

Nation-Building through Civic Education: A Comparative Study of Malaysia and Indonesia

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Abstract: Civic education serves as a key instrument for citizenship formation, although its orientation varies across national contexts. This study comparatively analyses civic education in Malaysia and Indonesia by examining how historical experience, national identity, and socio-cultural contexts shape curriculum orientation and civic values. Using a qualitative literature-based approach, the study analyses academic articles, policy documents, curriculum guidelines, and historical sources from both countries. The findings reveal distinct developmental trajectories. In Malaysia, civic education evolved from *Pendidikan Sivik* to *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan*, emphasising patriotism, ethnic harmony, and social cohesion in response to multicultural pluralism. In contrast, civic education in Indonesia is anchored in *Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan*, with Pancasila functioning as the ideological foundation for national identity, democratic values, and citizenship responsibilities. Overall, the study demonstrates that while both countries employ civic education for nation-building, differences in historical experience and ideological orientation lead to divergent curricular emphases and civic outcomes.

Keywords: Civic Education; Indonesia; Malaysia; Study Comparison.

1. Introduction

Civic education is a discipline aimed at preparing individuals to become responsible citizens who understand their rights and obligations and actively participate in social and political life, while also serving as a strategic instrument for character formation grounded in values such as religiosity, humanity, nationalism, democracy, and social justice (Banks, 2024; Widiatmaka, 2021). In Indonesia, civic education is implemented across all levels of education and is mandated in higher education as part of personality development courses that emphasise students' holistic formation.

Historically, citizenship education has evolved from classical notions of civic participation in ancient Greece and Rome into a broader educational framework concerned with character, rights, and responsibilities (Wuryan & Syaifullah, 2008). In the contemporary era, this development is reflected in Global Citizenship Education (GCE), which expands civic responsibility to global issues such as inequality, migration, and environmental sustainability (Hou, 2020; Banks, 2024). At the same time, earlier models that emphasised value internalisation and socialisation have been critiqued for being overly normative, leading to more critical approaches that consider the dynamic relationship between individuals, society, and the state (Wahab & Sapriya, 2011).

From this perspective, civic education is not only concerned with regulating citizen-state relations but also with cultivating civic virtues such as patriotism, honesty, responsibility, and respect (Leung & Chan, 2019). In Indonesia, these functions are closely linked to the need to maintain national unity within a highly diverse society. Civic education

therefore plays a crucial role in fostering nationalism and social cohesion (Lin, 2013), particularly through the internalisation of Pancasila values as guiding principles for good citizenship. In this context, Pancasila functions not only as the philosophical foundation of the state but also as a unifying framework embedded in the life of Indonesian society (Wahab & Sapriya, 2011; Pratama, 2021).

Although Indonesian civic education is influenced by broader global traditions, it retains distinctive characteristics shaped by national ideology and socio-cultural context. Each country adopts different approaches based on its historical and cultural background. Malaysia is selected as a comparative case due to its close historical and cultural ties with Indonesia, particularly through shared Malay heritage (Daniels, 2005). However, Malaysia's more complex multicultural composition creates different challenges related to social integration and cultural preservation (Zheng, Wang, & Wang, 2025). These conditions make the Malaysia-Indonesia comparison particularly relevant for analysing civic education through the lenses of historical experience, civic culture, and national identity.

Previous studies have examined civic education in both countries from various perspectives, including historical development, multicultural integration, and ideological foundations (Balakrishnan, 2004; Dewantara et al., 2019; Hendra & Hajri, 2023; Anindya et al., 2024). However, most studies remain fragmented and have not comprehensively analysed these dimensions in an integrated comparative framework.

This study therefore aims to comparatively analyse civic education in Malaysia and Indonesia by examining historical development, ideological foundations, and educational implementation. Through this approach, the study seeks to identify similarities and differences in how civic education contributes to nation-building and the construction of civic identity in multicultural societies. In this regard, strengthening Pancasila values becomes increasingly important in addressing contemporary challenges such as radicalism and social disruption, particularly in the context of Indonesia's demographic transition toward the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045 (Anggono & Damaitu, 2021).

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative comparative literature review design to examine civic education in Malaysia and Indonesia. Rather than functioning as a purely descriptive narrative review, this research adopts a structured analytical approach to systematically compare the historical development, ideological foundations, curriculum orientations, and pedagogical configurations of civic education in both national contexts (Chariri, 2009; Creswell, 2015; Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019).

The study draws upon a diverse range of sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, policy documents, curriculum guidelines, and official educational frameworks relevant to citizenship formation. This multi-source strategy is essential in comparative education research, as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of both formal institutional structures and broader socio-political influences (Hou, 2020; Leung & Chan, 2019). The analysis is conducted through interpretive qualitative content analysis, enabling systematic thematic categorisation and cross-case synthesis across the selected analytical dimensions (Banks, 2024).

By integrating a literature review with a comparative analytical framework, this design moves beyond descriptive reporting and instead facilitates the generation of context-sensitive insights into how differing socio-political and ideological structures shape civic education systems. Such an approach is particularly relevant in multicultural Southeast

Asian contexts, where education systems are closely intertwined with nation-building processes and identity formation (Dewantara et al., 2019; Hou, 2020).

The literature was collected through systematic searches in major academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, ERIC, and national policy repositories. The search process utilised relevant keywords such as “civic education,” “citizenship education,” “Pancasila education,” and “multicultural education,” combined with country-specific terms to ensure both breadth and relevance of the selected literature (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019). The search was conducted using combinations of keywords such as “civic education,” “citizenship education,” “*Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*,” “*Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan*,” “Pancasila education,” “national identity,” and “multicultural education.”

The literature selection process in this study followed a systematic and iterative approach to ensure both relevance and academic rigor. Initially, databases such as Scopus and other indexed repositories were used to identify peer-reviewed journal articles, given their recognized credibility in comparative education research (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019). This process was complemented by the inclusion of official curriculum documents and policy frameworks to capture institutional perspectives on civic education (Hou, 2020). In addition, scholarly books were incorporated to provide theoretical depth, while foundational and historical publications were selectively included to ensure conceptual continuity and contextual grounding (Smith, 1991). The selection process further involved systematic screening of abstracts, keywords, and citation relevance to maintain alignment with the study’s focus on civic education and citizenship formation (Banks, 2024).

To maintain analytical rigor, exclusion criteria were applied consistently throughout the selection process. Sources were omitted if they lacked academic credibility, were not peer-reviewed, or failed to substantively address civic education as a field of study. Moreover, literature focusing solely on general education policy without explicit engagement with citizenship formation was excluded, as it did not directly contribute to the analytical framework of this study (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019). This filtering process ensured that the final corpus of literature was both methodologically sound and analytically relevant.

Beyond thematic mapping, this study adopts a comparative analytical framework that integrates both interpretive and explanatory dimensions. Rather than merely categorising themes, the framework is informed by cross-national comparative education approaches that emphasise the interaction between historical trajectories, institutional structures, and ideological orientations (Leung & Chan, 2019). This perspective enables a deeper understanding of how civic education is not only formally structured but also socially constructed, experienced, and reproduced within specific socio-political contexts (Hou, 2020). By moving beyond descriptive comparison, the analysis seeks to uncover underlying causal patterns and institutional logics that shape civic education systems (Banks, 2024).

The comparative framework is operationalised through six interrelated analytical dimensions: (1) the historical trajectory of civic education institutionalisation; (2) ideological foundations and national identity construction; (3) curriculum orientation, including the balance between knowledge, skills, and values; (4) civic culture models, ranging from normative-ideological to multicultural-integrative; (5) pedagogical orientation; and (6) teacher preparation systems (Banks, 2024; Hou, 2020). These dimensions are treated not as isolated variables but as interconnected components that collectively influence civic education outcomes. The analysis employs a thematic cross-case synthesis combined with interpretive comparison, allowing for contextualised insights rather than purely mechanical juxtaposition (Leung & Chan, 2019).

The selection of Malaysia and Indonesia as comparative cases is justified not only by their historical and geographical proximity but also by their analytical significance in comparative civic education research. Both countries represent postcolonial Southeast Asian states characterised by complex multicultural compositions and ongoing nation-building processes (Hou, 2020). At the same time, they exhibit significant divergence in their ideological foundations and state narratives: Malaysia emphasises multicultural cohesion within a plural society, whereas Indonesia institutionalises Pancasila as a unifying state ideology embedded within its education system (Dewantara et al., 2019).

More importantly, this comparison is analytically valuable because it juxtaposes two distinct models of civic education that respond differently to similar structural challenges, including diversity management, nation-building, and democratic participation. Such a contrast enables a deeper understanding of how differing political histories, institutional arrangements, and ideological commitments shape the design and implementation of civic education (Banks, 2024). Consequently, this study contributes not only to regional comparative scholarship but also to broader theoretical discussions on civic education in plural and postcolonial societies (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019).

Table 1. Comparative Analytical Dimensions Used in the Study

No	Analytical Dimension	Key Indicators	Analytical Focus
1	Historical Trajectory	Periodisation, institutional shifts, policy reform	How civic education evolved over time
2	Ideological Foundation	State ideology, constitutional reference, national philosophy	Normative basis of citizenship formation
3	Curriculum Orientation	Knowledge-skills-values structure, thematic emphasis	Core curricular priorities
4	Civic Culture Model	Participatory vs normative orientation	Type of citizen constructed
5	Pedagogical Logic	Indoctrinative, deliberative, community-oriented approaches	How civic learning is operationalised
6	Teacher Preparation	Institutional framework, certification, pedagogical training	Professional support structure

Source: Primary data, 2025

The six analytical dimensions presented in Table 1 were derived from established scholarship in comparative citizenship education and subsequently adapted to the Southeast Asian context. This approach aligns with cross-national comparative frameworks that emphasise the importance of contextualising analytical categories within specific socio-political and cultural environments (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019; Hou, 2020). By integrating these dimensions, the framework facilitates a structured cross-case comparison while allowing for nuanced and context-sensitive interpretation of each national configuration. Consequently, the design captures both convergence and divergence without oversimplifying complex educational phenomena (Leung & Chan, 2019).

The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, a method widely applied in educational and comparative research to systematically interpret textual data (Schreier, 2012). The analytical procedure consisted of four stages: (1) categorising the selected literature according to the six analytical dimensions; (2) identifying dominant themes within each national context; (3) mapping similarities and differences across cases; and (4) interpreting how ideological and socio-political structures shape curricular orientation and

pedagogical logic (Banks, 2024; Mayring, 2014). This systematic and iterative process ensures both analytical consistency and interpretive depth in cross-case comparison (Schreier, 2012).

Furthermore, this interpretive comparative strategy enables the study to move beyond descriptive reporting and generate deeper analytical insights into civic education as an instrument of nation-building in multicultural societies. Existing research highlights that civic education plays a pivotal role in shaping national identity, social cohesion, and democratic participation, particularly in plural and postcolonial contexts (Dewantara et al., 2019; Hou, 2020). By situating civic education within broader ideological and institutional frameworks, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how education systems function as mechanisms of state formation and identity construction (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019).

3. Discussion

To facilitate comparative analysis, this study uses several analytical indicators as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Analytical Framework and Research Indicators

No	Analytical Dimension	Indicator
1	Historical Development	Evolution of civic education policy and curriculum
2	Civic Culture	Political participation, civic values, and social norms
3	National Identity	Ideological foundations and nation-building orientation
4	Curriculum Orientation	Learning objectives, civic competencies, and curriculum structure
5	Educational Implementation	Teaching practices, assessment, and institutional support

Source: Primary data, 2025

This section presents the main findings of the comparative analysis of civic education in Malaysia and Indonesia. Although both countries share cultural proximity and pluralistic social structures, their civic education systems have evolved through distinct historical and political trajectories (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019; Hou, 2020). In Malaysia, civic education is primarily shaped by efforts to promote national unity and social cohesion within a multicultural society characterised by ethnic and religious diversity (Leung & Chan, 2019; Ibrahim, 2018). In contrast, in Indonesia, civic education is strongly anchored in Pancasila as the foundational ideology guiding moral development, national identity formation, and democratic citizenship (Dewantara et al., 2019; Winataputra, 2020). These differences illustrate how civic education systems are shaped not only by shared regional characteristics but also by distinct ideological orientations and state-building agendas, reflecting broader socio-political configurations in each country (Banks, 2024; Hou, 2020).

Overall, both systems aim to prepare responsible citizens, promote national identity, and foster social cohesion. However, notable differences persist in curriculum emphasis, policy orientation, and the integration of civic values within educational programmes. These distinctions reflect each country's specific national priorities and historical experiences. In both contexts, civic education is understood not merely as moral instruction but as a means

of cultivating civic identity, a sense of belonging, and social cohesion within multicultural societies (Barghi, 2017; Mulaydi & Malihah, 2024).

Differences are particularly evident in the dominant civic values embedded in each curriculum. In Malaysia, civic and moral education textbooks emphasise values such as responsibility, respect, helpfulness, hard work, and caring as defining characteristics of a “good citizen” in a multi-ethnic society (Tan, Naidu, & Jamil, 2018). These values function not only as personal virtues but also as mechanisms for maintaining social order, unity, and political legitimacy.

The following subsections elaborate on these findings by examining Malaysia’s historical background, national identity, civic culture, educational commitment, and the development of *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan*, alongside a systematic comparison with Indonesia’s *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan*.

3.1. Historical Experience of Malaysia

Malaysia’s historical experience may be divided into four broad phases: prehistory, early state formation, colonialism, and post-independence. Archaeological evidence from Niah Cave in Sarawak indicates human habitation dating back approximately 38,000–40,000 years, marking early Homo sapiens presence in the region (Turner, 2012). During the Hoabinhian period, hunting and gathering communities occupied the northern Malay Peninsula around 10,000 BC. Subsequent Proto-Austronesian expansion connected the Malay Peninsula with wider Southeast Asia between the third and first millennia BC (Leinbach, 2022). By the first century BC, Indian traders had introduced political ideas, Sanskrit culture, and Hindu-Buddhist religious traditions, interacting with existing animistic beliefs (Turner, 2012).

The Malay Peninsula later emerged as a strategic trading hub linked to regional Hindu-Buddhist polities, particularly the Srivijaya Kingdom, which dominated the Malacca Strait from the seventh century AD (Ricklefs, 2013; Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017). The Malacca Sultanate (1400–1511 AD), founded by Prince Parameswara, consolidated maritime trade networks and facilitated the spread of Islam through commercial and diplomatic exchange, including relations with Ming China (Daniels, 2005).

European colonial intervention began with Portuguese control in 1511, followed by Dutch rule in 1641 (Leinbach, 2022; Daniels, 2005). British dominance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries institutionalised administrative control through the Straits Settlements and the Pangkor Agreement, reshaping political and economic structures while preserving aspects of Malay customary authority (Hooker, 2003).

After independence, Malaysia faced regional tensions, including the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation (1963–1966). Although this conflict generated instability, diplomatic resolution enabled consolidation of the Malaysian Federation and post-colonial national identity (Jones, 2001).

National identity refers to Smith's understanding that national identity can be defined as political community, history, territory, homeland, citizenship, and common values and traditions (Smith, 1991). Smith considered national identity to be multi-dimensional and listed five fundamentals: 1) Historical region or homeland; 2) Thick with myth and historical memory; 3) A general basis regarding culture; 4) General legal rights and obligations for all members of society; 5) Community economy with territorial mobility for all members.

National identity is closely linked to a country’s historical experiences, encompassing shared understandings of homeland, society, culture, and local wisdom.

In many post-independence countries in South and Southeast Asia, the formation of national identity has been challenged by ethnic and cultural diversity. Competition among ethnic and cultural groups often emerged during early nation-building processes, as newly independent states struggled to achieve political stability and social cohesion. Addressing these challenges requires deliberate efforts to strengthen national unity, including the promotion of a common language and the development of inclusive multi-ethnic identities as part of state policy (Gill, 2014).

Malaysia exemplifies these dynamics as a federated, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious state comprising two geographically separated regions across the South China Sea, 13 states, and three federal territories. Politically, the Malay Muslim majority holds dominant influence in areas such as education, public administration, and governance, while ethnic Chinese communities are prominent in the economic sector. Although Malaysian society is generally characterised by peaceful coexistence, ethnic tensions—particularly involving Bumiputera, Chinese, and Indian communities—have periodically surfaced. Despite its status as an industrially advanced country and major tourism destination, Malaysia also faces socio-economic and environmental challenges, including concerns over palm oil expansion and its impact on rainforest areas (Malaysia Country Profile, BBC UK, 2016).

Malaysia is geographically located near the equator and is characterised by a tropical maritime climate with high humidity and monsoonal wind patterns (Turner, 2012). Demographically, Malaysia shares similarities with Indonesia as a plural society, although with less ethnic and linguistic diversity. In 2021, Malaysia's population reached approximately 32.6 million, consisting of 69.9% Bumiputera (including Malays), 23% Chinese, and 6.7% Indian, with smaller proportions of other ethnic and indigenous groups. Recent demographic data indicate a gradual increase in the Bumiputera population alongside a relative decline among Chinese and Indian communities (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 2022).

Ethnic Malays predominantly identify as Malaysians or Malays, share the Malay language, and are largely Muslim. Despite ethnic minorities forming smaller proportions of the population, Malaysia remains a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Since independence in 1957 and the formation of the Malaysian Federation in 1963, constitutional discussions have emphasised inter-ethnic tolerance and the protection of minority rights as foundations for national unity. The federal constitutional monarchy reflects an effort to balance multicultural democracy with both secular governance and Islamic principles (Wolf, 2016).

Islam constitutes the majority religion in Malaysia, followed by Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and other beliefs. Linguistic diversity includes Malay, English, Chinese languages, Tamil, and several regional and indigenous languages. Despite its plural social composition, Malaysia has maintained relative political stability and social harmony. However, ethnic groups often experience limited interaction, particularly within educational settings. To address this, the education system incorporates programmes designed to foster inter-ethnic interaction, mutual understanding, and tolerance among students from different cultural backgrounds (Khader, 2012).

3.2. Historical Development of Civic Education in Indonesia

The development of civic education in Indonesia has been shaped by colonial legacies, post-independence nation-building, authoritarian governance during the New Order, and democratic reform since 1998. From Dutch-influenced *Burgerkunde* to contemporary *Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* (PPKn), the subject has

undergone repeated shifts in nomenclature, content, and pedagogy in response to changing political contexts.

In the early post-independence period, civic education in Indonesia emerged under various institutional labels as the newly established republic sought to consolidate national identity and civic competence. This phase combined constitutional knowledge with efforts to cultivate a shared sense of national belonging and collective identity, with early curricula reflecting political and social imperatives in the 1950s and 1960s (Fauzi & Srikantono, 2013; Winarno et al., 2024; Kurniasih & Isma'il, 2022).

During the New Order era under President Suharto, however, civic education became explicitly ideological. Through Pancasila Moral Education and the Guidelines for the Appreciation and Practice of Pancasila, Pancasila was institutionalised as the sole foundational ideology. Educational practices during this period emphasised moral formation, political loyalty, and national conformity, while limiting critical deliberation and participatory engagement. This shift reflected the regime's intent to use schooling as a tool for political socialisation, embedding ideological objectives deeply into both curriculum design and classroom practices (Wahab & Sapriya, 2011; Samsuri, 2004; Santoso, 2017).

Following the Reformasi period beginning in 1998, civic education underwent significant reorientation. While retaining Pancasila's normative centrality, successive curricular frameworks—including the Competency-Based Curriculum, the School-Based Curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum, and the Merdeka Curriculum—expanded the scope of civic education to incorporate democracy, human rights, and active citizenship. Despite these reforms, a persistent tension remains between ideological continuity and the promotion of critical, participatory citizenship. Empirical studies indicate that, although Civic Education formally promotes democratic competencies, classroom practices often continue to prioritise moral instruction and identity formation over deliberative engagement (Winataputra, 2016; Graf et al., 2024).

In recent developments, the institutionalisation of ideological education has been strengthened through collaboration between the Agency for Fostering Pancasila Ideology and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. This collaboration has resulted in the publication and dissemination of the Main Pancasila Textbook, intended as a standard national reference for Pancasila education across educational levels. Officially launched in 2022, this initiative reflects a renewed state commitment to reinforcing ideological literacy while attempting to align it with contemporary educational approaches that emphasise character development, citizenship competence, and national identity formation (Lutfi et al., 2023).

Institutionally, teacher education programmes have gradually undergone professionalisation, contributing to improved pedagogical capacity in civic education. However, significant challenges persist, particularly in addressing controversial socio-political issues and implementing participatory and deliberative pedagogies in classroom settings. The gap between policy intentions and classroom enactment continues to shape the practical outcomes of civic education (Santoso, 2017; Winarno et al., 2024).

Overall, the trajectory of civic education in Indonesia reflects a continuous negotiation between ideological continuity and curricular adaptation. In contrast to Malaysia, where civic education is largely guided by pluralism and social cohesion, the Indonesian model has been shaped by the sustained institutionalisation of Pancasila, which continues to influence both its normative objectives and pedagogical logic (Dewantara et al., 2019; Hou, 2020).

3.3. Civic Culture in Malaysia

The concept of civic culture was introduced by Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba to explain the relationship between political orientation and social behaviour as a foundation of democracy. Drawing on classical political thought, particularly Aristotle's notion of a mixed polity, Almond and Verba conceptualised civic culture as a balance between parochial orientations and active participation (Almond & Verba, 2015). Civic culture thus refers to the cultural conditions enabling democratic systems to function effectively.

Malaysia, a federal constitutional monarchy that gained independence in 1957, has relied on education as a central instrument of nation-building. The adoption of Malay as the national language and its implementation in state schools formed part of broader efforts to consolidate national identity (Andaya & Andaya, 1984). Politically, Malaysia operates under a parliamentary system influenced by British colonial governance. Foundational constitutional arrangements established representative institutions while maintaining traditional authority structures, including the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (Bedlington, 1997; Abas, 1968; Fauzi, 2015; Malaysian Constitution, 1957).

Despite its formal democratic framework, Malaysia's democratic practice has been shaped by ethnic and religious dynamics. Episodes such as the 1969 racial riots illustrate tensions between pluralism and political stability (Fauzi, 2015). During Mahathir Mohamad's leadership, economic modernisation was accompanied by political centralisation, prompting continued negotiation between state authority and civil society (Said Ed, 2012).

Malaysia's civic culture is further influenced by the institutional role of Islam within the legal system. The historical spread of Islam during the Malacca Sultanate and subsequent legal codification reflect interactions between Islamic traditions and colonial legal frameworks (Daniels, 2005; Tebba, 1993; Turner Ed., 2009).

Malaysia's civic culture is shaped by continuous negotiation among democratic institutions, ethnic pluralism, religious traditions, and state authority. Rather than constituting a fully liberal democratic model, it operates through structured accommodation and contestation, providing important context for understanding the civic values embedded in Malaysian education.

3.4. Civic Culture in Indonesia

According to Almond and Verba's classical conception, civic culture reflects citizens' orientations toward political institutions, participation, and civic norms. In Indonesia, civic culture has developed through a distinctive trajectory shaped by ideological state formation, democratic transition, and enduring local traditions. As noted by Dewantara, Suhendar, and Rosyid (2019), it cannot be understood solely through formal political participation but must also be examined through normative values embedded in education, ideology, and communal practices.

During the New Order period, civic culture was strongly influenced by state-led ideological socialisation. Civic education functioned primarily to internalise Pancasila values, political loyalty, and national unity through programmes such as *Pendidikan Moral Pancasila (PMP)* and the *Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila (P-4)*. This approach fostered a predominantly normative and compliance-oriented civic culture, prioritising social order over deliberative participation (Wahab & Sapriya, 2011).

Following Reformasi in 1998, civic education began incorporating themes of democracy, human rights, constitutionalism, and participation. However, implementation has remained uneven. Although policy frameworks emphasise participatory citizenship, classroom practices often continue to prioritise value transmission, limiting critical engagement (Winataputra, 2016). Consequently, contemporary Indonesian civic culture reflects a hybrid condition, combining democratic aspirations with enduring ideological traditions.

Beyond formal schooling, civic culture is reinforced by local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) such as *gotong royong* and *musyawarah*, which function as informal civic learning spaces that sustain communal participation (Jonassen & Slavin, 2025). At the same time, challenges persist in strengthening participatory civic culture, particularly in teacher preparedness and pedagogical approaches. Many educators still prioritise moral instruction over dialogical learning, constraining the development of critical civic skills (Kuncoro & Triyanto, 2024).

Indonesia's civic culture rests upon the institutional centrality of Pancasila, reinforced by local traditions that nurture communal participation and collective responsibility. In contrast to Malaysia's pluralism-oriented trajectory, this configuration shapes a distinctive model of citizenship formation and informs the comparative framework of this study.

3.5. Commitment to Education in Malaysia

Following independence in 1957, Malaysia prioritised the strengthening of state education as a key instrument for achieving national unity within a pluralistic society. The Education Act of 1961 reflects the government's commitment to rebuilding public trust in the national education system and ensuring that education served broader nation-building goals. In this process, the Ministry of Education played a central role in initiating educational reforms and guiding policy direction.

The mission of the Malaysian Ministry of Education is to develop a high-quality, world-class education system while maximising individual potential in line with national aspirations (Azrin, 2016). These aspirations are grounded in the national ideology known as *Rukun Negara* (1969), which functions as the philosophical foundation for political, economic, socio-cultural, and educational policies. The principles of *Rukun Negara* emphasise national unity, democracy, justice, equality, independence, diversity, and progress, and are articulated through five core values: belief in God, loyalty to the King and country, the nobility of institutions, the sovereignty of law, and politeness and decency (UNESCO, 2011).

In practice, the implementation of civic education in Malaysia has contributed to strengthening national identity and promoting inter-ethnic tolerance among students. Various studies indicate that civic and moral education programmes in Malaysian schools encourage students to develop values such as respect, responsibility, and cooperation in multicultural environments. Although challenges remain, particularly regarding critical civic engagement, the integration of civic education with national identity programmes and co-curricular activities has helped reinforce social cohesion within Malaysia's plural society.

3.6. Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan in Malaysia

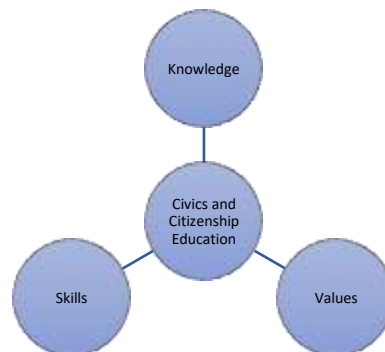
The development of civic education in Malaysia can be traced back to the Razak Report (1956), which emphasised the importance of civic subjects as mandatory components of citizenship education to promote racial unity (Aziz, 1985). Civic education was formally introduced as a school subject in 1972 with the primary objective

of fostering patriotism and love for the country (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2009). However, in response to curricular shifts prioritising scientific and technological knowledge, civic education was removed from the school curriculum in 1982 and integrated into other subjects. At the primary level, civic content was incorporated into the subject Nature and Human, alongside science, history, geography, and health education (Tejima, 2007).

Prior to 2005, civic education did not exist as a stand-alone subject, with its core ideas embedded within disciplines such as social sciences, moral education, Malaysian studies, Islamic studies, and history (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1994). Following curriculum reforms, civic education was reintroduced as a compulsory subject in 2005 under the revised nomenclature *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan*. The subject was implemented gradually, beginning in primary school (Year 4) and lower secondary education, and by 2009 it had become compulsory for all students up to upper secondary level (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2009).

The main objective of *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan* is to raise students' awareness of their roles, rights, and responsibilities as members of society and citizens of the state, with the aim of fostering unity, patriotism, and active contribution to societal and national development (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2008). The curriculum is structured around three core components: knowledge, skills, and values. Knowledge objectives focus on understanding civic roles and responsibilities, skills objectives emphasise self-discipline and civic competence, and values objectives aim to nurture citizens who are proud of their national identity and committed to the welfare of Malaysia as a sovereign nation (Tejima, 2007).

Figure 1 Three Aspects of Pendidikan Civic dan Kewarganegaraan



Source: Balakrishnan, 2004

According to Balakrishnan (2004), the knowledge component of *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan* includes understanding personal strengths and weaknesses, family and environmental awareness, and basic knowledge of the Malaysian political system. The skills and values components aim to encourage active citizenship, emphasising that civic education should extend beyond classroom instruction and be integrated into intra-curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities, particularly community-based engagement.

A new phase of *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan* was implemented in 2005, beginning at upper primary and lower secondary levels. Civic learning during this phase was linked to content from Local Studies and History, while moral and ethical dimensions continued to complement civic education. Curriculum revisions ensured that civic content previously distributed across subjects such as moral education,

religious education, and local studies was systematically integrated into *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan* (Tejima, 2007).

The curriculum is organised around core themes reflecting students' personal, social, and national development. At the basic education level, these themes include self-respect, family life, school and social relationships, Malaysian society and culture, national identity, and future orientation. At the secondary level, the themes expand to emphasise personal achievement, social participation, cultural heritage, and Malaysia's status as a sovereign nation (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2002). Across these levels, learning objectives focus on the integration of knowledge, civic skills, and values.

In practice, *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan* addresses key civic dimensions such as human rights, public awareness, value clarification, and critical thinking. Critical thinking, in particular, is viewed as essential for developing enlightened and responsible citizens and is reinforced through both school and higher education contexts (Grossman et al., 2008). Malaysian scholars and educators have therefore emphasised reading culture and reflective learning as integral components of civic education.

Evaluation in *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan* is designed to assess not only students' cognitive understanding but also their attitudes, behaviours, and sense of responsibility. Assessment involves both academic measures and qualitative evaluations conducted by teachers to determine the extent to which students have internalised civic knowledge, skills, and values in accordance with curricular objectives (Tejima, 2007).

3.7. How Teachers Are Prepared in Malaysia and Indonesia

Effective preparation of civic education teachers is essential for addressing contemporary civic issues and fostering democratic competencies. Research highlights that teacher preparedness requires not only subject knowledge but also pedagogical confidence (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019) to facilitate discussion of social and political issues, including controversial topics (Davies, 2006; Kerr et al., 2007). Nevertheless, many teachers continue to face difficulties in engaging students with such content due to limited training and instructional support.

In Malaysia, civic education teachers are prepared through a centralised national system administered by the Teacher Education Division (TED). This body oversees teacher education colleges and university programmes that provide both pre-service and in-service training aligned with national standards. TED aims to enhance professional competence across educational levels through structured academic and professional development, with a minimum three-year diploma as the basic qualification for teacher preparation (UNESCO World Data on Education, 2011).

In contrast, civic education teacher preparation in Indonesia is primarily conducted through university-based teacher education programmes. These programmes emphasise pedagogical competence, subject mastery, and contextual instructional skills aligned with *Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan*. Studies indicate that teacher education departments play a key role in developing civic pedagogical skills through curriculum planning, instructional design, and adaptation to learners' needs (Hidayah, 2023). Additional research highlights that teachers' readiness is shaped by their ability to prepare lesson plans, utilise instructional resources, and adapt to different learning environments, including online contexts (Irwan & Kamarudin, 2021).

Furthermore, research on the broader role of civic education teachers in Indonesia underscores their responsibility in cultivating civic values and social character. Teachers are expected not only to deliver content but also to foster civic dispositions

such as responsibility, participation, and citizenship awareness among students (Sapriani & Anjar, 2024).

Comparatively, these findings illustrate how differing institutional arrangements shape teacher preparedness in both countries. Malaysia emphasises nationally regulated professional standards and certification, while Indonesia prioritises university-based pedagogical development grounded in civic and educational theory. Although both systems face challenges in equipping teachers to address complex civic issues, they represent distinct approaches to teacher preparation within civic education practice.

3.8. Comparison *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan (PSK)* and *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan (PKn)*

Based on the preceding discussion of Malaysia’s educational profile and the development of *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan*, civic education in Malaysia and Indonesia demonstrates fundamental similarities in orientation. Both countries, shaped by multi-ethnic and multicultural social structures, position citizenship education around cultural values, spirituality, and national identity formation.

In Indonesia, the development of civic education has followed a long and dynamic trajectory. During the colonial period, civic-related instruction was influenced by Dutch *Burgerkunde*, which aimed to cultivate obedience to colonial authority, followed by Japanese-era education that emphasised loyalty through ideological indoctrination.

After independence, citizenship education evolved through various curricular reforms—from early post-independence civic instruction to more explicit ideological subjects such as *Pendidikan Moral Pancasila* and P-4 during the New Order period. Since the Reformasi era, civic education has been institutionalised under *Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan (PPKn; Pancasila and Civic Education)* and adapted through successive curriculum frameworks, including the *Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi (KBK; Competency-Based Curriculum)*, the *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP; School-Based Curriculum)*, the 2013 Curriculum (K-13; 2013 Curriculum), and the Merdeka Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*), reflecting efforts to balance ideological foundations with democratic and competency-based learning (Hendra & Hajri, 2023).

Table 3. Comparison *Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan (PSK)* and *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan (PKn)*

No.	<i>Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan</i>	<i>Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan</i>
1.	Pendidikan Sivik and Kewarganegaraan subjects in Malaysia are mandatory subjects in primary and secondary schools. Lower school is taken for 6 years, and middle school is taken for 6 years (divided into two, lower middle school and high school). However, in higher education, there are no special courses like in lower and middle schools. However, the content of civic education is integrated into Mata Pelajaran Umum (MPU), where MPU aims to “give birth to graduates who are holistic, live up to the values of patriotism and Malaysian identity, and master human skills towards	Citizenship Education is a compulsory subject at both primary and secondary education levels. In higher education, civic education courses are also mandatory and are incorporated into the curriculum as <i>Mata Kuliah Wajib Umum (MKWU; General Compulsory Courses)</i> or <i>Mata Kuliah Umum (MKU; General Courses)</i> and are further classified under <i>Mata Kuliah Pengembangan Kepribadian (MPK; Personality Development Courses)</i> . This

	meeting job market capabilities.” The MPU consists of 4 clusters, namely: (1) U1 (philosophy, values, and history); (2) U2 (improving soft skills); (3) U3 (increasing knowledge about Malaysia); and (4) U4 (practical skills in community/community management such as community services and curriculum) (Sumadi, 2018).	arrangement is stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 37 paragraph (1); Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education, Article 35 paragraph (3); and Decree of the Directorate General of Higher Education No. 36 of 2006.
2.	<i>Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan</i> also refers to the pillars of the state, which are used as policy directions and references, which are used as the basis for material content.	<i>Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan</i> subjects are a means of instructional material for implementing Pancasila through formal education.
3.	According to the explanation in the elementary and middle school curriculum, <i>Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan</i> is to “give students awareness of their roles, rights, and responsibilities in society and the state in order to produce community members and citizens who are united, patriotic, and can contribute to the welfare of society, country, and world.”	<i>Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan</i> conceptually and holistically, according to Winataputera (2016), aims to “form young citizens who have a sense of nationality and love of the homeland in the context of the values and morals of Pancasila, the values and norms of the 1945 Constitution, the values and norms of unity in diversity, and a united nation.”
4.	<i>Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan</i> emphasizes racial unity and fosters a sense of love for the country.	<i>Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan</i> is a vehicle for uniting various existing differences (ethnicity, religion, language, culture) so that they respect each other, respect each other, and are tolerant. Apart from that, civics also emphasizes the implementation of civilized democratic principles.
5.	<i>Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan</i> is directed at optimizing three components, which include knowledge, skills, and values.	<i>Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan</i> accentuation in the learning process leads to the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.
6.	<i>Pendidikan Sivik dan Kewarganegaraan</i> encourages students to become active citizens and oriented towards community service.	It is hoped that <i>Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan</i> can encourage citizens to contribute actively in the context of national and state life so that civics is not only interpreted as a class subject but also teaches about the nation's socio-cultural life.

7	National identity formation is pursued through patriotism and ethnic unity, shaped by Malaysia's multicultural social structure and its potential for ethnic tensions.	National identity formation is pursued through the internalisation of Pancasila values, which serve as the moral, ethical, and ideological foundation of the nation.
8	Curriculum content is normative-moral and directed towards strengthening social cohesion in a multi-ethnic society.	Curriculum content is ideological-normative, ensuring understanding of Pancasila, democracy, and national identity within the framework of the Unitary State of Indonesia.
9	Learning assessment focuses on value and attitude reinforcement, such as unity, loyalty, and inter-ethnic tolerance.	Learning assessment focuses on understanding and practising democratic values, such as deliberation, civic responsibility, and citizens' rights and duties.
10	Civic education is not yet institutionalised as a standalone university course; it is embedded in MPU as a means of developing human skills and Malaysian identity.	Civic education is institutionalised as a standalone compulsory course at the university level as part of national civic and personality development.

Source: Primary data, 2025

The comparison shown above emphasizes that while both Malaysia and Indonesia commit to the formal inclusion of civic education within their schooling systems, the underlying frames and functions of this inclusion differ significantly. Malaysia situates its civic and citizenship education under the rubric of national cohesion and ethnic unity, aligning curriculum features with state-pillars and soft-skills portfolios that aim to foster a collective “Malaysian identity.” Meanwhile, Indonesia anchors its citizenship education in the ideological foundation of Pancasila and its constitutional values, deploying it more explicitly as a mechanism of national identity building and democratic citizenry.

Recent scholarship supports this distinction in orientations: for instance, Dewantara, Suhendar & Rosyid (2019) contend that in Indonesia “Civic Education must be in accordance with Pancasila values in all aspects of citizenship learning”, emphasising the ideological embedding of the subject in national identity formation. Conversely, research on Malaysian civic education highlights the integration of state-pillars and national unity paradigms into curriculum content, reinforcing the role of education as a social integrator rather than purely a democratic skills-builder. Taken together, these findings indicate that while the formal structure of civic education may appear similar across the two countries, the meaning, purpose, and expected citizen outcomes diverge substantially – a reality that any effective comparative analysis must acknowledge (Yee, 2018).

Beyond identifying similarities and differences, the comparison also provides insights into potential practices that Indonesia could adapt to strengthen its civic education. One notable aspect of the Malaysian system is the integration of civic learning with community-based activities and co-curricular programmes, which encourages students to experience civic values through real social engagement. In addition, Malaysia’s emphasis on structured civic themes and value-based assessment provides a more systematic approach to evaluating students’ civic attitudes and behaviours. These

practices may offer useful references for Indonesia in enhancing experiential civic learning and strengthening the practical implementation of democratic citizenship education within schools.

3.9. Ideological Institutionalisation and Pedagogical Logic

The comparative findings indicate that differences in civic education between Indonesia and Malaysia are rooted in distinct patterns of ideological institutionalisation. In Indonesia, Pancasila functions not only as the constitutional foundation but also as the philosophical basis of civic education, rendering pedagogy inherently normative and value-laden. Dewantara et al. (2019) argue that Pancasila is inseparable from the identity and objectives of civic education in Indonesia, shaping both curricular content and instructional practices toward the internalisation of national values. Consequently, this normative orientation tends to prioritise value transmission and moral coherence over deliberative and critical inquiry within classroom interactions.

In contrast, Malaysia's approach to civic education is shaped by its multicultural social configuration, where civic learning is oriented toward fostering tolerance, social cohesion, and respect across ethnic communities. Comparative studies on civic education curricula highlight this distinction, noting that Malaysia's *Pendidikan Sivik* emphasises multicultural engagement, whereas Indonesia's model is anchored in Pancasila as the core philosophical and pedagogical foundation. In the Malaysian context, civic and multicultural education is primarily directed toward maintaining social cohesion within a plural society. Empirical studies indicate that its implementation prioritises consistent policy practice, shared cultural values, and interethnic harmony rather than the internalisation of a singular ideological doctrine (Patras et al., 2022). Accordingly, pedagogical practices tend to emphasise observable expressions of tolerance and civic responsibility, framing citizenship formation as the management of diversity through accommodation rather than ideological consolidation.

These differing institutional foundations give rise to distinct models of civic culture. Indonesia's approach can be characterised as a normative-ideological model of citizenship formation, in which civic identity is closely tied to national ideology and constitutional values. In contrast, Malaysia reflects a multicultural-integrative model, where civic education functions as a mediating instrument between cultural diversity and national unity. Rooted in a plural societal structure, this model prioritises social cohesion, interethnic tolerance, and the cultivation of harmonious coexistence through relational and community-oriented pedagogies (Khader, 2012; Tan et al., 2018; Balakrishnan, 2004).

Although both countries share the overarching objective of fostering responsible and engaged citizens, the underlying causal mechanisms differ significantly. In Indonesia, normative and ideological commitments shape both curricular content and instructional approaches, reinforcing a unified civic identity grounded in state philosophy. In contrast, Malaysia's approach is driven by plural social imperatives, leading to pedagogical strategies that emphasise dialogue, inclusion, and the management of diversity within a multicultural framework (Reichert & Torney-Purta, 2019; Hou, 2020).

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sense, Indonesia foregrounds ideological coherence in shaping citizenship, whereas Malaysia prioritises relational and community-oriented pedagogies to accommodate social diversity.

3.10. Effectiveness and Tensions in Practice

Despite strong institutional foundations and clearly articulated curricular intent, the effectiveness of civic education in practice remains a subject of ongoing inquiry. Research on civic education implementation in Indonesia shows that while curricula emphasise character (value) development, classroom practice may still tend toward theoretical and conventional methods, limiting opportunities for active student engagement and critical inquiry. Sakban et al. (2024) find that civic education in Indonesia is shifting toward more transformative and inclusive approaches, yet challenges persist in pedagogy and contextual relevance.

Similarly, studies on specific instructional strategies suggest that alternative approaches, such as problem-based civic learning, yield stronger civic skills outcomes compared to conventional methods, indicating that innovation in pedagogy may influence effectiveness. For example, contextual problem-based civic education has been shown to improve students' civic skills more effectively than conventional approaches (Robert, Maftuh, & Darmawan, 2015).

These insights reveal a tension between policy intent and classroom realities. In Indonesia, despite curricula that formally integrate Pancasila and civic values, teachers often rely on traditional pedagogies that may not fully activate students' critical capacities. Malaysia faces a parallel tension: while Sivik education aims to promote tolerance and unity, the emphasis on social harmony can constrain open critical dialogue about structural inequalities or contested sociopolitical issues. Both contexts demonstrate that the transformative potential of civic education depends not only on institutional design but also on pedagogical enactment and teacher capacity in real-world classrooms.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that civic education in Malaysia and Indonesia functions as an important instrument of nation-building but is shaped by different ideological and socio-political contexts. Malaysia's model emphasises multicultural accommodation and social cohesion within a plural society, while Indonesia's civic education is grounded in the ideological centrality of Pancasila as the foundation of national identity and democratic citizenship. The findings suggest that civic pedagogy is not ideologically neutral but reflects historically embedded national priorities. In Indonesia, the institutionalisation of Pancasila provides normative coherence but may create tensions between value transmission and deliberative learning. In Malaysia, the focus on multicultural integration promotes social harmony yet may limit deeper critical engagement with contested political issues. These differences illustrate two distinctive models of citizenship formation in Southeast Asia: ideological consolidation and multicultural accommodation. Theoretically, this study contributes to comparative civic education scholarship by highlighting the role of institutionalised ideological frameworks in shaping civic pedagogy. However, as a literature-based analysis, the study does not examine classroom-level implementation. Future research using empirical classroom observation could provide deeper insights into how civic ideals are enacted in educational practice.

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