

An Analysis of Malaysian Civics and Citizenship Textbook

Through a Multicultural Curriculum Framework

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Abstract—This article aims to look at the Malaysian civic education textbook through the multicultural curriculum framework, by using content analysis method. The article analyzes the civic textbook for secondary one to five, focusing on the theme of Warisan Kepelbagaian Budaya Malaysia. The major goal of multicultural education is to bridge the gap so as students from diverse background will experience educational equality. Extending from the multicultural education concept, Santora presented a multicultural curriculum framework that can empower students in the knowledge and skill dimension so that they can participate in a pluralistic society as a citizen. While Malaysia is a multicultural society by nature and by discourse, the question arise as what kind of multicultural concept is presented in the textbook and if the concept is aligned or shaping the multiculturalism concept in the society. The preliminary findings show that the concept of multicultural presented in the textbook is very much highlighted to the differences of the different ethnicities, without the element of empowering students' participatory skills in a pluralistic society. In light of the findings, the multicultural concept is reflecting the national discourse of multiculturalism, acting as an agent to bring stabilization to the country.

Keywords—civics textbook; multicultural education; textbook analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is currently home to different groups of race, with Malay, as the biggest racial group; next to it is the Chinese race and the Indian race. Though there are other races on the land, with the Peranakan, Eurasian and other minorities, the three main racial group is the most dominant group of all, with Malay taking the lead. The emergence of the pluralistic societal structure in Malaysia today can be trace back to the period of British administration. Many scholars believe that the multiculturalism exist today in Malaysia is a British colonial legacy [1-3]. The large-scale immigration during the second half of the nineteenth century brought in the immigrants' religious and cultural institutions to the peninsular Malaya, separated from the indigenous population [4]. The different race underwent occupational specialization by the British, making their racial divisiveness and racial consciousness reinforced. It was further strengthen by separate vernacular

schooling stream [4]. The identity of the races constructed through the history was a picture of a segregated society in peninsular Malaya during the colony period.

During the formation of the Malaya in 1957, the three political parties that represent the Malay, Chinese and Indian races come together and lay out the foundation of racial harmony, power sharing, and decision by consensus. The three political parties are UMNO (The United Malays National Organization), MCA (The Malaysian Chinese Association), MIC (The Malaysian Indian Congress), which join in hands to form the Alliance Party at that time, continue to be the ruling coalition till the present time. The kind of how races work together and tolerate each other at that time work out as the foundation of multiculturalism in Malaysia today that races can live in harmony with each other, at the same time preserve their own culture and language. However, in a pluralistic society of such, national integration faced challenges to integrate a pluralistic society in Malaysia since independence. The tension always exist between the unity of the national identity and the diversity of the various races' identity, making it as a contested issue. The concept of the identity of a 'Malaysian' is a debated issue. In the 1970s, the National Cultural policy making the regional culture as in Malay culture and Islamic culture as the dominant culture. However, in the 1990s, the multicultural elements somehow integrated into the construction of the identity of a Malaysian. Mahathir Mohamad introduced the term 'bangsa Malaysia' as in a united Malaysian nation, intended to include all the races into one umbrella [5]. Similar to the concept, Najib Razak too, introduced the concept of 'One Malaysia', hoping that all Malaysian should prioritize their identity as a citizen of Malaysian, followed by their racial identity. Multiculturalism seems to be a constructing element within the national identity, that 'Malaysian-ness' cannot be independent by itself, but is a construction of various cultures.

The question thus arise, what kind of multiculturalism is portrayed in the existing textbook, especially in Civics and Citizenship Education textbook. Civics and Citizenship Education can works as a tool to shape up the mind of a citizen, bring in the integration of races into a united national identity, but also able to reflect the pluralistic society in the country. As Malaysia is a country with centralized education system, with a

top-down management structure, how is the textbook being used to narrate the concept of multiculturalism? What kind of multiculturalism in the Civics and Citizenship Education textbook that shapes up the citizen to live in a pluralistic society in Malaysia? The study thus attempt to use a multicultural curriculum framework to analyse the existing Civics and Citizenship Education textbook in Malaysia.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Multiculturalism Spectrum

Different group of people can interpret the term ‘multiculturalism’ differently. Kincheloe & Steinberg made it a clarification by classified the multiculturalism into five categories, the conservative multiculturalism/ monoculturalism, liberal multiculturalism, pluralist multiculturalism, left-essentialist multiculturalism and the critical multiculturalism [6]. The conservative multiculturalism believes in the superiority of Western patriarchal culture and embrace the white male supremacy. Thus, the other ethnicities are viewed as a lower type of human beings, legalized their assimilation effort in bringing in others into the mainstream culture. The liberal multiculturalism believes that individuals share a natural equality and using ‘color blindness’ as their slogan as they believes that racial, class and gender differences has no ground in affecting people. Similar to the conservative multiculturalism, they still assimilates to white male standards. The pluralist multiculturalism highlights the race and gender differences. They celebrate human diversity and equal opportunity without challenging the dominant Western narratives. They call upon the ‘multicultural literacy’, aiming to get students from culturally different background adapt into the mainstream culture, and building pride on one’s heritage and cultural differences, without looking into the power relations of the social structure. The left-essentialist multiculturalism does not recognize the historical situational effect on the races. Using an essentialist ground, they produce a dominant-culture-is-bad marginalized-culture-is-good dualism. Lastly, the critical multiculturalism came from the critical theory, concern on how the domination takes place; desire to promote individuals’ consciousness within the power structure. Even though the categories made is based on America society, but this brings light to clarify the concept of multiculturalism.

B. The Multicultural Curriculum Framework

The discourse on multicultural education have different emphasis [7]. However, there is an emerging consensus among the scholars that one of the major goal of multicultural education is to reform the school and other educational institutions, so that students from diverse background can experience educational equality [7]. Besides, it does address the dimensions of schooling including the curriculum, tracking and grouping, staffing and testing.

Narrowing the focus onto curriculum, Banks has conceptualized the four approaches to multicultural curriculum reform, which is the contributions approach (Level 1), the additive approach (Level 2), the transformation approach (Level 3) and the Action approach (Level 4). The contributions

approach highlights the heroic icons and celebrative elements for different culture; whereas the additive approach add in content and concepts into the curriculum without changing the structure. The transformative approach will change the structure of the curriculum to give way to the perspectives from diverse ethnicity. The action approach highlights the action part, allow students to solve the existing problem in the society [8].

C. The Santora’s Multicultural Curriculum Framework

To make it even more detail, Santora has provided a comprehensive multicultural curriculum framework model for social studies, based on the theoretical framework of Dewey and Freire [9]. The framework contains 3 thematic area and 12 sub strands of components, with the theme of ‘Understanding Self and Others’, ‘Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy’ and ‘Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge’. The 12 components derived from the 3 themes address the social, psychological, political and intellectual needs of participatory citizenship in a culturally pluralistic democracy.

1) The Theme of ‘Understanding Self and Others’

a) *Ethnic identity*: Include the bicultural experience into the curriculum, position students in their or others’ ethnic community, home, or school culture.

b) *Applying concepts of culture*: Using the world cultures model (Figure 1) to explore the differences of culture that position in the world of diversity.

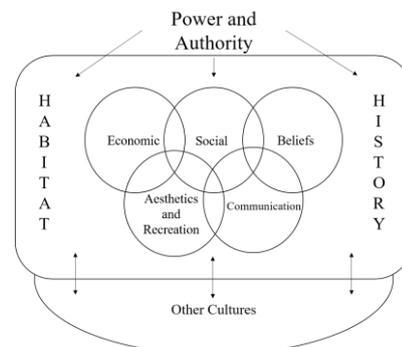


Fig. 1. The world culture model.

Sources: *The Drama of Dominance and Diversity: A Multicultural Curriculum Framework for Secondary Social Studies/Language Arts Core* [8].

c) *Cultural Diversity*: Using ethnographic or historic research to understands the diversity of culture.

2) The Theme of ‘Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy’

a) *Social Action for Social Reconstruction*: Using projects to provide students the ‘real life’ experience to acquire skills for an active participant in a critical, multicultural democracy.

b) *Social and Cultural Rights and Responsibilities*: Develop a culturally critical conscience for ethical and moral decision-making.

c) *Critical Thinking*: Engaged in critical thought or reflective inquiry to evaluate the legitimation of dominance.

3) *The Theme of 'Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge'*

a) *Interconnectedness*: Viewing the world as a network of interdependency, understand events as a web of network.

b) *Multiple Perspectives*: De-center the dominant perspective and encourage alternative perspectives.

c) *Context Setting*: Emphasis on the contextual model of events.

d) *Race, Class and Gender Consciousness*: Reconsider the history of the main canon, allowing students to use different perspectives from the various races, classes and gender to view any historic events.

e) *Social History*: A history or events that has relevance to students who are marginalized.

f) *Contributions*: Emphasize the contributions of diverse groups of people.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The source of the study is the national Civics and Citizenship Education textbook, the '*pendidikan sivik dan kewarganegaraan*' that published in the year of 2004-2008. The curriculum of the Civics and Citizenship Education includes 6 themes, which is *Pencapaian Kendiri; Hubungan Kekeluargaan; Hidup Bermasyarakat; Warisan Kepelbagaian Budaya Malaysia; Malaysia Negara Berdaulat; and Cabaran Masa Depan*.

The theme of the textbook that under examined is the fourth theme, 'The Multicultural Heritage in Malaysia' (*Warisan Kepelbagaian Budaya Malaysia*). The analysis is done across secondary form one till form five, focusing on how the multiculturalism is being portrayed. The description of the textbook is listed in Table 1.

TABLE I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEXTBOOK

Form	Author	Editor	Publi shed Year	Publisher
Form 1	Panel Penulis Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia	Roshayati binti Hassan	2004	'K' Publishing Sdn. Bhd.
Form 2	Maimoon binti Jantan, Roshani binti Abdullah, Johari bin Talib	Noraisyah binti Hashim	2005	MEP Education Consult Sdn. Bhd.
Form 3	Abdul Ghalib bin Yunus, Ghazali bin Lateh	Mahani binti Mokri, Ahmad Shakir bin	2006	Multi Media Synergy Corporation

Form	Author	Editor	Publi shed Year	Publisher
		Yahya		Sdn. Bhd
Form 4	Mohamad Dahalan bin Mohd Ramli, Mahdi bin Shuid, Sivarajan A/L Ponniah	Yasmin binti Yusoff, Wan Munirah binti Wan Hamzah	2007	Arah Pendidikan Sdn. Bhd.
Form 5	Sim Ee Hwa, Ooi Siew Chin, S. Rajanderan, Wan Mazni binti Wan Ab Hamid	Yeo Pei Lui	2008	Zeti Enterprise

In this study, the method primarily used is quantitative content analysis, which involved tallying the frequency of occurrence of references to multiculturalism, based on the parameter constructed by Santora's multicultural curriculum framework. The main category of the coding scheme is the 3 thematic area, 'Understanding Self and Others', 'Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy' and 'Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge'. The sub category of the coding scheme is the 12 components of 'Ethnic Identity', 'Applying concepts of culture', 'Cultural Diversity', 'Social Action for Social Reconstruction', 'Social and Cultural Rights and Responsibilities', 'Critical Thinking', 'Interconnectedness', 'Multiple perspectives', 'Context setting', 'Race, class and gender consciousness', 'Social history', and 'Contributions', as stated in Table 2.

The dominant group is referring to the Malay as they are the biggest racial group in Malaysia. Whereas the other racial group includes the Chinese, Indians, Peranakan, Eurasian and others are counted as the non-dominant group. The coding unit for this study is one activity unit as one unit, with the total activities unit of 30 units.

TABLE II. CODING SCHEME OF THE STUDY

Main Category	Sub Category	Description
Understanding Self and Others	Ethnic Identity	The growth of bicultural experience
	Applying concepts of culture	World cultures model in exploration of the differences in a world of diversity
	Cultural Diversity	Ethnographic or historic research to understands the diversity of culture
Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy	Social Action for Social Reconstruction	Class projects that engage students in a critical participative social action
	Social and Cultural Rights and Responsibilities	Culturally critical conscience for ethical and moral decision-making

Main Category	Sub Category	Description
	Critical Thinking	Reflective inquiry of the hidden culture and ethnocentric values
Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge	Interconnectedness	Understand events and people as a web of connected network
	Multiple Perspectives	Includes the perspectives of the non-dominant group
	Context Setting	Enable the contextual model of events
	Race, Class and Gender Consciousness	Whose history – social sciences
	Social History	Consider in the history or events of the non-dominant group
	Contributions	Includes the contributions of non-dominant group

^a. Sources : The Drama of Dominance and Diversity: A Multicultural Curriculum Framework for Secondary Social Studies/Language Arts Core [8].

IV. RESULT

Using the set of parameters in this study, the multiculturalism component was analyzed from the Civics and Citizenship Education textbooks. The frequency of manifestation of the concept was marked and tallied. The generated data was presented in figures and tables to show the coverage of the different component of multiculturalism in every year level.

TABLE III. THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF ‘CRITICAL PARTICIPATION IN A PLURALISTIC DEMOCRACY’

	Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy		
	Social Action for Social Reconstruction	Social and Cultural Rights and Responsibilities	Critical Thinking
Form 1	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Form 2	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Form 3	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Form 4	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Form 5	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total (%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

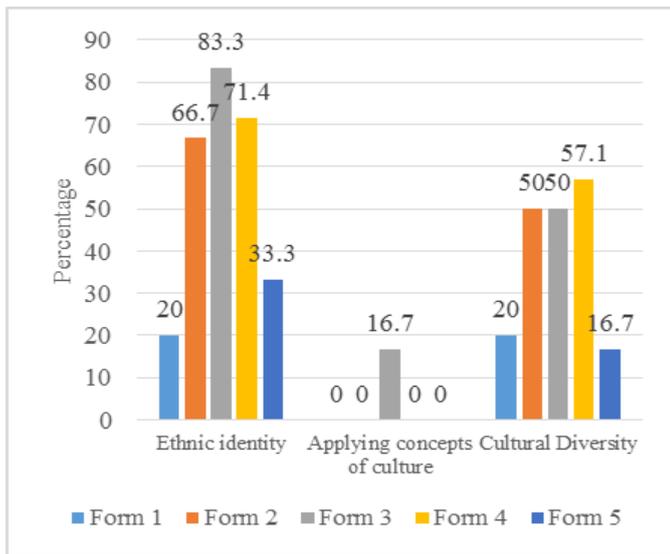


Fig. 2. The frequency of occurrence of ‘understanding self and others’.

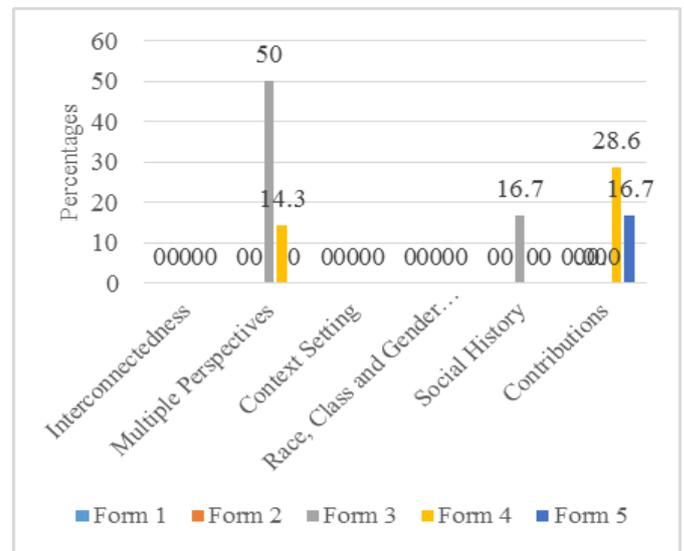


Fig. 3. The frequency of occurrence of ‘multicultural, transformative content knowledge’.

A. The Consistency of Multicultural Curriculum Components throughout the School Level

The Figure 2 and Figure 3 both shows that under the theme of ‘Understanding Self and Others’ and ‘Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge’, the occurrence of the different component does not increase as the year level increases. The data reflect under the theme of ‘Understanding Self and Others’, which the component of ‘Ethnic identity’ shows a percentage of 20% for Form one, 66.7% for Form two, 83.3% for Form three, 71.4% for form four and 33.3% for form five. It is obvious that it does not have an increase trend. It is similar for the component of ‘cultural diversity’ of 20%, 50%, 50%, 57.1% and 16.7% for form one till form five respectively, whereas the component of ‘Applying concepts of culture’ only appear in form three.

Similarly, under the theme of ‘Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge’, the component that exists does not show an increasing trend. The component of ‘Multiple perspectives’ only exists in form 3 (50%) and form 4 (14.3%), while the component of ‘Social history’ only exists in form 3 (16.7%) and lastly the component ‘Contributions’ exists in form 4 (28.6%) and form 5 (16.7%). While in Table 3, the data showed that there is no existence of the component under the theme of ‘Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy’. Thus, we can conclude that generally there is no increasing trend of all the different components of multiculturalism in the textbooks.

From the trend of the data, we can say that the textbook has a rather consistent portrayal of multiculturalism from the lowest year level until the highest year level. With no emphasis on the contextual setting and critical thinking component at the higher year level of schooling, which is a higher level of thinking skills. It also shows that the content of multicultural curriculum does not have a deepening and widening trend as the year level increases. With a total absence of ‘Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy’, it also shows that the textbook has no interest in shaping the students to participate in the society in a critical way no matter which year they are at, even at the higher year level.

B. An Emphasis on the ‘Ethnic identity’ and ‘Cultural diversity’ Component

The overall data from Figure 4 showed that the emphasis of multicultural curriculum component across the five years level textbook is the ‘ethnic identity’(56.7%) and ‘cultural diversity’ (40.0%) component, which is fall under the theme of ‘Understanding Self and Others’. The components of the ‘Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy’ theme went into total missing, with a zero frequency for ‘Social Action for Social Reconstruction’, ‘Social and Cultural Rights and Responsibilities’ and ‘Critical Thinking’. For the theme ‘Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge’, there are slight occurrence with the ‘multiple perspectives’ (13.3%), ‘social history’(3.3%) and ‘contributions’(10.0%), with the missing of ‘interconnectedness’, ‘context setting’ and ‘race, class and gender consciousness’ components.

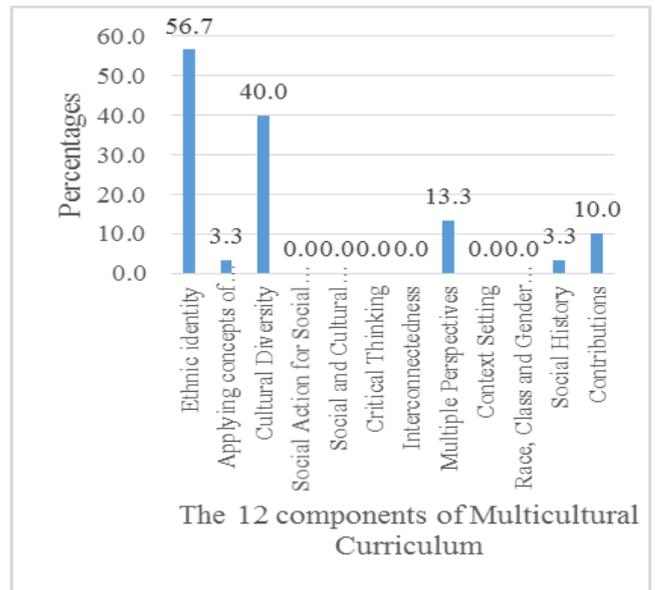


Fig. 4. The frequency of occurrence of 12 multicultural curriculum component.

With the emphasis is very much on the theme of ‘Understanding Self and Others’, the students can understand both their own racial identity and the national identity, using ethnography and historic research to embrace cultural diversity. The five textbook that under analysis shows a consistency of helping students to gain bicultural experience. However, the component of ‘Applying concepts of culture’ shows a low frequency of 3.3%. Students will not able to look at the culture in a bigger picture and obtain a cross cultural competency, that they able to comprehend how culture related to different spheres of life and how does the difference of culture is situated in a society through the lens of history and habitat using the World Culture model. Without a balance number of multicultural curriculum component, the students will fall into the trap of stereotype and misplaced assumptions easily, with the understanding of multiculturalism limited at the level of acknowledging differences only.

C. The Understate of the theme ‘Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy’ and ‘Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge’

The textbook does not encourage ‘Critical Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy’ as the data doesn’t show any existence. Although the textbook encourages students to participate in the pluralistic society using ethnography and historic research, the participation is not encouraged to be critical. The Form five textbook involves several activities including generating ideas to promote the cultural heritage in Malaysia, but the social action is without the element of critical participation. It is very obvious that the social action in the textbook is reinforcing the concept of multiculturalism that intend to be. There are no discussion on how to use social action to bring changes in society.

The discussion of racial disputes and ways of dealing it is not shown up in the textbook, although it is a common issue in a pluralistic society. The issues that the minority or non-

dominant group encounter in the country are not discussed as well. As the one and only theme that talks about the concept of multiculturalism, the scope of concept is surrounding the knowledge of cultural heritage without a concern for the non-dominant and underprivileged, includes the lower social economic classes.

With a limited occurrence under the theme of ‘Multicultural, Transformative Content Knowledge’, the students will have a limited understanding of the knowledge through different perspectives. According to Banks, “Transformative academic knowledge consists of concepts, paradigms, themes and explanation that challenge mainstream academic knowledge and expand the historical literary canon [8].” The parts and parcels of knowledge in the textbook will not give the students a thorough and well-rounded understanding of events in a pluralistic society. With only a limited number of knowledge content in the text, the knowledge from the marginalized or the non-dominant can become a subjugated knowledge that the power of discourse will fall into the hands of the dominant society. For example, the knowledge of the ‘pantang larang’ of an Iban society is merely describing of the facts itself that we still cannot fully comprehend the value system of the Iban society. If we examine carefully through the Civics and Citizenship Education textbook year by year, the knowledge of Iban society is constrained that after completing the subject, students still cannot understand the Iban races better, with the memory staying on their costumes, the facts of their ‘pantang larang’ and their festivals. Furthermore, the diversity of the population of Malaysia has a history of migration. While the heritage of the various cultures are being discussed in the textbook, there are no mention of the social migration history of the population, which is crucial for students to understand others. As a citizen in a pluralistic society, the shallow and fragmented knowledge of the others’ culture is not enough for people to build up their cross-cultural competence.

V. DISCUSSION

A. *The Multiculturalism that Resonates with the National Discourse*

The multiculturalism in the textbook is closely related to the inter-race relation since the country independence. As mentioned earlier, the Malaysian national identity since the 1990s is knitted to the concept of multiculturalism. To be fair to every races in Malaysia, the textbook includes the cultural knowledge from all the races to become a national narrative. During the Independence Day, the celebration of the differences between races is even more obvious, declaring that Malaysia is a country built up of various races. The ‘bangsa Malaysia’ and ‘One Malaysia’ are also the discourses that shapes up the multiculturalism concept in Malaysia. The component of the textbook with the emphasis of ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘cultural diversity’ is a reflection of the concept of multiculturalism in Malaysia.

The ancestors of the country laying the foundation of racial harmony, power sharing, and decision by consensus rather than confrontation, making the multiculturalism exist as a concept of tolerance as well. The absence of the theme of ‘Critical

Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy’ is parallel to this. The formation of the country gives way to the Malay preference policy, at the same time the Chinese and Indians could continue to stay on the land as citizen [10]. The tolerance concept works as a stabilization agent in the pluralistic country, making the pluralistic society lives in harmony without raising up any disputes. However, knowledge is never neutral, so does the textbook, it is socially constructed and whichever knowledge is ‘legitimate knowledge’ is laid on whoever in power [11]. Thus, the ‘tolerance’ concept works well for the dominant power in the society to maintain stability, replicate the value system through education.

B. *The Portrayal of Pluralist Multiculturalism in the Textbook*

In view of the spectrum of multiculturalism, the Civics and Citizenship education textbook in Malaysia resonates with the call of pluralist multiculturalism, celebrates differences in a pluralistic society. Students are encouraged to operate successfully in their racial culture and embrace the national identity, making it bicultural identity possible. The focus of the curriculum is to make students proud of their racial heritage and cultural differences. However, apart for celebrating differences, there are no space in questioning the dominant power, which does not pose inquiry in the power relation of the societal structure, as there are no critical participation allowed in the textbook.

The common portrayal of pluralist multiculturalism is the cultural exhibition. The textbook has to include a variety of racial culture, trying to put in all different kinds of cultural knowledge in the text. However, the inclusion of the variety of culture while increases the volume of the content, due to the limit of content will make the cultural knowledge become shallow, thus turn into a cultural exhibition. According to the four approaches of multicultural curriculum reform by Banks, the content of the text book falls into the category of contributions and additive approach, highlighting the celebrative elements and contributions of heroes without changing the dominant knowledge structure [8]. The cultural knowledge that does not pose a level of depth cannot empower students from diverse background to understand their racial background in a deeper and comprehensive way. In the same way, they do not deeply understand other races as in the value system, the cultural sensitivities and the social history etc. Students will only recognize the cultural ornaments and festivals of the other races. They could not use an insider perspective to understand the other races. Thus, the lack of deep understanding of other races making the barrier between races is reinforced.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In short, the results show that the multiculturalism in Malaysian Civics textbook is a concept that highlights ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘cultural diversity’ that resonates with the national discourse. Using the multicultural curriculum framework by Santora, the textbook shows no sign of encouraging critical participation in a pluralistic democracy. The multiculturalism is not emphasize in the theme of ‘Multicultural, Transformative

Content Knowledge', which potentially make the marginalized knowledge will become a subjugated knowledge.

As the Civics and Citizenship textbook will come to an end in 2018, there are a possibility of new textbooks are written in the future. Thus, the study intends to suggest for a change for the new textbooks. The Santora way of multicultural curriculum framework might work well in the context of America, but in Malaysia there are limitations that cause the textbook will not able to portray every component in the framework. However, the Western framework sheds light to point out a way to walk into the future for Malaysia. The current textbook with a shallow interpretation of cultural differences has to be reviewed and making it more related to students from various background. Despite of the portrayal of various racial culture in the textbook in a shallow level, the social history should be included to help students from various background to understand the value system of different racial groups, helping students to acquire cultural sensitivities towards others and the competence of cross-cultural ability. Furthermore, the inclusion of a contextual knowledge is crucial to overcome the stereotype of the different races in Malaysia, helping students to grasp a comprehensive understanding of others rather than a fragmented understanding that lead to misconceptions.

The knowledge construction of the textbook should move beyond the understanding of facts. According to the learning domain of Bloom Taxonomy, the cognitive domain stated that the knowledge of facts are the lowest knowledge category of the six levels. Beyond the remembering of facts, the textbook can include an interconnectedness of knowledge and multiple perspectives of events that brings into a broader perspective of understanding of others. The textbook can includes a bigger chunk of passage that require thinking skills, especially in the higher form, so as students can work on the knowledge by their own rather than absorbing the knowledge in a simplistic factual form. By this way, the students can move forward beyond the lowest level of the Bloom Taxonomy, advance into the level of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. From then on, students can be exposed to the value system of the various

racial group and be entrusted to have inter-race dialogue that require higher order of thinking skills. The infusion of this kind of knowledge will helps students to embrace the diversity in the pluralistic society. Thus, will help in strengthening the bond within races, making the nation even stronger.

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