult to argue that the Canadian Multiculturalism Policy Framework (CMPF) should be adapted to Malaysian society.

According to the CMPF, multicultural society should look at the cultural component, ethnocultural group, and how to preserve and promote shared understanding, respect, and acceptance [10].

Malaysia has witnessed substantial socioeconomic progress since independence, and in a relatively calm setting, it has had exceptional economic and educational progress. Today, we can see an upsurge in inter-ethnic friendships and connections among Malaysians, changing their attitude toward diversity and openness to it. Each ethnic group has its holiday season festivals, such as Hari Raya Aidilfitri, which comes on the day following Ramadan, the holiest month of the Islamic calendar, when Muslims rejoice and celebrate. Deepavali, the festival of lights, symbolises the triumph of light over darkness, and Chinese New Year denotes a good Lunar New Year. Throughout the festival seasons, the “Open House” custom is an excellent example of a ritualised way in which Malaysians commemorate and practise diversity during these holiday seasons. The “Open House” is open to all business colleagues, coworkers, neighbours, and friends, and they will treat their guests with respect by refusing to offer any banned delicacies from other faiths. Learning about other cultures helps communities build trust, tolerance, respect, and understanding.

Between 1996 and 1998, Hari Raya Aidilfitri and Chinese New Year occurred on the same week on occasion. The term ‘Kongsi Raya’ was first used in Malaysia in 1996 by the Subang Parade department store in Subang Jaya [11]. “Gong Xi Fa Cai,” the Chinese New Year greeting, and “Raya,” the Islamic celebration Hari Raya. It also meant “shared festivities,” since kongsi is Malay for “sharing” and Raya is Malay for “festival.” ‘Kongsi Raya,’ primarily observed in Malaysia and Singapore, was also a celebration of ethnic variety and acceptance of cultural and religious differences between Muslims and Chinese people.

However, and unfortunately, due to racial animosity, racist insults, and unsuitable statements by governmental and community leaders, Malaysia’s racial inequality shows a severe rupture of peaceful racial relationships among varied races. Because multicultural tolerance is one of the primary foundations for happy coexistence, internalising intercultural tolerance, especially among the younger generation, is an effective effort to avert conflicts within societies. Because of these cultural distinctions, the media has become a tool for fostering national unity and peace among residents. It is reasonable to state that the media play an essential role in disseminating information and cultural features among people of various nationalities and faiths. Consequently, the media should be prioritised in creating a feeling of belonging and fostering the development of a moral and responsible society.

The national media and social media platforms are highly beneficial to maintaining and developing diversity among Malaysians. Cultures have grown more visible worldwide due to media and technology. Television, the internet, telephones, and satellite communications alter society and expand intercultural and intersocietal connectivity. With the help of the media, it is anticipated that the problem in multicultural society would be resolved, opening the way for the achievement and acceptance of the ‘Keluarga Malaysia’ (Malaysian Family) suggested by Malaysian Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Ismail Sabri on October 23, 2021. [12].

The message of 'Keluarga Malaysia' must be communicated to the general public, and one means to do so is through the media. Many of the taglines creating a feeling of community are written in Malay, but since English is the second language, they may also be found in English. In Malay, programmes such as 'Kita Jaga Kita,' 'Bersama Hentikan Wabak COVID-19,' 'Malaysia Prihatin,' and others are promoted. Given that Malay is the official language and widely used in the media, it is clear that one of the media's most important roles is to educate the public about the meaning of taglines on television, radio, websites, and social media platforms, as "social media applications and websites have become the world's most popular tools for contacting and communicating with other people." The media is expected to play a key role in promoting the 'Keluarga Malaysia' concept and any other campaigns because it has a powerful medium to educate the public on the importance of unity by promoting cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of other ethnics, cultures, and religions. These are positive efforts made by the government in promoting unity in the country.

The objective is to revitalise the country and bring it up to the level of a developed, high-income country. In light of the current situation, it also lays out a strategic direction in which Malaysians of all races and religions will work together to recover the country from COVID-19's harmful effects by uniting all Malaysians under the 'Keluarga Malaysia,' putting aside political differences to achieve stability, and closing economic gaps [13] In general, the CMPF believes that, based on the Federal Constitution and Rukun Negara, Malaysians may accept similarities and differences, strengthening the concept of unity in our multicultural society.

As a result, the four CMPF components of a policy goal, communication, cultural component, and social component, can provide comprehensive input or improvisation in the implementation of existing policies such as the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, the 12th Malaysia Plan, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As Malaysians, we must take an active role in fostering intercultural peace via integrated solutions. Complex issues, such as stopping the spread of illness and preventing ethnic and political strife, cannot be addressed in isolation. Malaysia must concentrate on systems, root causes, and linkages between challenges, rather than just pointing fingers at one another, to build solutions that respond to society's daily reality.

Our experience working across the Goals and Visions has provided us with valuable insight and policy knowledge that will assist us all in meeting the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 objectives by 2030. The Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 is a pledge to make the nation a better place for individuals of all economic levels, races, regions, and supply chains [14]. The vow strives to strengthen political stability, boost national prosperity, and unite the rakyat while respecting ethnic and cultural diversity as the nation's basis. Governments, the private sector, civic society, and individuals must all work together to realise the goal so that future generations inherit a better world.

2.2 The Canadian Multiculturalism Model

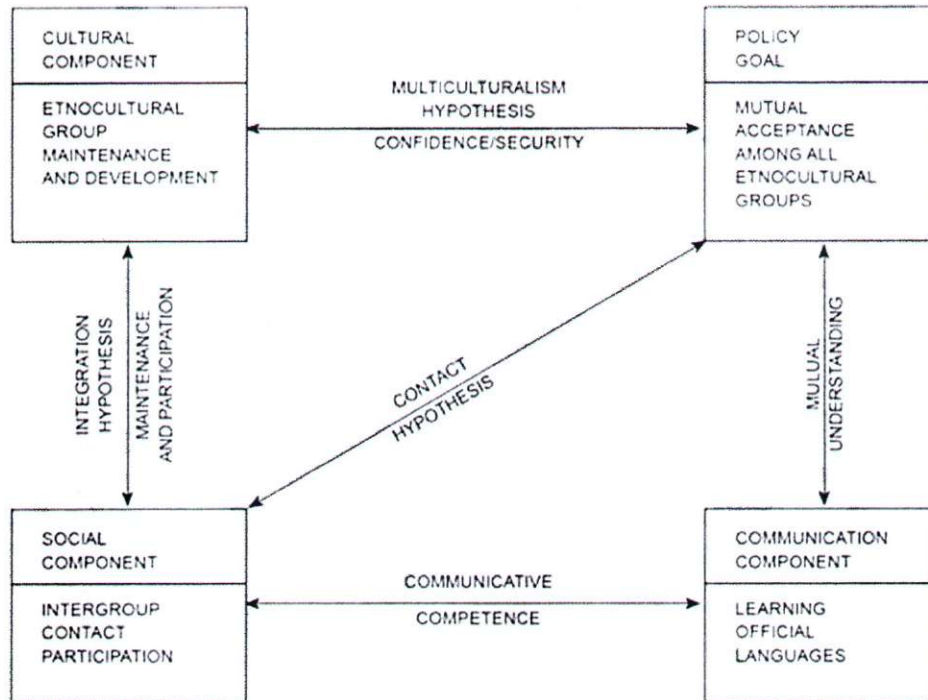


Figure 1: Goal, components and linkages in Canadian multiculturalism policy (revised from Berry, 1984)

Figure 1 depicts these key aspects and connections (from Berry, 1984). The policy's primary purpose is to increase consensual understanding between all ethnocultural groupings (upper right). Three programme components are working toward this aim. The cultural component is in the top left, and it is to be done by providing support for cultural protection and improvement among all ethnocultural groups. The second component (bottom left) is the social (or intercultural) component, which aims to promote cultural exchange by creating opportunities for intergroup interaction and reducing obstacles to full and equal involvement in society's everyday activities. The last element is the intercultural communication component, depicted in the bottom right corner of Figure 1. This reflects the multilingual reality of Canadian culture, encouraging all ethnocultural groups to learn one or both official languages (English and French) to interact with one another and participate in national life [15].

It is critical to note that the Canadian concept of Multiculturalism and multiculturalism policy emphasises two main and equally important emphases. That includes the preservation of heritage cultures and identities (the cultural component) and the full and equitable participation of all ethnocultural groups in society's life (the social or intercultural component). There are connections between these four elements and the four

components themselves. The first, dubbed the multiculturalism hypothesis (top of Figure 1), is defined in the policy statement as the assumption that self-confidence leads to sharing, respect for others, and a decrease in discriminating attitudes. Berry et al. (1977) identified this notion as a psychologically-based assumption that may be tested empirically. The notion that when people and groups are “doubly engaged” (that is, respecting and engaging in both their ancestral cultures and the greater society), they would be more successful in their lives is shown in Figure 1 (left side). A better degree of happiness in both the psychological and social realms will be proof of this achievement. This is the integration theory, according to which participation in, expertise in, and confidence in both cultural groups provides the social capital necessary for intercultural living success. The contact hypothesis is a third connection shown in Figure 1 (diagonal), in which contact and sharing are seen to enhance mutual acceptance under specific conditions, particularly those of status equality and voluntary intercultural engagement.

By balancing these elements, the policy’s main aim of improving intercultural relations in Canada, where all groups and people have a place in their heritage cultural settings and the greater community, should be achievable. Multiculturalism, in this view, is for everyone, not only non-dominant groups. This feature indicates that all organisations and people undergo cultural and psychological transformations. Multiculturalism policies have progressed in other nations.

There is also a common misconception that Multiculturalism merely refers to the presence of many non-dominant cultural communities (“minorities”) in a society (i.e., acknowledging the cultural maintenance component), rather than their equitable participation and incorporation into the larger society (i.e., not accepting the intercultural component). As a result, many people believe that diversity leads to societal division and estrangement. Some in Europe have said “multiculturalism has failed” because of this inadequate vision. However, it has not failed because it has never been attempted; such civilisations have paid little attention to the multicultural component. In culturally varied cultures, improving intercultural connections is a priority.

The multicultural vision is described as achieving two conditions: conserving varied heritage cultures and fostering fair participation for all ethnocultural groups. Some multicultural policies foster these characteristics and legislate for them; others, on the other hand, just promote diversity without ensuring fair participation. According to the multicultural perspective, diversity should be respected as a public benefit, accommodated, and have beneficial implications for people and communities. However, more concrete studies are needed to prove that persistent intercultural encounters lead to favourable outcomes confidently.

It is noted that multicultural policy and practice must emphasise both diversity and inclusive participation. The lack of this equitable component has caused some citizens and politicians to declare that “multiculturalism has failed.” However, it has not failed since it has not been tried. Discrimination, which occurs on three levels: systemic (in society), group (excluding groups of individuals because of their membership), and personal (limiting an individual’s ability to engage as a member of a cultural community), is the most crucial factor in this lack of equitable participation. In previous studies, discrimination was the single most significant factor in mutual animosity (that is, reciprocal negative affect) and inadequate psychological and sociocultural adaptation. To

reduce such harmful results, public legislation supporting inclusion and regulating displays of exclusion (both in words and action) is essential.

Public education on Multiculturalism's dual character (cultural diversity and equal inclusion) must be stressed, allowing all members of society to comprehend and appreciate this complicated vision. The benefits of diversity and equality must be shown in all aspects of life, including education, health, justice, the media, and politics. The drawbacks may also be detected, although studies demonstrate that, for example, while immigration and diversity may have some short-term economic costs, they have enormous long-term economic and cultural benefits. For example, in Canada, public advertising based on the slogan "Multiculturalism Works" promotes the concept that a society in which citizens know a variety of languages, customs, and values has an edge when participating in commerce and diplomacy with the rest of the world. Furthermore, having cultural activities from all regions of the globe, such as film, theatres, music, and literature, is widely accepted to improve people's lives.

The contact hypothesis has been tested several times and shown to be mostly correct [16]. More contact is related to more favourable intercultural interactions and results in most settings (particularly equal status contact). Intercultural interaction is required for Multiculturalism's inclusion component, and good intercultural attitudes and behaviours are typically required for fair inclusion. Positive relations may result from policies and initiatives that stimulate intercultural contacts and discourse, such as everyday activities in the arts, sports, and politics.

The assumption that national identity can and should include variety is inherent in the multicultural perspective at the country level. In certain civilisations ("settler societies"), having a strong ethnic identity and a positive national identity are mutually exclusive. On the other hand, these two identities are adversely associated with certain other civilisations (those fresh to the experience of immigration and diversity). Such a "dual" style of life (using the integration/multicultural method) is often linked to higher levels of personal happiness. Promoting a shared in-group identity [17], a superordinate inclusive identity that accommodates national and ethnic attachments, is one way to attain these favourable effects.

There is evidence that support for Multiculturalism is influenced by the meaning given to the word and the policies that accompany it. Research that investigated the difference between Multiculturalism in principle and Multiculturalism in practice, found that construing Multiculturalism in abstract terms and concerning broad goals reduced the extent to which members of dominant groups viewed diversity as threatening while emphasising the concrete ways in which Multiculturalism can be achieved increased perceptions of threat [18].

Support for Multiculturalism was strong in Berry et al (1977) Canadian national survey. However, it dwindled when it was made more tangible by alluding to the practical repercussions, and it was much lower when the expenses (e.g., prospective tax implications) were included. This complicates the acceptance of variety and lays a larger on governments to weigh Multiculturalism's advantages and costs. Despite the obstacles that arise, multiculturalism policies and initiatives may offer a firm foundation for improving acculturation experiences and improving intercultural connections for everyone in the nation.

2.3 Malaysia and the Cultural Goal

In a multicultural Culture, “ethnicity” and “race” have social and political significance. These phrases, introduced to Malaya by the British during the colonial period, have impacted state politics and ordinary life in Malaysia at the grassroots. Malaysia has been experiencing ethnic conflict since its earlier years of independence. Malaysian policymakers have presented notions and plan to eradicate ethnic conflict from the start of forming a new Malaysia. However, they have not been very successful, despite the country’s racial stability. Malaysian Multiculturalism is still a tumultuous nationalist enterprise. In truth, Multiculturalism’s path to a common national identity is contradictory. It is claimed that visual culture might aid in the reconstruction of a heterogeneous society, arguing that Malaysia’s ambition to forge a national identity would remain a fiction as long as one ethnicity and its values are valued more highly than others. It also looks at whether a shared identity is essential in a heterogeneous society like Malaysia [19].

It is also argued that Malaysia is seen following its colonial power, the United Kingdom, abandoning Multiculturalism in favour of assimilation or ‘unity in variety.’ Although the dominant race has traditionally taken precedence, it has promoted itself as a diverse nation. But as the argument before, this is from the social contract agreement and *jus soli*. The claim is that Malaysia has gone through a protracted negotiation process between the many ethnic communities represented by their respective political parties. This prioritising started when they took over what the British had left behind: the ‘Three Cultures’ concept, which only acknowledged Malay, Chinese, and Indians as ethnic groups. The British managed and treated each ethnicity differently throughout colonial times. People wanted to define themselves as members of ethnic groups that would be recognised by colonial authority [20]. In reality, when prominent leaders of the Malays, Chinese, and Indians assembled to form a unified multicultural society with a shared identity, they resolved to prioritise Malay and Malay values. They picked Islam as the official religion, Malay as the national language, and it was decided that the Malay large percentage would wield political authority. For the first time, the Chinese and Indian peoples were awarded full citizenship and promised freedom of religion and the opportunity to practise their culture in exchange for “giving Malay language and culture primacy in the new state” [20] p.142.

There are studies on Multiculturalism that differentiates the approaches between Malaysia and Singapore. In the two nations, different causal pathways have led to different results. Singapore has taken policy measures stressing “integration and pragmatism” in handling diversity, whilst Malaysia has maintained a “separation and preferential strategy.” According to various recognised measures, Singapore’s multiculturalism results seem to be more effective than Malaysia’s in terms of national competition and interracial tolerance [21].

2.4 Malaysia and the Policy Goal

In principle, Malaysia has its constitution, which we follow as a chart and compass to sail through the various issues [22]. The constitution is drafted to give destiny to citizenship, fundamental liberties, and electoral rights to everyone irrespective of race and religion. The central aspect of the Policy Goals in the Canadian Multiculturalism Policy is that there must be mutual acceptance among all ethnocultural groups. In Malaysia, we have two essential guiding pillars i.e. The Constitution and the National Principle of Rukun Negara. The Rukun Negara's mission is to:

- a. To bring Malaysians closer together.
- b. To guarantee that the rich and varied cultural traditions are treated with respect.
- c. To preserve democracy as a way of life.
- d. To establish equality wherein the nation's riches are shared equally.
- e. To establish a progressive civilisation based on current science and technology.

With the two pillars, every citizen must feel that Malaysia is really their home, and only then we will love it unconditionally and make a sacrifice for the nation. By following the framework and functioning it, the country will be able to live in harmony, be progressive and increase its productivity to achieve the national goal of 'Keluarga Malaysia'. As stated by Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Mohamed Kamal Hassan, if we do not follow the principles in the Constitution and 'Rukun Negara', the agenda of the national integrity may get trampled upon under the boots of ugly ethnoreligious polarisation [23]

2.5 Communication Component

The ability to communicate is essential for mutual understanding. In Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia is the official language and the language of instruction across most educational primary and secondary institutions, with English being offered as a second language. All races, however, may study their home language in either vernacular or private schools. Because the statutes provide for a great deal of leeway and freedom, it comes down to a question of judgement, political bravery, and pedagogical purpose.

Furthermore, all societies tolerate free speech as long as it does not promote hatred and contempt for any race. Only constitutional reasons – such as disturbance of public order or morals – may be used to justify the removal of the constitutional right to free expression. [24]. So one of the best ways is to promote multilingualism in education. Politicians and the education ministry need to consider this viewpoint and accept that fluency in additional languages, mainly English and Mandarin, will not jeopardise our national language's sovereign status but will provide new opportunities for people seeking jobs in our globalised digitalised economy. [25]. There are no constitutional or legal barriers to aggressively promoting multilingual or multilingualism in our educational system at the kindergarten, primary, secondary, or university levels.

3. Discussion

It is a government's moral and philosophical reaction to the nation's growth. It encourages the study of other cultures and a different attitude toward a diverse group of people. [26] p.23 believes that all races and cultures have something valuable to offer

society; hence they should all be treated equally with respect, dignity, and given the opportunity (Reisinger, 2009). As a general phrase, it refers to a society that includes individuals from many ethnic and religious backgrounds.

In matters of the social component of multiculturalism, much attention is paid to how culture affects everything from tourist planning and development to marketing and promotion. Cultural expressions, however, have primarily been defined by their material nature. Tourist behaviour and travel decisions are heavily influenced by country culture, yet this is seldom considered. With this, [26] argued that scholars in this field have been more interested in cross-cultural challenges.

The social components of the multiculturalism policy framework in Malaysia's case may include expanding the tourism industry by promoting ecotourism to introduce all cultures in Malaysia. To achieve Multiculturalism in tourism, multicultural education and the promotion of cultural variety are necessary. Through increased migration (business, tourism, economic, and political), international ownership, and demographic shifts, it will become more critical in the future to expand Multiculturalism. Such is especially after the post-pandemic where the tourism industry has started to pick up again; where the Malaysian economy may earn handsomely through this industry. The homestay experience is also one method of giving exposure to local culture.

In the relationship between cultural exposure (CE), intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence (ICC) in businesses in a diverse work environment found evidence to support the idea that intercultural competence is more than just cultural awareness [27]. A person's intercultural skills may be improved more effectively by studying at a deep level of CE rather than in a broad one. Implications are taken from the study's results so that firms may effectively attract and develop people who are really interculturally oriented and can successfully traverse today's heterogeneous workplaces. [28] and. The homestay experience may be one method of overcoming the stigma of prejudice against other people of a different race, nationality, background, religion and any distinguishing characteristics.

The racial riots in Kuala Lumpur in 1969 were a watershed moment in Malaysian education because they aroused worries about the country's lack of national unity. Following that, under the New Economic Policy (NEP), which began in 1970, education was linked to the socioeconomic reorganisation of Malaysian society. However, [29] argued that the NEP's improvements exacerbated the inevitable divisions in a multiracial society. In the face of globalisation and the necessity for continuing economic growth, conditions got increasingly difficult. Specific policies, such as the Student Integration Plan for Harmony, Vision School and Civic and Citizenship Education, have been implemented to promote racial unity at the school level. They will, however, only have positive results if a concerted effort is made to include inclusion and diversity into the agenda of national education.

We aimed to give an impartial narrative of Malaysian education's historical evolution and its influence on cultural diversity. Malaysia's education system has risen from the wreckage of its colonial origins to become a wholly indigenous, strong, and globally recognised system. It may not yet have reached its optimal condition in meeting various groups' various requirements within society. Nevertheless, it has undoubtedly shown

persistence and pragmatism in creating a country with a mixed population and a fragile demographic, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic combination.

Malaysia, a multilingual and multi-ethnic country, has built an educational system that uses a variety of languages as the medium of teaching to accommodate this diversity. Bahasa Melayu (BM) has been established as the national language to strengthen national unity. Mandarin and on the other hand, is offered in Chinese vernacular schools. Because of the disparity between the two school systems, educationists and non-educationists alike have criticised vernacular schools as barriers to racial unification. On the other hand, Chinese educators believe that preserving their mother language (Mandarin)-based education is critical because of its strong relationship with their Chinese ancestry; Mandarin was found to be the most exemplary representation of the students' ethnicity and national identity. Furthermore, Mandarin is the pupils' preferred language both inside and outside the classroom, implying that there is no feeling of unity among them.

However, according to Malaysian Chinese Language Council head Datuk Eddie Heng Hong Chai, vernacular schools have not impeded national unity. However, he warns that threats from some groups might lead to the demise of the country's unity and peace if they continue. He further added that Chinese schools are now multicultural institutions because of many non-Chinese pupils. The Education Act and the Constitution protect the country's vernacular schools, including those in the Chinese and Tamil communities. [30]. On another note, Malaysian former Prime Minister Tun Mahathir Mohammed said that Chinese schools are not beneficial to national unity. However, the government must be cognizant of the emotions of communities while reacting to such concerns [31].

Malaysia and Singapore are notable instances of multicultural cultures. However, their acculturation theories are distinct. Both nations have three major ethnic groupings, although their proportions are radically opposed. Malaysia's population is made up of 50.4 per cent Malays, 23.7 per cent Chinese, 11 per cent indigenous peoples, 7.1 per cent Indians, and 7.8 per cent of people of other ethnicities. In Singapore, 74.1 per cent of the population is Chinese, 13.4% is Malay, 9.2% is Indian, and 3.3 per cent is from other ethnicities. Due to its colonialism background, Malaysia has made "ethnicity" a significant policy problem, which it still is. Stephan and Stephan's (2000) model of integrated threat theory, the dominance of community politics. The city-state of Singapore does not engage in affirmative action and instead aims to regulate cultural identities via a cosmopolitan mindset (0070 and 0075). Multiculturalism is used in this article to refer to the two nations' official strategies for managing their multiple societies. While Malaysia's multiculturalism model is based on policies put in place to manage inter-group tensions, mitigate conflict, and seek social justice between ethnic groups as a result of the country's history, Singapore's multiculturalism model is steered by practical realism and market underpinnings linked with the demands of a global city. Both models will confront problems in the subsequent years as they adjust to seismic alterations in the geo-economic environments [32].

The idea behind Malaysia's vernacular schools was to provide a public venue for the growth and development of the vernacular language and culture of Malaysia's ethnic minorities, allowing for cultural variety and acceptance. When it comes to commercial and social interactions, English serves as a common language for Malaysians, whereas Malay serves as the official language. Vernacular schools were feared to harm minority languages and cultures if they were not established. If we compare it with Singapore,

there are no so-called vernacular schools but the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools. Numerous issues are exacerbated when pupils of different races are subjected to unequal treatment in the educational settings of SAP, such as those that are dominated by the more privileged race. Possible remedies include entirely eliminating the SAP schools and promoting the study of other languages and cultures in schools [33].

The argument is that in Singapore; instead, the country's curriculum includes English-medium schools that have integrated Chinese into their curriculum despite their designation as "English-only" institutions. Because of this, the schools are nearly usually attended by Chinese students. To attend the SAP schools, you don't have to require Chinese ancestry but the Malay population in Singapore is focused toward studying their mother tongue language and so ensures that SAP schools stay a Chinese-learning environment via policy and ethnicity. This is therefore an indirect form and function of the vernacular school.

During the reign of Lee Kuan Yew, the late Prime Minister shut down all Malay vernacular schools under his government because he firmly believed that these institutions did not nurture nationalist and ethnic identity among the Malays and contributed to societal divisions. Malaysians were blamed for foreign influences since they were considered as disloyal. Furthermore, the extremist Islamic ideologies taught in these madrasah institutions may cause Singapore Malays to abandon secularism and become more receptive to Lee Kuan Yew's radical Islamic philosophy.

Such Act led to widespread dissatisfaction among the Malays and emotions of racism and religious prejudice directed against the Malays. Many Madrasahs were forced to shut down due to a lack of government support, and the poorest of Singapore's ethnicities, the Malays, were most hard hit. Malay nationalists were visibly furious with Lee Kuan Yew. As Singapore was already in a precarious position due to its recent independence from Malaysia, a lack of Malay patriotism was glaring. In the late 1990s, the government permitted madrasahs to function again, but only if the national curriculum and Singapore's educational curriculum were also taught in schools, along with religious and Arabic language instruction. For a long time, Singaporeans have doubted the devotion of the country's Malays, but this is no longer the case. Even while the Singaporean government's approach to Malay policy has never been seamless, it has always been agile. The Malays in Singapore, who have always felt their race and religion were a problem in Singapore, have always kept quiet about the displeasure they had feel in general.

When it comes to state assumptions and predispositions about ethnicity, the belief in the importance and durability of the "ethnic element" is the first and most significant determinant. [34] argued that the Singapore government is unrepentant about the fact that ethnoreligious ties are here to remain. Thus, it would be imprudent to think that Singapore could develop into a country without government interference. Instructively, the government considers that Singapore Malays have the highest connection to their ethnoreligious principles, which might hamper nation-building initiatives. To illustrate its worries, the government has often cited the two race riots of 1950 and 1964. A second presupposition, which is related to the conviction in ethnicity's intractable character as a "given" in multiracial Singapore, is that ethnic stability can only be attained if the current ethnic proportionality among the three groups is rigorously preserved. In 2000, out of a total population of around 4 million, the Chinese made up 76.8% of the population,

Malay's 13.9 percent, and Indians 7.9%. There was a small shift in 2010, with the Malays accounting for 13.4% and Indians accounting for 9.7%.

When compared to the Canadian Multiculturalism, [35], policymakers of developed economies recognise the significance and relevance of bilingualism in the operation of society. They do all necessary to build a unified bilingual education system and procedures for their people. Bilingual education has a long history in Canada, a cosmopolitan nation with two official languages. It also has extensive expertise with its deployment at the turn of the twenty-first century. The Canadian government wants to make it possible for Canadians to learn both official languages and tongues of ethnic minorities and immigrants and indigenous languages. Bilingual education development is one of the goals of state educational policy, according to the pan-Canadian plan "Learn Canada2020." When it comes to Malaysia, adopting the Canadian multiculturalism policy and reasoning may be the best method to conclude what is suitable for Malaysia. However, this statement is up for debate as specific policies protect the rights of the Malays, as mentioned in the previous discussion regarding the social contract and *jus soli*.

4. Conclusion

We cannot run away from the definition of Multiculturalism as stated in the Encyclopedia Britannica that Multiculturalism is both a response to cultural pluralism in modern democracies and a way of compensating cultural groups for post exclusion, discrimination and oppression. However, it is now to be realised that Multiculturalism not only requires tolerance of others but it also necessitates finding ways of cooperation and cultural engagement between communities and individuals at all levels of society. Malaysia being a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, should realise the importance of mutual acceptance, mutual respect for any differences and the requirement for common ground to achieve unity and harmony. In planting and nurturing unity and harmony, we all have a role to play by recognising our diversity as assets. Our cultural mosaic should consist of all West and East Malaysia races to bring about a lasting Malaysian cultural identity.

5. References

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