

# Integration of Civic Education in Primary School: Challenges Faced by Teachers

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## Abstract

Civic education plays a crucial role in shaping informed and responsible citizens, yet its effective integration in the English subject in primary schools presents notable challenges. This mixed-methods research employs surveys for quantitative insights and interviews for qualitative depth to scrutinize the implementation of civic education in English subjects. The study unveils a spectrum of challenges faced by teachers, including a lack of awareness regarding the importance of civic education, intensified curriculum pressure, and insufficient training and guidance. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to enhance the incorporation of civic education. Moreover, the study advocates for further research exploring the implementation of civic education in other subjects and extending its scope to secondary schools. By addressing these challenges, educators and policymakers can contribute to fostering a more comprehensive civic education framework, ensuring the cultivation of responsible and engaged citizens.

**Keywords** : Civic Education, Challenges, Teachers, Integration, Curriculum

## Introduction

Civic Education in Malaysia is not something new in the country's education system. This is because the subject of Civic Education has been introduced in the education system since 1954 through the 1954 Annual Education Report. This subject was introduced based on the awareness that this country is a multi-ethnic country and the field of education plays an important role in ensuring that the multi-ethnic community in this country is able to live together harmoniously. Through a good education system, it is possible to foster awareness and understanding of the diversity of religion, culture and customs in Malaysia and further foster the spirit of harmony and unity among the community (Wan Yusoff, 2019). Nevertheless, several studies in the early phase of the implementation of Civic Education found that this subject was considered unimportant as stated in the study conducted by Arfah Aziz (1979) who stated that Civic Education did not leave a large positive impact on students. Abdul Rahman Md Aroff (1994) also stated that the subject of Civic Education failed to achieve its goals because the school's readiness was so weak when it came to its implementation. In accordance to the situation, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) introduced Moral Education in 1983 to replace the Civic Education. However, civic elements are still taught in

an integrated manner in the subjects of Local Studies, History, Islamic Education and Moral Education.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Center re-enacted the Civic Education curriculum in the Primary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSR) and Middle School Integrated Curriculum (KBSM) to reintroduce these subjects. As a result, in 2005, MOE introduced Civic and Citizenship Education for Year 4 in primary schools and for Form 1 in secondary schools. All in all, KBSR and KBSM provide guidance that Civic and Citizenship Education aims to make students aware of their roles, rights, and responsibilities in society. This subject also aims to help the country in producing members of society and citizens who are united, patriotic and can contribute towards the well-being of society, the country and the world. As the reappearance of this subject was carried out in stages, in 2003, only Year 4 and Form 1 students were formally involved in the teaching and learning process (PdP) of Civic and Citizenship Education in the classroom. Accordingly, in 2008, this subject was taught comprehensively to all students regardless of their years in primary school and forms in secondary school.

The year 2016 was the last year Civic Education and Citizenship stood as one subject by itself. This is so because in 2017, this subject was abolished again. However, civic elements and values are integrated in the subjects of Islamic Education, Moral Education and History. In 2019, a circular letter by MOE (Surat Siaran KPM Bilangan 7 Tahun 2019) was issued on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019. This circular letter is related to the implementation of Civic Education in Preschools, Primary and Secondary Schools under the Malaysian Ministry of Education. In this letter, it is stated that His Majesty, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong has ordered that the Civic Education to be reintroduced in schools in the First Meeting of the First Term of the 14th Parliament on 16 July 2018. Accordingly, 2019 became the year in which the Civic Education was reintroduced with some new refinements.

## **Literature Review**

### **Civic Education in Malaysia**

Civic Education in Malaysia plays an important role in the society. Mohamad and Ali (2021) stated that 21st century learning in Civic and Citizenship Education is important to prepare the young generation to become knowledgeable, competitive, and ethical citizens. This statement supports the findings of a study by Abd Rahman, Abu Bakar and Yusof (2020) who stated that the emphasis on Civic Education is important to form Malaysian citizens who are competitive, responsible, have high knowledge as well as social awareness. In addition, the implementation of Civic Education also plays a role in helping the community in the aspect of reducing social problems that occur. Civic Education at school is an instrument to promote social integration and solve social problems (Claes, Hooghe & Stolle, 2009). The following statement supports one of the roles of Civic Education in the education system in this country which is to curb social problems. This situation is closely related to the findings of a study by Zulkifli and Hashim (2020) which proves that Civic and Citizenship Education can shape the identity of students in several aspects such as understanding and being aware of their responsibilities as citizens who possess moral values, leadership and the ability to think. Zulkifli and Hashim (2020) also stated that students who receive good Civic and Citizenship Education have the potential to face social challenges positively.

In addition to social problems, Malaysia is also not immune to sensitive racial issues. As a plural country with the existence of various races, Malaysia needs to prevent any racial disaster from happening. Triyono (2017) stated that if the plurality is not managed and built

properly, it will trigger a conflict that can shake the joints of multiracial living. The field of education is the best way to instill racial harmony from school through civic values that are applied. Balakrishnan (2015) reports that as a multi-ethnic country, citizenship education in Malaysia is responsible for providing understanding to recognize and respect other people's culture, norms, and ways of life. Therefore, it is very important for Civic Education to continue to be in the Malaysian education system. On top of this awareness, as stated above, Civic Education has been re-introduced in the education system in this country through civic literacy and civic practice.

### **Civic Education in the Curriculum**

Civic Education refers to the knowledge related to citizenship as well as methods and ways of mobilizing a citizen to be responsible for society and the country (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2019). Civic Education, which is often seen coming in and out of the school curriculum in Malaysia with various names, has gone through a new phase when it was reintroduced in June 2019. This time, Civic Education is implemented through civic literacy and civic practice. Civic literacy refers to the integration of Civic Education in the subjects of Malay, English, History, Islamic Education and Moral Education. While civic practice refers to the implementation of Civic Education in activities that are being conducted outside of the classroom such as co-curricular activities, school assemblies as well as programs organized by the school or programs organized by non-government organisations (NGOs). This situation is supported by a study by Zulkifli and Hashim (2020) who stated that the integration of elements of Civic Education and Citizenship needs to be improved in the education curriculum to produce more morale and responsible Malaysians. Zulkifli and Hashim (2020) also added that the formation of student identity through Civic and Citizenship Education is a continuous process and not an activity that can only be done in the classroom.

The implementation of Civic Education involves all levels of schooling including pre-school, primary school and secondary school under the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2019). This situation is important to ensure that the implementation of Civic Education is not only focused on a certain age level, but it is also being focused and emphasised at every levels. Rahim and Sulaiman (2019) also discussed the importance of Civic Education being conducted at all age levels including pre-school, primary, secondary, and higher education. The existence and implementation of Civic Education at every levels of education in this country has given a significant rise to various responses. Among the responses, the responses by teachers as the driving forces of this implementation are what matter the most. Kamaruddin (2016) found out that Civic Education teachers in Malaysia have a high desire to teach the subject if support and facilitation for the PdP of this subject are given to them. On the other hand, without support and guidance, it is certain that the teachers involved will face constraints in the implementation of Civic Education through civic literacy in their teaching subjects.

### **Civic Education Teachers at School**

Teachers as the main driving forces of education in schools play an important role in the implementation of Civic Education. One of the important factors that contribute to the success of teaching subjects is the teacher's attitude (Tripp & Sherrill, 2011). In relation to the teachers' attitudes, many of the past studies that have been carried out have given several different images of teachers involved in teaching civic education in schools. Among them, the study conducted by Kamsin and Alias (2020) found that there is a need to increase teachers'

awareness in integrating aspects of critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration and communication in the teaching of Civics and Citizenship Education. The findings of this study provide an overview of the ineffectiveness of the implementation of Civic Education by teachers. This statement coincides with the results of a study by Haniza Mahmood (2014) who found that teachers lack confidence in teaching Civic Education in Malaysia. Kamaruddin (2016) also reported that Civics and Citizenship Education teachers have a high desire to teach the subject if enough support and facilitation for the implementation of PdPc in this subject is given to them.

Considering the support and facilitation as the factors in the implementation of Civic Education in schools by teachers, Lo (2009) said that Civic Education teachers who do not have any academic qualifications related to this subject are actually capable of teaching it well if there is enough support and help to facilitate their PdPc sessions. Being aware of the importance of the implementation guidance, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has distributed examples and manuals for the implementation of PdPc Civic Education at every level of schooling which include preschool, primary school and secondary school (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2019). All forms of supporting documents provided can help teachers in implementing Civic Education at school. This situation is supported by a study from Mohd Ali and Hashim (2021) who said that the Teaching and Learning Guide (PPP) of Civic and Citizenship Education is effective in helping teachers to master the knowledge, skills, and values of Civic and Citizenship Education required for their teaching and learning processes.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is a qualitative study that uses document analysis to gather research data. The documents selected for the analysis are previous research articles related to the implementation of Civic Education in schools. In addition, the official documents of the Malaysian Ministry of Education were also used in the document analysis process of this study. The documents analyzed in this study were obtained from various databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. In addition, the selected documents are also filtered according to the year of publication and this study only uses the latest articles as material, which are articles published from 2016 to 2023.

At the beginning, the researcher selected several articles related to the implementation of Civic Education in primary schools and then filtered the selected documents by focusing on the constraints faced by teachers in implementing Civic Education in schools. As a result, a total of 19 articles were studied in the document analysis process of this study. The researcher has studied and analyzed these selected documents in a narrative manner to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study.

### **Implementation of Civic Education at School**

Several reforms and refinements have been made in the process of re-introducing Civic Education in 2019. Basically, four main core values have been chosen to be emphasized which are love, respect, responsibility, and joy. All of these core values are being emphasised in six contexts which are self, family, school, community, country and global context. In addition, the main goal of Civic Education is to produce citizens who know their rights, who are responsible and who have noble morals to contribute towards the well-being of the society, country as well as the world by focusing on civic literacy and civic practice.

**Civic Literacy**

Civic literacy refers to the implementation of Civic Education in the classroom. For preschoolers, Civic Education is implemented in integrated learning time which is referring to the initial conversations and pre-learning activities. The amount of time allocated for this purpose is 30 minutes a week with flexibility is given to the teachers to use appropriate support materials in PdP that can interest students. On the other hand, for primary and secondary schools, through the curriculum, Civic Education is integrated in the subjects of Malay Language, English, Islamic Education, Moral Education and History. The allocated time is one hour on the fourth week of every month. Teachers are asked to plan their teaching and learning process of their core subjects in accordance o the core values of Civic Education that are being focused on. The core values should be in line with the core values that are being focused in the civic practical program. The school is given the flexibility to amend the implementation time of Civic Education through integration in the subjects of Malay Language, English, Islamic Education, Moral Education and History if it clashes with school activities on the fourth week of the month.

**Civic Practice**

Civic practice refers to the implementation of Civic Education outside of the classroom. The implementation of Civic Education outside of the classroom includes several activities such as co-curricular activities, insertion programs, involvement of corporate bodies, involvement of Parent and Teacher Associations (PTAs), school-organized programs and official school assemblies. For co-curricular activities, teachers need to use and refer to the Guidelines of Civic Education Practice in Co-Curriculum that are provided to them. This implementation involves uniformed body teams, clubs, and associations as well as sports and games. The allotted time is 30 minutes for secondary schools and 20 minutes for primary schools with emphasis being placed on the main core values set. For school-sponsored programs or school insertion programs that involve the school, PIBG, corporate bodies or any related body, the implementation of Civic Education is carried out through the program by focusing on the core values set as well in the program. The programs carried out must also comply with a circular letter by MOE (Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas Bilangan 5 Tahun 2018) that was issued to give approval to any party to carry out activities involving students, teachers and educational institutions under the Ministry of Education. For the school's official assembly, the implementation of Civic Education is carried out for 5 minutes during the school's weekly assembly by focusing on the core values that are focused on. Flexibility is given to the school to diversify the methods used in addition to using the media to empower and trigger civic awareness based on the core values set among students.

The involvement of all parties is important to ensure that the implementation of Civic Education through civic literacy and civic practice can achieve its goals. For teachers, the implementation of civic literacy in the classroom through the integration of Civic Education in the subjects of Malay Language, English, Islamic Education, Moral Education and History requires a high commitment to ensure that teachers can effectively integrate Civic Education in their respective subjects.

**Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Civic Education**

According to Razali, Ishak, Hamzah and Aziz (2016), teachers play an important role in implementing education policies in schools. The same situation occurs in the implementation of Civic Education which demands the competence of teachers as implementers in schools.

However, there are various constraints or challenges faced by teachers in schools in implementing Civic Education through civic literacy and civic practice. The constraints faced by teachers in the implementation of Civic Education in schools are listed below.

### **Lack of Awareness of the Importance of Civic Education**

Civic Education plays an important role in the Malaysian educational system towards the formation of a developed society. Noh and Abas (2017) concluded that the understanding of the civic concept is important to form responsible and proactive citizens in society. Therefore, the awareness of the importance of Civic Education is very important to ensure that this subject can be carried out effectively with the cooperation of all involving parties.

However, the lack of awareness by the school community of the importance of Civic Education is often being an obstacle to the implementation of Civic Education in schools. According to Noh and Abas (2017), students in secondary school often do not understand the importance of Civic Education in forming good personality and leadership in society. Students and society are often unaware of the importance of Civic Education in forming good personalities and leadership in society (Salleh, 2019). This statement supports the findings of a study by Ibrahim and Shah (2018) which stated that the lack of awareness about the importance of Civic Education is one of the main factors that prevent the implementation of Civic Education in secondary schools in Malaysia.

Ibrahim and Shah (2018) also stated that the lack of awareness about the importance of Civic Education among students, teachers and parents resulted in a lack of support and understanding of the goals and objectives of Civic Education. A study by Abdullah (2016) also stated that Civic Education is considered unimportant by some parties. This statement gives an impression that awareness of the importance of Civic Education is still lacking in the context of education in this country. It is certain that the lack of awareness of the importance of Civic Education is a constraint and obstacle for teachers in implementing Civic Education in schools through civic literacy and civic practice.

In other words, the implementation of Civic Education in schools by teachers faces obstacles when there is a lack of awareness about the importance of this subject by students, community, and teachers at schools themselves. This statement is closely related to the findings of a study by Norazlina and Mohamad Fazli (2017) who stated that teachers cannot implement Civic Education well because they are too busy teaching other subjects. The findings of this study provide an overview of the attitude of teachers themselves who are not aware of the importance of Civic Education compared to other subjects which makes them too busy teaching other subjects which has caused them to not be able to implement Civic Education properly. Thus, the lack of awareness of the importance of Civic Education is one of the constraints to the implementation of Civic Education in schools by teachers.

### **Intensive Curriculum Pressure**

Curriculum refers to the planning and organization of teaching and learning in educational institutions (Sivamalar, 2019). In other words, curriculum is a guidance of what needs to be taught and fulfilled through the teaching and learning sessions in an educational institution. Curriculum that is too dense has to some extent had an impact on the implementation of Civic Education in schools. The pressure of a dense curriculum refers to a situation where the education curriculum in this country is relatively large, so that it puts pressure on teachers and students to meet the demands of the entire curriculum that is drawn up within the specified period. This situation causes teachers to choose to spend more



instructional time teaching other subjects than Civic Education. According to Ibrahim and Shah (2018), a curriculum that is too dense interferes with the delivery of Civic Education subjects in addition to not giving sufficient focus to the formation of moral values and leadership abilities in students.

The above statement is supported by Mohd Nor and Ahmad (2020) who stated that among the stress factors faced by teachers at school is the pressure from a dense curriculum. The pressure of a dense curriculum will cause teachers to be too busy teaching other subjects to finish the syllabus while leaving Civic Education aside. This situation coincides with the statement above regarding the findings of a study by Norazlina and Mohamad Fazli (2017) who stated that teachers cannot implement Civic Education well because they are too busy teaching other subjects. The pressure of this curriculum is to some extent being a constraint to the implementation of Civic Education in schools by teachers. According to Nazri, Rashid and Idris (2018), a curriculum with too many demands in subjects such as Science and Mathematics is one of the challenges in implementing Civic Education in schools. Indirectly, the implementation and integration of Civic Education is less focused due to the pressure from the curriculum of other subjects that teachers and students need to fulfill.

Overall, the pressure of a dense curriculum has a great impact on teachers, especially from the aspect of time management and the ability of teachers to focus on the implementation of effective teaching and learning sessions. Teachers often feel stressed and run out of time to complete assigned tasks and do not have enough time to focus on important aspects of Civic and Moral Education (Norazlina & Mohamad Fazli, 2017). Considering the aspect of teachers' health, there is no doubt that too much pressure will have a bad effect psychologically which in turn disturbs the teachers' mental health. Razali, Mohd Fadhil and Lailawati (2020) stated that psychological stress can affect the efficiency of teachers in teaching and have a negative effect on the effectiveness of education. In conclusion, the pressure of a dense curriculum is one of the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing Civic Education in schools through civic literacy and civic practice.

### **Teachers Lack of Training and Guidance to Implement Civic Education**

Mohd Nor and Ahmad (2020) stated that training and professional development of teachers in managing stress, overcoming problems, and improving teaching strategies is important in improving the effectiveness of education. Mohd Nor and Ahmad (2020) also stated that the lack of access to training and professional development is one of the main issues faced by teachers in Malaysia. In the context of the implementation of Civic Education in schools, the lack of training and guidance given to teachers has become one of the main obstacles to the effective implementation of this subject. This statement is supported by the findings of Razali, Mohd Fadhil and Lailawati (2020) which stated that the lack of training given to teachers in implementing Civic and Citizenship Education is considered to be the main factor that hinders the effectiveness of teaching and learning of this subject.

The factor of lack of training for teachers is also supported by a study conducted by Abd Rahman, Abu Bakar and Yusof (2021). According to Abd Rahman, Abu Bakar and Yusof (2021), the lack of training and development of teacher professionalism in facilitating Civic Education is also an issue faced in improving Civic Education in Malaysia. Closely related to Civic Education in schools, the study by Wong and Goh (2021) also refers to the value education pedagogy in schools in Malaysia. According to Wong and Goh (2021), the lack of training and support for teachers in implementing value education is also a challenge in implementing this program effectively. Based on this study, the researcher also suggested

that there should be an emphasis on value education in the curriculum and the provision of sufficient support to teachers in implementing this program effectively.

Apart from the lack of training given, teachers are also faced with the problem of lack of guidance to carry out Civic Education in schools. The implementation guide for teachers is very important to ensure that teachers are guided in the right direction in implementing a curriculum or subject entrusted to them. Said, Zakaria and Illias (2018) emphasise that guidance for teachers is important because it provides direction and assistance to teachers in planning and implementing teaching activities. However, in implementing Civic Education, teachers are now faced with the problem of lack of guidance for the implementation of Civic Education in schools. According to Mohd Nor and Ahmad (2020) through their study on the challenges in Civic and Moral Education in schools, one of the main challenges is the lack of clear and comprehensive guidelines and instructions to implement Civic and Moral Education in schools. Without clear and comprehensive guidance and instructions, there is no doubt that the implementation of this subject will be ineffective, which in turn will have a negative impact on the quality of the students' understanding of civic values.

Kamaruddin, Hamzah and Mustafa (2019) also shared the same view by stating that there is a lack of sufficient guidance and teaching materials in implementing Civic Education in Malaysia. This situation makes it somewhat difficult for teachers to deliver lessons and guide students more effectively. Therefore, the need to provide adequate training to teachers and provide them with clear guidance in implementing the Civic and Citizenship Education curriculum is important to ensure effective learning and meaningful citizen development (Razali, Mohd Fadhil & Lailawati, 2020). In addition, Abd Rahman, Abu Bakar and Yusof (2021) also shared the same opinion by stating that there is a need to improve the quality of training and teacher development in the field of Civic Education.

### **Closure**

Civic Education plays its own role in the national education system through its objectives that provide benefits to members of the community. The main objective of Civic Education is to form individuals who are visionary, capable, responsible, respect differences and have awareness and involvement in social and political issues (Zulkifli and Hashim, 2020). Zulkifli and Hashim (2020) also stated that Civic Education also aims to build awareness and knowledge about the principles of democracy, human rights, individual freedom, and the importance of common good. If Civic Education can be implemented with excellence in all levels of education in this country, it is certain that all of the stated objectives can be achieved and hence produce Malaysian citizens who are always moving forward.

However, the implementation of Civic Education in schools by teachers is not free from constraints. The lack of awareness of the importance of Civic Education, the pressure of a dense curriculum and the lack of training and guidance for teachers in implementing Civic Education are among the challenges faced by teachers in schools. Various suggestions and recommendations have been found by researchers in improving the implementation of Civic Education in schools. Among them, a study by Mokhtar, Shaharudin and Shaharudin (2020) suggested that teachers form a professional learning community to discuss issues related to Civic and Citizenship Education. It is hoped that with the various suggestions and recommendations given, the effective implementation of Civic Education in schools can be increased to achieve the objectives that have been stated for the good of all parties.



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