
The Process of National Integration in the Educational Setting

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Kajian ini diusahakan atas andaian bahawa sistem pendidikan di negara memainkan peranan memupuk perpaduan di kalangan murid-murid sekolah. Berpegang kepada definisi perpaduan sebagai satu usaha yang diambil secara sedar untuk mewujudkan masyarakat yang bersatu padu yang mempunyai identiti kebangsaan berasaskan budaya nasional (Melayu), maka kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui sejauh manakah pelaksanaan dasar sistem pendidikan kebangsaan berjaya membentuk sikap yang positif terhadap perpaduan kebangsaan di kalangan murid-murid sekolah menengah di Malaysia. Empat soalan besar yang menyentuh tentang pelaksanaan dan penghayatan murid-murid mengenai dasar pendidikan kebangsaan iaitu identiti nasional, Bahasa Malaysia, kurikulum kebangsaan dan aktiviti ko-kurikulum di sekolah telah ditimbulkan.

Pandangan diperolehi daripada 10,686 orang murid dalam tingkatan tiga, lima dan enam atas. Mereka daripada 6 negeri di Semenanjung, Sabah dan Sarawak.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa dari segi identiti nasional, murid-murid bersetuju tentang perlu dan pentingnya identiti nasional. Tetapi mereka tidak sebulat suara bersetuju bahawa satu budaya dianggap sebagai asas budaya kebangsaan. Faktor etnik mempengaruhi pandangan mereka, namun semakin tinggi tahap persekolahan murid maka semakin positif nampaknya mereka terhadap dasar dan rasional budaya pribumi dijadikan asas identiti kebangsaan dan kebudayaan kebangsaan.

Secara keseluruhan murid-murid sekolah menerima hakikat bahawa Bahasa Malaysia adalah bahasa yang menyatupadukan semua kaum di negara ini. Namun dari segi amalan, kumpulan lain daripada bumiputera masih belum menghayati dan mengamalkan sepenuhnya Bahasa Malaysia sebagai bahasa perhubungan. Mereka belum menunjukkan bahawa mereka memilih dan suka membaca dalam Bahasa Malaysia. Mereka lebih suka menggunakan gabungan Bahasa Malaysia dengan Bahasa Cina atau Bahasa Inggeris.

Rata-rata murid-murid menerima pelaksanaan kurikulum. Mereka bersetuju bahawa beberapa mata pelajaran mempengaruhi pemahaman dan sikap terhadap perpaduan, sementara mata pelajaran yang lain dianggap berfungsi lebih untuk meluaskan pengetahuan sahaja. Satu ciri yang ketara mengenai pelaksanaan ko-kurikulum di sekolah ialah sungguhpun murid-murid menunjukkan minat terhadap aktiviti ko-kurikulum, penglibatan mereka adalah terhad. Pelajar menunjukkan kecenderungan memilih sukan dan pergerakan kumpulan yang berunsurkan kaum.

Introduction

One of the major problems facing Malaysia is the process of integrating its multi ethnic populace into having a common national identity and outlook and a common value system. Towards achieving this the Malaysian Government has to date adopted several policies and strategies, notable among which were The Rukun Negara, The New Economic Policy (NEP) and the National Education Policy.

Of these however, education is regarded as the forefront of nation building in view of the fact that schools inculcate the child with values and facts which are supportive of the national ideology. The Razak Education Report of 1956, which became the bedrock of the present education system outlined two main strategies that is, a uniform school system for all and a curriculum with common content syllabuses. The Cabinet Committee Report in 1979 reviewed the objectives and effectiveness of the education system until the end of the 70's and made several notable changes. The Cabinet Report stressed that the curriculum should be able to produce citizens who are developed all-round physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally and who uphold the national ideology or the Rukun Negara. Further, the curriculum should foster in the individual, awareness, characteristics and values of a Malaysian who is willing to set aside racial sentiments, heritage and parochial differences.

On the basis of such policy guidelines it is difficult to deny the importance placed on the national education system for integration. The school system in particular has been given the challenging task more so than any other institutions in the country. This study was undertaken to ascertain whether integration as envisaged by the various Reports and Policies are actually realised after more than 30 years of implementation, what are the strengths and weaknesses and, what does the future hold.

Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this research is to examine the role of the education system in motivating integration among children of different ethnic groups currently studying in Malaysian secondary schools and the extent these schools have succeeded in the process of inculcating positive values in this regard.

In more specific terms, the study aims to answer the major questions i.e. to what extent do secondary school pupils indicate possession of national integration qualities and how different and varied are the compositions? This major question is broken down to include the following sub-questions:

- (i) To what extent are students in Malaysian schools today knowledgeable of the national culture, the national identity, basic aspects of the constitutions, the official religion, aspects of Malaysian culture which cover the fine arts, the folklores, traditional games and the likes.
- (ii) Do students practise or express aspects of behaviour which reflect indications of acceptance of the national language both in and out of schools?
- iii) What are students' perception of the various strategies employed to achieve integration as found in the school curriculum.
- (iv) Do students' participation in co-curricular activities have any effect on their integration? and
- (v) Was there any relationship between certain variables namely gender, race, and level of schooling in the different aspects which indicate the criteria of national integration; and in the practices which indicate characteristics of being integrated into the national culture?

Conceptual Framework

In this research, the term national integration is defined in the setting of a multi-ethnic society, meaning a nation with cleavages of race, language, religions, customs and other primordial attachments. History has shown that in Malaysia the post-colonial period was the beginning of inter ethnic dissatisfactions. Should this pluralistic nature of Malaysian society be allowed to proceed unarrested, it would naturally hamper the development of the country politically, economically and socially. So various policies were drawn and strategies implemented to bring about national integration.

Local anthropologists, sociologists, politicians and others have defined the term national integration differently. For instance, one definition attempts to view integration encompassing several aspects such as cultural integration, normative integration, functional integration and communication integration. Another sees the process the form of "acculturation and assimilation" meaning "cultural changes in the direction of another ethnic group in contact such that an ethnic group becomes more similar to the other group" or in the case of assimilation, the "adoption of ethnic identity of another ethnic group".

Politicians also focus on the definition of national integration as a process. Khalil Yaacob considered it as "the process of bringing together culturally and socially discreet groups into a single unit and the establishment of a national identity" implying that it is a process of creating a sense of territorial nationality which would overshadow or eliminate subordinate parochial loyalties. Musa Hitam (1982) defined it as an assimilation process, that integration is aimed at amalgamation of the best characteristics of the various races which could eventually develop into a truly Malaysian characteristic. He perceived that although creating national identity out of diversities was quite difficult it is not impossible.

On the basis of the above definitions, it can be concluded therefore that integration is a dynamic process and is planned towards a positive goal of bringing together of the communities towards a closer approximation of a nation with loyalties more to the nation than their own communal groups.

This study defines the term national integration to mean a conscious effort to create a united society with a national identity based on the national culture. The integration process is seen to take place in 4 stages following that suggested by Ali Marzuis' (1969) stages of pluralism and national integration.

The first is the bare co-existence stage. This was the situation before the second world war where relationships were bare co-existence which implies that the degree of integration was minimal.

The second stage is the relationship of contact. This reflects the period after the second world war and immediately after independence. There was cooperation and compromise in politics, and in some business dealings but there was also periodic tensions among the various races.

The third stage is the relationship of compromise and represents the present situation. Relationships among communal groups are still in the form of competition as well as peaceful reconciliation.

The fourth stage is the stage of amalgamation or acculturation. This is yet to come and will involve the merging of identities where national interest takes priority over communal interests. Tensions or polarisations may still continue though no longer a tension between total identities.

Apart from national integration, definition of the other major concepts used in the study are given below.

Conscious effort refers to the policies enforced by the government to bring about an integrated society. For example; the New Economic Policy, the National Education Policy, Rukun Negara, the various education acts and others.

National identity refers characteristics which are based on Malay identity and the national culture. It implies that identity and culture are based on the traditional characteristics of the indigenous people.

National culture, the culture of the indigenous people as defined by the Malaysian constitution.

Research Methodology

The research is based on the survey technique using a specially formulated questionnaire to seek opinions or views of school students as respondents. Items were developed through constructs designed as devices for the measure of the major questions of research. These constructs were carefully chosen to portray suitable operational concepts in line with the definitions used.

The constructs revolve around the following four sub-questions:

1. Knowledge and acceptance of the national identity,
2. Acceptance and usage of the National Language,
3. Contributory functions of the curriculum,
4. Contributory functions of co-curricular activities.

For each sub-question, indicators or descriptors were identified to measure the degree of integratives shown through the responses. There were all together 64 questions most of which required close-ended responses.

Sample and Data Collection

The population of the study consisted of secondary school children. As the target number was large, a purposive sampling technique was adopted where students in forms 3, 5 and Upper 6 in six states representing various zones were shortlisted. The states were Kelantan, Penang, Johor, Federal Territory, Sabah and Sarawak. The students were those in examination classes and were considered a stable group in the sense that they had experienced a more continuous term of study and would have settled down in their various stream of academic pursuit. Questionnaires were distributed to sample of classes in the above forms in the six states mentioned. A total of 10,686 students returned the schedules for analysis.

The data was analysed descriptively and through inferential analysis. Frequency counts were made to indicate the overall picture of the responses, while simple cross-tabulation was used to show relationships between the value of two variables.

Sample Descriptions

A total of 10,686 school children returned the questionnaire. A breakdown of the sample of the research as shown in Table 1. Classification by level of schooling shows that (46%) were third formers, (52%) fifth formers and 182 almost (2%) were six formers. 5585 (52%) were male students and 5011 (47%) females.

Table 1

Characteristics of the Sample
By Level, Subjects and Race

Characteristics	No	% Total
Level		
Forms 3	4919	46
Forms 5	5585	52
Forms 6	182	2
Sex		
Male	5582	52
Female	5011	47
Subjects		
Science	2132	20
Arts	3048	29
Commerce	2567	24
Home Science	487	5
Vocational	569	5
Agriculture	374	4
Matriculation	998	9
Others	178	1
Race		
Malays	4492	42
Chinese	3383	32
Indians	617	6
Sabahans	1107	10
Sarawakians	855	8
Others	232	2

In terms of streams or subject major it was found that the population was almost equally distributed among the science, the arts, and the commerce streams and they comprised about 70% of the sample.

By race, the Bumiputeras consisting of Malays, Sarawakians and Sabahans made up 60% of the sample, the Chinese 32% and the Indians 6%; portraying the present patterns of racial distribution of the country.

Findings and Discussion

Some important findings of the study are given below and this is discussed in the order of the major questions raised.

1. National Identity

In order to examine students' acceptance and knowledge of the national identity, students were asked questions relating to aspects of the national identity, national culture and local history. Responses which show high agreement with the statements raised are taken to indicate possession of characteristics of the national identity.

Table 3

Views on Need for One Culture
For National Identity

Gender/Level/Race	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
Male	37.1	31.3	31.7
Female	36.8	37.7	25.6
Forms 3	33.6	35.0	31.1
Forms 5	39.7	33.9	26.4
Forms 6	53.9	29.8	16.2
Malays	46.3	34.3	19.4
Chinese	27.4	34.4	38.3
Indians	32.6	28.4	39.1
Sarawakians	33.1	34.3	32.6
Others	32.8	35.0	32.2
Sabahans	34.1	37.5	24.4

Table 4

Views on Bahasa Malaysia as a
Language for Integration

Gender/Level/Race	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
Male	92.1	3.9	4.0
Female	92.7	4.1	3.2
Forms 3	91.0	4.9	4.1
Forms 5	93.8	3.1	3.2
Forms 6	7.6	16.1	7.2
Malays	96.5	1.2	2.3
Chinese	85.1	8.9	6.3
Indians	89.3	5.5	5.2
Sabahans	73.6	15.1	11.3
Sarawakians	96.1	1.6	2.2
Others	-	-	-

Table 5

Views on Yang Di Pertua Agong
as Symbol of Democracy

Gender/Level/Race	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
Male	95.0	7.0	8.0
Female	88.4	5.7	5.9
Forms 3	86.7	5.6	7.7
Forms 5	86.6	7.2	6.1
Forms 6	n.a	n.a	n.a
Malays	90.0	5.3	4.7
Chinese	80.7	9.0	10.3
Indians	81.5	9.1	9.4
Sabahans	91.3	2.6	6.1
Sarawakians	90.4	4.6	5.0
Others	82.2	10.0	7.8

In general, the responses seem to show that;

- i) The students appeared to agree with three aspects pertaining to national identity. Over 80% agreed that it is important for the nation to have her own national identity, that Bahasa Malaysia be accepted as the National Language and as a language for integration and that the Yang Di Pertuan Agong ought to be the symbol of Parliamentary Democracy.
- ii) The students, however, differed in their opinion regarding the need for a single culture as the basis for the nation's identity. Seventy-three percent of the Chinese and sixty-three percent of the Indians disagreed or were uncertain about this. However almost half of the Malays agreed to the concept of a single culture.
- iii) The students were also divided in their opinions regarding the adoption of Malay Culture as the basis of the National culture. This is true among the majority of the Chinese and Indian students.

The above results appeared so maybe because the students were greatly influenced by their own background, particularly ethnicity. Their homes seemed to have a stronger influence on their attitudes than the schools attended. In this respect, one can safely conclude that the schools were perhaps ineffective in bringing about national integration.

2. Knowledge on National History

The willingness of the students to accept, identify and be proud of the heroes of the nation before independence, were agreed upon by the Research committee as indicators or signs indicating possessing characteristics of national identity. Students were asked to identify and list not more than five main figures of the nation, before independence, whom they considered to be national heroes. It was also agreed by the Research Committee that the best form of identification refers to those responses that gave between 3 - 5 Malay names as their heroes. Students responses are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Identification of National Heroes

Types of Heroes					
Gender/Level/Race	3 - 5 Malay	1 - 2 Malay	Mixed Group	Chinese	Chinese plus Malay
Male	50.5	10.0	8.7	0.7	30.0
Female	55.5	11.5	6.3	0.4	26.1
Forms 3	51.9	11.1	9.5	0.8	26.6
Forms 5	55.9	11.3	5.6	0.4	26.8
Forms 6	46.2	18.4	7.7	0.4	37.3
Malays	56.0	8.7	6.6	0.0	28.6
Chinese	70.6	8.7	3.4	0.1	17.2
Indians	74.3	10.7	3.7	0.1	11.2
Sabahans	19.6	11.5	10.1	1.7	57.1
Sarawakians	31.6	13.6	31.1	0.2	23.5

Data on the identification of heroes reveal that the Bumiputra students i.e. the Sabah Bumiputra, the Sarawak bumiputra, and the Malaya, showed the highest percentage in their ability to name between 3 - 5 Malay heroes, compared to the other main ethnic groups.

Generally, students in the rural schools were able to name between 3 - 5 Malay heroes as compared to their counterparts in the urban schools, who could only name between 1 - 2 Malay heroes and, at best, the names of mixed Malay and Chinese heroes. Students in higher forms were better able to name mixed Chinese and Malay heroes.

The results show that the Indian and Chinese students find it difficult to identify with the Malay heroes. Only the Bumiputra students could identify the Malay figures as warriors or heroes of our country. This has to do with the education received by the students in schools and at home.

The result which indicates that the higher the students' level of education, the lower is their ability to name between 3 - 5 Malay names is quite worrying. One would expect that the higher the level of schooling the more mature one will be and therefore will be able to accept facts of situations better. But in this case, as they get older the students feel it more necessary to name heroes of their own ethnic origin although these people may not be heroes in the national sense. It is as though they feel the greater need to identify with those of their own ethnic origin out of allegiance rather than on national history. This again points

Table 8
Language of Communication in Schools

Gender/Level Race	Languages Used				
	Bahasa	Chinese	Tamil	Bahasa & English	Bahasa & Ethnic Language
Male	33.1	5.1	0.3	27.9	14.6
Female	30.7	5.2	0.3	33.3	14.6
Forms 3	33.1	5.5	0.3	29.2	17.6
Forms 5	31.4	4.5	0.3	31.8	11.6
Forms 6	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Malays	48.8	0.2	0.1	44.4	1.0
Chinese	2.2	15.4	0.6	9.0	41.0
Indians	4.5	1.5	1.0	37.4	1.5
Sabahans	60.3	0.2	-	27.4	6.1
Sarawakians	46.7	0.5	0.2	39.3	2.9

On the question of whether the students agreed that Bahasa Malaysia is a factor that unifies all ethnic groups, the findings are encouraging. A high percentage of respondents reported in agreement except the Sabahans, where about a quarter still felt uncertain or disagreed. Other data on the Sabahans, however did not seem to support the pattern, for they were among the highest groups which indicated enjoyment in reading Bahasa Malaysia books and magazines and communicating in Bahasa Malaysia in schools.

This irregularity in opinion is probably due to fact that most of the Sabah respondents reside in the rural areas and therefore use their own dialect when speaking among themselves. Furthermore, they may not have understood the significance of the questions due to the lack of orientation and emphasis. It is recommended therefore that in the rural areas especially, schools should re-emphasize the significance of Bahasa Malaysia as a unifying factor for all ethnic groups.

On the question whether students enjoyed reading Bahasa Malaysia books, magazines and newspapers, all the Bumiputera groups reported high enjoyment. The Indians and the Chinese groups consistently reported lower enjoyment. To examine the pattern of responses further, it is quite understandable that the Bumiputera groups indicated high enjoyment because their alternative choice of reading materials is somewhat limited. On the other hand, the Chinese and the Indian had the advantage of being bilingual and for many, even trilingual. More important, Chinese books were readily available since many were imported from other Chinese speaking countries. There is also the factor that books, magazines and newspapers in the mother tongue serve as cultural interest for the non-bumiputras which might not be available in the reading materials published in Bahasa Malaysia.

The Indians enjoyed reading books in Bahasa Malaysia more than the Chinese. The pattern is consistently seen in their preference for reading Bahasa magazines and newspapers, although not as high as the Bumiputra groups. However, while the Chinese found their alternatives in reading books and newspapers in the Chinese language, the Indians found their alternatives in the English language.

Finally, on the question regarding what language the respondents usually use when communicating with their friends in school, the findings are more revealing (see Table 8). One would expect with the education policy emphasizing on the use of the National Language in schools, all the ethnic groups would indicate high percentages of usage of Bahasa Malaysia. As it turned out, only the three Bumiputra groups indicated higher percentage than the overall score.

The question that comes to mind is, why do the Chinese and Indian groups show very low percentages? A possible reason would be in the manner the respondents chose their circle of friends. It is highly likely that each ethnic individual chooses friends from members of his or her own ethnic group. Thus, it is easier and much more comfortable to communicate in one's own language. It is only when one has to communicate with individuals who are members from another ethnic group that one uses other common languages, that is Malay or English. This would imply that a school with pupils who are ethnically homogeneous would find their pupils using the language of that particularly race, although the medium of instruction in the classroom is Bahasa Malaysia.

The Chinese and Indian students nevertheless showed high percentages in using a combination of Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese, and a combination of Bahasa Malaysia and English, respectively. This means that they did not entirely abandon the use of Bahasa Malaysia when communicating with friends.

We can conclude therefore that the data indicate that the process of integration is somewhat taking place in the school setting. However, the process is rather slow and tottering. After thirty years of independence, Bahasa Malaysia is still not accorded its rightful place. From the patterns of responses given, it is possible to form an impression that the Non-Bumiputras used the language as a convenience, rather than a sincere desire to make it work as a sovereign language of the nation.

4. Contributions of the School Curriculum

In order to examine the contributory functions of the school curriculum, students were asked to indicate:

- i) subjects taught which were considered nationally integrative,
- ii) their commitment in trying to master those subjects which were considered helpful to national integration. Commitment is seen through how they perceived their achievement in the school examinations.
- iii) their belief on how these subjects could be taught to bring about integration.

Data of students responses are shown in Table 9, 10 and 11. Some of the main findings are as follows:

Most students felt that Bahasa Malaysia, History, Geography and Civics and to a lesser extent English Language were useful in inculcating a deeper understanding of one's country. Subjects like Physical Education, Art, Literature, General Paper, General Science and Mathematics were not or were of little help. In terms of variable differences as shown in the case of student's responses to subjects like Bahasa Malaysia, Geography and Mathematics, Chinese students appeared to be more cautious in their responses and therefore consistently produced lower responses than the other groups.

Table 9

Contribution* of Subjects Towards
National Integration

Subjects	Helpful	Little Help	Not Helpful
Bahasa Malaysia	85.8	8.9	5.1
English Language	51.9	30.0	18.1
History	86.0	7.4	6.7
Geography	87.5	7.1	5.5
Civics	91.5	14.5	14.0
Physical Education	24.3	25.5	50.1
Mathematics	28.6	17.9	53.5
Literature	35.8	19.6	44.7
General Paper	41.9	13.3	44.7
General Science	39.9	24.4	37.7
Art	24.1	30.3	45.6

* in terms of helpfulness towards providing understanding of one's country

Table 10

Contribution of Selected Subjects to National Integration

Gender/ Level/ Race	Bahasa Malaysia			Mathematics			Geography		
	Help- ful	Little Help	Not Help- ful	Help- ful	Little Help	Not Help- ful	Help- ful	Little Help	Not Help- ful
Male	85.3	9.2	5.6	27.5	17.5	55.1	86.7	7.7	5.7
Female	86.6	8.7	4.6	29.9	18.4	51.7	88.3	6.5	5.1
Forms 3	87.5	8.2	4.4	22.5	19.6	57.9	87.1	7.4	5.5
Forms 5	84.3	9.7	6.0	35.3	15.9	48.9	88.3	6.7	5.1
Malays	88.8	6.8	4.3	28.7	20.5	50.8	85.3	5.9	4.9
Chinese	80.4	13.3	6.2	30.5	16.3	53.2	84.7	9.6	5.6
Indians	82.0	10.4	7.4	24.8	16.0	59.1	86.9	6.5	6.6
Sabahans	90.0	4.4	5.5	24.9	15.1	60.0	89.3	4.2	6.5
Sarawakians	89.8	8.0	2.3	29.0	16.7	54.3	86.4	8.3	5.2

Table 11

Perceived Achievement in Selected Subjects

Gender/ Level/ Race	Bahasa Malaysia			History			Geography		
	High	Low	Not Avai- able	High	Low	Not Avai- able	High	Low	Not Avai- able
Male	74.4	20.7	4.8	52.4	26.1	21.5	62.0	26.0	12.0
Female	75.1	20.6	4.2	53.5	29.2	17.3	58.9	29.6	11.5
Forms 3	70.8	23.3	5.9	48.4	29.4	32.1	49.9	32.8	17.4
Forms 5	79.5	17.9	2.7	69.3	25.3	5.3	72.6	22.2	5.1
Malays	89.7	8.5	1.8	59.2	21.1	19.3	64.3	24.3	11.4
Chinese	47.0	43.2	9.8	39.4	35.2	25.4	56.2	30.2	13.7
Indians	76.1	19.1	4.7	53.3	29.7	17.0	59.3	29.4	11.3
Sabahans	87.4	11.8	0.7	65.3	28.3	6.4	62.6	30.7	6.6
Sarawakians	86.9	10.7	2.5	46.3	26.1	17.7	56.1	29.0	13.9

Except for Bahasa Malaysia, students perceived their achievement in other subjects as low. In terms of variability, urban students seemed to perform lower than rural students and non-residential lower than their residential counterparts.

At least 75% of students agreed that subjects like History and Geography were interesting because a lot of their contents deal with events which are within or are related to the country. Most of the other subjects were also seen to have included adequate references to national matters. When asked whether subject content of the curriculum should be reorganized, students showed varying patterns of answers. The differences were brought about by the variables; race and location of schools.

The responses given indicate that certain subjects in the curriculum requires re-examination and perhaps a redesigning of content. Usually school subjects are seen by students mainly as examination requirements, they may therefore overlook the reasons behind the prescription of a national curriculum an a common syllabus for all and the need for integration. Teachers should ensure that in teaching the various subjects there are enough references and materials pertaining to life situations in Malaysia and that national, ethnical values are instilled in the students.

5. Co-Curricular Activities and Integration

In this research, the functions of co-curriculum in integration is indicated through students' involvement and interest in co-curricular activities. Students were asked about their interest in games, clubs and uniformed activity and the reasons for participation in them. It is assumed that a higher level of participation brings better integration among school children. A high interest yet low participation can also be taken to indicate that students possess pctential characteristics of being integrated. Students responses are shown in Table 12 and Table 13.

Table 12

Interest and Participation in Selected Games

Gender/ Race	Types of Games	Badminton		Bola Sepak		Ping Pong	
		High Inte- rest	High Parti- cipa- tion	High Inte- rest	High Parti- cipa- tion	High Inte- rest	High Parti- cipa- tion
Male		65.1	37.1	43.9	45.1	31.0	17.2
Female		67.6	28.8	11.0	4.1	17.0	7.8
Malays		63.0	27.0	39.4	27.3	22.0	10.6
Chinese		58.9	43.3	21.4	11.3	34.4	18.6
Indians		73.0	37.8	44.8	36.4	20.1	8.8
Sabahans		69.0	30.8	48.3	31.4	24.2	12.9
Sarawakians		63.9	34.3	43.7	32.1	14.9	9.2

Table 13

Interest and Participation in Selected School Associations

Gender/ Types Level/ Race Asso- cia- tion	Bahasa Malaysia		Bahasa Inggeris		Kelab Interact		Persatuan Sejarah	
	High Interest	High- Partici- pation	High Interest	High Partici- pation	High Interest	High Partici- pation	High Interest	High Partici- pation
Male	56.3	34.3	26.0	13.2	7.5	4.5	28.2	17.2
Female	62.2	37.3	35.1	17.2	8.3	4.3	15.2	10.3
Forms 3		n.a	34.1	15.9	9.4	4.7	30.3	15.6
Forms 5			30.6	13.8	12.9	7.8	21.5	12.1
Forms 6			22.6	12.3	16.9	10.0	31.0	20.4
Malays	70.4	44.4	27.1	27.0	5.7	3.5	30.1	17.0
Chinese	35.7	18.0	29.1	12.4	10.9	6.4	12.2	5.2
Indians	57.4	40.2	53.7	33.6	10.1	4.2	25.2	15.6
Sabahans	72.5	42.4	34.1	26.0	6.6	3.8	45.1	25.3
Sarawakians	69.1	38.2	30.3	22.6	4.6	2.7	36.2	16.1

The data show that students' level of participation in co-curricular activities lagged behind their level of interest. A possible reason for this was perhaps because the students were unable to translate their interests into corresponding activities due to inadequate facilities. It could also be because they lacked skills and competence and proper supervision on the teachers' part. Probable entrenchment in past orientation towards academic or cognitive learning could also explain such findings.

The data reveals that irrespective of ethnicity and location, students appeared to have preference for badminton and soccer. Such preference is shown because these games had been introduced and promoted in schools for a long time.

Preference for others however follows ethnic grouping. The Chinese preferred table tennis to sepak takraw which was favoured by the Bumiputras. There was also a low level of interest and involvement in sepak takraw when compared to badminton and soccer. Sepak takraw has long been set a side because of lack of concrete efforts to popularize it given several other choices of games which students can choose from.

In terms of preference for school clubs, again the pattern follows Kelab Bahasa Malaysia, the Chinese Kelab Bahasa Cina and the Indians Kelab Bahasa Tamil. Overall, the English Language club was highly favoured by the Indian students. The divergence in preferences could be attributed to students' previous learning experiences and the cultural need for socialization in the vernacular language.

The research shows that third formers preferred school clubs which were academic oriented such as Kelab Sejarah, Kelab Bahasa Inggeris, while the sixth formers preferred such clubs as Kelab Interact and Kelab Agama. This preference could be influenced by the fact that third formers are very conscious of examinations while the sixth formers see their involvement in clubs to escape from the drudgery of academic work. It is pertinent therefore to recommend that if integration is to start early, clubs such as Civics, Interact and History, should be made more attractive to the younger students. The potential of every school club should also be examined to increase its integrative ability and impact.

Conclusion

This research has managed to seek the opinion of secondary school students on certain aspects of the education system which are relevant to national integration. In many ways their responses have provided us with certain indicators of how the policies are received and how the process of integration is taking shape. In general it is possible to say that Malaysian students have accepted the educational objectives and policies which have been introduced to foster national integration. However, certain implementation strategies need further scrutiny and detailed studies.

Data of the study shows that some elements of integrativeness has definitely taken place. It supports the assumption that integration is a planned conscious effort to create a united society with a national identity based on the national culture. And if we can further say that the process takes place in four stages that is, bare co-existence, relationship of contact, relationship of compromise and amalgamation or acculturation, then perhaps Malaysia has already passed stage 1 and 2 and are in fact at stage 3 that is, the stage where relationships among the various groups are still in the form of competition but at the same time there are elements of peaceful reconciliation. This therefore promises a bright future for the nation.

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