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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF VALUE SYSTEMS IN  
MALAYSIA: IN SEARCH OF EFFECTIVE INITIATIVES**

**<sup>1</sup>Sakinah Muslim, <sup>2</sup>Nor Azizah Zainal Abidin &  
<sup>3</sup>Marfunizah Ma'dan**

School of Government, Universiti Utara Malaysia

*<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author: [sakinah@uum.edu.my](mailto:sakinah@uum.edu.my)*

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**ABSTRACT**

In an effort to ensure that people in Malaysia have a strong character and at the same time have the ability to make mature decisions, they need to be guided by the right moral and ethical principles. In this regard, the development of society's value system requires a strong framework or foundation. However, what are the efforts and policies that develop and support the right value system? This study is under the 'interpretivism' paradigm and is qualitative in nature. The focus of this study is given to the concept of moral values. This study produces a list of important initiatives that are very crucial in the context of society's value system in Malaysia. The results of the research show that: the intervention of value education must be complete and have a comprehensive module or measure; special emphasis and continuous application of values; recognition and promotion of good values by providing special awards and mass promotions and involving all mediums; implementation in the form of a team and must be comprehensive rather than ad-hoc and one-off; an active discussion that involves various levels and continuous; formalize value education and provide a complete module as a guide; the creation of social imaginations and shared values; the study needs to be done

continuously; guideline on the use of media and ensure development in a local context and adopting local culture. It will contribute to the existing work by providing considerable insights into value system initiatives in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Values, Malaysia, Value Systems, Character Building.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the context of the development of human capital in a country, values and value systems are important elements that need to be discussed. Values are about what is important to us and they also provide direction to goals. According to Rokeach (1979), any value orientation will affect social phenomena. This means that the values chosen will shape society. He has studied 36 human values arranged in a value system. He has stated that all individuals recognize the same values but at different rates or levels. Values such as honesty, passion, peace, and wisdom are recognized by all cultures. The assumption that all humans share the same values was also defended by previous researchers (for example Allport, 1961; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). Therefore, to develop the human capital of a country, we need to pay special attention to the application of the right value system.

Basically, values are an important aspect of human behavior. Without noble values, a society may have wealth and development, but it will be empty or soulless. According to Schroeder et al. (2019), values inspire, motivate, and make someone carry out tasks and responsibilities. A person's value and moral system is indeed something that is only embedded in the individual, but it will affect something that can be seen, which is the individual's behavior. This makes value the main element in the formation of the human resource development of a country.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The purpose of this study is to understand the views of academics about the value system development efforts in Malaysia. In order to fulfill this aim, qualitative data was collected from interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with experienced faculty members that are

experts in nation-building and nationhood area, which focused on revealing respondents' insights into value system development initiatives. In particular, participants were invited to reflect and share their views and knowledge on value systems from academic perspectives. The specific question is 'what needs to be done to further strengthen the development of the value system in Malaysia?' Academics' perspectives are categorized according to their differences and similarities.

## **FINDINGS**

It is undeniable that the value system in this country has not yet received the attention it deserves either in terms of practice or in terms of education and research. Self-identity, unity, ethical values, and competitive nature are only discussed and applied seasonally and at certain levels only. This situation will remain the same if we do not take any action to change this situation for the better. To start the initiatives, we need to examine the suggestions that have been made by the expert.

### **The Intervention of Value Education Must Be Complete and Have A Comprehensive Module or Measure**

Education related to value elements must be very comprehensive such as in the form of special modules and syllabi. The content also needs to be appropriate to the present time. According to the fourth respondent, modules and programs must be continuous and need to target all parties.

"...there should be a proper module and a continuous program. After that, create a program that can integrate them out there. Uniform bodies should be mandatory for all three schools, namely the national school, the Chinese-type school, and the Tamil-type school. We have to do this, and the program must be once a week or once every two weeks. The module must be planned and there must be a program. There must be a series of lectures to webinars everywhere. But it must be clear what is the purpose of specific initiatives. If we want to educate pupils on Rukun Negara, what is the proper intervention in the school assembly?"

The fourth respondent also comments on the weakness of the existing initiatives. Overall, it is incomplete and just targeted a certain group of people:

Rukun Negara during school assembly is not an insightful program, it's just a recitation session. We have the Rukun Negara Secretariat, what does the Rukun Negara Secretariat do? If the Rukun Negara Secretariat is just for students, do you think that teachers don't need it? To the teachers, where is the program related to Rukun Negara? Can you see it? The same goes for The National Education Philosophy. This philosophy is also for us. Education philosophy is not just for schools, right? But in institutions of higher learning, people never talk about the concept of Philosophy of Education".

In terms of curriculum, the second respondent claimed that education needs a proper Curriculum to make it more meaningful:

"If we say education, it means we must have curriculum. After that, we must have syllabus. The meaning of the curriculum is what we really want to achieve, we want to teach about the Rukun Negara. When comes the syllabus, has certain topics. And this is very important because we want to teach the Rukun Negara at a fairly young level, which is perhaps in kindergarten, and we want to introduce it. Then continued in primary school, continued in secondary school, and finally in IPTA, IPTS. We all have Rukun Negara education. So the higher level must be more complicated. So, for those levels, there must be a curriculum and a syllabus. Like Belief in God, the ruler must have something he wants to convey. I don't want to teach faith there. What religious beliefs? So maybe what is important there is the social aspect of the religion. His religion has a psychological aspect, and a social aspect. So, the social aspect we can raise the social aspect of religion, we raise it in the framework of our pluralistic population, right, the meaning is this, it's like religion, it has an interpretation from ustaz, there is an ongoing interpretation from the preacher, there is an interpretation from JAKIM and so on JAIS. It means you can't let go like that because it's an ideology of life, that's religion. Way of life. So Rukun Negara is like that. He is the national ideology. Every citizen must want to hold this thing. So, there must be an interpretation from the government and it should be for me, this Rukun Negara education in the form of a curriculum, a syllabus, that must come from the State

Bureau. We have, right. "The fifth respondent also emphasized the importance of modules:

The fourth respondent touched on the appropriate approach that needs to be taken. That approach should be creative and complete:

"If the children enter Standard 1 or pre-school we educate them, exposed them about the Rukun Negara, try to make narrations of the Rukun Negara, and make animations of the national pillar. Tell them about national philosophy in children's animation, and children's stories, then we can develop these kids. Unfortunately, no one has ever thought about this"

The second respondent also suggested the appropriate approach and content according to the level:

"...when they go to secondary school, they get more information about faith in God, then they go to IPTA, IPTS, then maybe we provide advance level of the information. If before this they just remember, understand, and practice, in IPTA, IPTS we should add analysis, and evaluation. If we can create, we create a new method, we create a new strategy, a new approach after the students go through it in kindergarten, and school. If we don't have stages like this, surely now we just memorize it, everyone just memorizes it. I don't even understand because I have never been given understanding. How do you want to appreciate it if you don't even understand it"

Hence, the government should take serious consideration of this issue. Educators and related parties need to be creative to ensure that good values can be instilled in all students at any level. Also, all related programs need to be comprehensive and systematic

### **A Specific Emphasis and Genuine Implementation of Values**

Anything related to value and value systems should be given special attention. Instilling values is the most basic thing before we proceed to policy development and other phases. All parties need to work together to provide a good foundation, especially for the younger generation. For the second respondent, Rukun Negara education needs to be made a very important foundation in Malaysians' life. It needs to be an important tenet just as Pancasila for the Indonesian people.

"There should be Rukun Negara education like in Indonesia. Indonesian people even though their work is only labor, know every single principle of Pancasila in detail. But we are only limited to that title because we do not have proper exposure and education on Rukun Negara".

Emphasis should also be given at the initial level of education and continue to the highest level. So proper program content must be in accordance with the stages:

"...we need to teach the Rukun Negara at a fairly young level, which is kindergarten. We need to develop them in stages. For instance, when they enter primary school, there will get additional information after they get it from kindergarten".

The application shouldn't be artificial. The third respondent asks everyone to back to the most basic thing that needs to be done, which is a thorough application that includes cognitive, motor skills, and emotional. The application must include all institutions. For example, the third respondent insisted on the application of good values:

"...the first is nurturing in terms of cognitive, motor skill, emotional and spiritual. And all institutions should be mobilized together. Educational institutions, family institutions, and organizations, all need to possess good value. For instance, Japanese people are clean, even when they are old, they still practice a clean way of life owing to the fact that they have been taught from a young age that cleanliness is a good thing".

The implementation of Rukun Negara also needs to be done wholeheartedly. This country's philosophy needs to be practiced in the best way so that it becomes the identity of the community as expressed by the fifth respondent:

"The Pillar of the Nation needs to be made into one's identity, right, so belief in God is right. Every Malaysian must believe in God no matter what his religion is. So if there are Malaysians who do not believe in God, atheists, they are not Malaysians...".

So, all parties need to start efforts by applying pure values and prioritizing values that lead to progress. This is a basic initiative that

can be carried out at all levels. So, all members of the community need to give full commitment. The second respondent said that the unity and integration among communities in this country. It is only artificial, and it is just to avoid unrest and crisis. Accordingly, this effort requires the commitment and expertise of all parties in order to be realized properly.

### **Recognition and Promotion of Good Values by Providing Special Awards and Mass Promotions and Involving All Mediums**

In order to show the importance of good values, there must be proper recognition and promotion. For example, the fifth respondent suggested that there should be recognition at the school level.

“...I think it is necessary to realize that we give too much emphasis on exams. Now is the time to emphasize the values among students. Values need to be emphasized from a young age, for example how to queue and how to greet older people. That's a value that isn't in the textbook that needs to be taught and emphasized at the school level. Hence, school is not just about an exam. Maybe we need to recognize and publicized good figures in values. Not just academic awards but good character awards, curriculum awards, and so on. It means we recognize values. When we recognize, that's the culture we want so people will go in that direction, right? ‘The best school personality’ for example? People will start to give special attention to values. Now they just highlighted who can get 100 percent 9A right. We have to fight that, right? We talk about it the same way we talk about it when we deliver the SPM results, right? That's one of the things we can do so that this value is not seen as alien right? When there is an award, people will try to achieve it, right”.

In terms of promotion, the fifth respondent stated:

"...previously, there's a lot of unity ads by big companies, and I think it is very interesting. Petronas for instance always come out with something touching. When I teach ethnic relations first, I tell each group to find videos that touch their feelings, some people cry watching those videos. I think that should be encouraged. Now there is no need for a long video, people want to watch tik tok. Thus, we should make this short one that is related to the pillars of the country.

Make it short and to the point and that should be promoted. Apart from the existing movies, we can use the signboard.

Along the 800 kilometers PLUS, Johor all the way to the North all the way to UUM, we need that kind of signboard. The exposure to Rukun Negara is only at school. After that, it's over. If someone doesn't enter IPT, it's over. So, there is no longer a continuation program, right? That's a new IPT to start with a national club. It didn't exist before. I used to think that the issue of unity was related to the pillars of the country, people stopped at the school level. It means that the unity is finished at the school level, right? Actually, even at the university level, we should emphasize Rukun Negara as well. Because those who come out might probably become leaders or PTD who develop policies and so on. If PTD doesn't have awareness about Rukun Negara, doesn't have awareness about the constitution, or history, how does he want to make a policy that proclaims the pillars of the nation, identity, and so on? That's why I think we need a signboard, short videos, and so on. I think there are many things we can think of to promote the unity of the country."

These opinions clearly show that rewards and promotions are very important so that there is continuous awareness in the community. Efforts should not be taken lightly because they will have long-term effects on all parties. These efforts should include all mediums of media.

### **Implementation in an Established Team and Must Be Comprehensive rather than Ad-Hoc and One-Off**

Implementation must be very systematic and be carried out by one specific team. It cannot be ad-hoc and one-off as the second respondent mentions:

"...For me the policymakers need to ensure that the policy is implemented. If we can't do it, then it won't go smoothly. So those who do that must always look for improvement. Regarding this matter, even if the minister wants to push it aside, the policymaker must find an NGO that can always promote that matter. So, this NGO is like the government too... it's not just the government. They play the role of managing the country as well. So, we really need to use the role of certain NGOs such as the national language policy which is not going



very well. So, we use NGOs like GAPENA who insist on that. GAPENA made statements and their leaders insisted and so on. So, if you show your commitment, there's potential to start soon".

This initiative requires careful planning in order to be able to choose the right members and form a group that can give full commitment. It needs to be guaranteed that this effort is not only rhetorical or ceremonial in nature.

### **An Active Discussion that Involves Various Levels and Continuous**

A good value or value system needs to be something insightful and concrete. It needs a strong framework and guidelines to ensure that the right values are practiced. In this regard, discussions about values, the practice of values, and guidance need to be held actively in all mediums. It cannot be held just in the month of independence. According to the fifth respondent:

"...I think what we are doing in a pandemic situation, we have a webinar, we have a dialogue is good. I think we need to spread the word, right? We need to encourage more".

To ensure that this effort can be implemented, the support and assistance of all related agencies, especially the media, institutions of higher education, experts in the field, and government and private parties are very necessary. Diverse opportunities, expertise, and funds are important elements in making discussions active and continuous.

### **Formalize Value Education and Provide A Complete Module as A Guide**

Education is the main medium for cultivating good values and developing attitudes in society. Although the emphasis on values in various policies has been made, education will provide a stronger foundation. Among the things that can be done is by adapting the practices of countries that have proven to be successful in their values and progress. There are countries that emphasize manners before knowledge. They also emphasize the education of the heart. Instilling student morals such as mentality, evaluation, engagement and moral attitude through all activities at school. This includes order, awareness,

hard work, justice and harmony in relationships and with the environment. This is by providing one class every week.

In a survey of Value Education in Europe by the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE) it was found that among the most frequently mentioned topics from 26 European countries were environmental awareness, cross-culturalism, international understanding, democratic citizenship, peace and anti-racist. This can also be applied in this country.

The fifth respondent insisted that there should be a special subject and not just added in other subjects.

"I think we need to take Rukun Negara or National Education Philosophy as a course. A course for students, especially school students, is not just embedded. It should be discussed directly instead of touched on indirectly in any subject such as civics. Don't just read the pledge during the assembly but there is no appreciation or practice".

At the university level, the relevance of teaching and assessment materials has a great impact on the development of human capital. Normally learning depends on the dynamics of the interaction between the two main elements. However, there is a deficiency in the proliferation of the application of values and the strength of moral appreciation after students take the CTU 151 course. The study of Rubiah et al. (2017) showed the need for the content of the course to be carefully arranged and planned so that students can be exposed to knowledge about civilization and its contribution to world civilization. A similar study was also conducted by Faridah et al. (2018) regarding the implementation and perception of students toward learning strategies and soft skills in the Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization (TITAS) course at the University of Malaya. However, he found that the student's perception of learning strategies and assessment methods was significant and had a positive effect on the achievements obtained in the assessment of coursework and the achievement of soft skills. He also suggested that improvements should continue to be made to the course to ensure the continuity of the values of civilization in the construction of Malaysian civilization.

The practice of pure values in the course of Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization (TITAS) towards the formation of the student's personality is also carried out. The study of Mohd Azrul et al. (2017) found that the level of understanding and practice of moral values in the case of TITAS is at a high level. This finding is proven by the mean score obtained for each construct being at a high level. This shows that the elements of pure values such as in the construction of religious beliefs, morals, and ethics are at a very high level and can be applied among students. The findings of this study are in line with the view (Ahmad Firdaus, 2017) that students should be encouraged to emulate and practice good values as an appreciation of self-skills and the quality of good citizens as well as being concerned about life issues and self-development. According to a study (Suraya Ishak et al., 2014) related to students' views on the use of cases in learning ethics subjects. The results of the study show that the use of current cases allows students to better understand the theory and application of ethical theory. In addition, the use of current cases allows students to gain knowledge about ethical issues that they may potentially face after entering the real world of work and industrial environments.

Hence, it is clear that formal value education is crucial in developing value systems. Complete modules and guides must be established to enable value education to be solid.

### **The Creation of Social Imaginations and Shared Values**

Charles Wright Mills in his work titled 'The Sociological Imagination' has presented three elements that need to be seen when studying society, namely the individual, the family, and the community, and from there the society exists. To create a strong unification among the people, we need to create a sociological imagination in our society. The third respondent suggested a lot about this.

“... We were once colonized. When we were colonized, we received a very different colonial heritage. So, he has different ideas and views, producing different social biographies...”

“...We have to accept the fact that our history is unity in diversity. That is why the Ministry of National Unity introduced the National Unity Policy called unity in diversity. We cannot pitch the idea of unity in uniformity. Due to diversity, each has different values and customs.

The Chinese with their values and principles, and the Malays with their values and principles. But there are universal values that can be shared".

Thus, efforts to create a sociological imagination and shared values need to be accelerated. This will indirectly facilitate further efforts.

### **Continuous and Serious Study on the Value System**

The study needs to be done continuously and then when there are findings, accommodation needs to be done. This is important so that appropriate changes can be made. According to the third respondent:

"There is an effort at the state government level when they do a mapping social cohesion study. Every year there will be a social cohesion study and a method to bridge the gap between different races. If we don't really know them, how can we educate them effectively?"

An example of social cohesion is like what we have in a vernacular school. I used to go to a Chinese school, and my brother went to a Chinese school, but we can see that the school make adjustments to accommodate all races. Chinese school has a canteen that provides halal food. There is no such obstacle. We can adjust the accommodation. Education that starts from home and outside the home is formal and informal. The next is peers. The second one I called organization earlier, meaning that education does not stop there. Continued with the organization of how these colleagues can continue efforts for national development, national development, to bind and strengthen the relationship of unity. The rest are peers. Applied technology, the continuous campaign".

If we try to understand and make improvements continuously, then we will finally be able to achieve unity and good values.

### **Proper Guidelines for the Use of Social Media**

Social media is very important at this point. Researchers usually use the definition made by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) which defines social media as a group of internet-based applications that are built based on web 2.0 concepts and technologies, allowing users to create and exchange generated content. Social media has provided a good

communication platform for members to use the internet. Starting with Myspace in 2003, there are various sites with add-on applications that have been developed to allow the sharing of various things. Facebook, which was introduced in 2004, has accelerated this development (Mohamed & Ali, 2018). Social sites such as blogs, websites, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Life Bon, Hi5, Orket, Tagged, LinkedIn, IMO, and more (Ibraheem & Zayed, 2016). In the context of values, the role of the media becomes very important. It is also a medium of support for education. Social media also plays a major role in the dissemination of information today. If the information presented is not accurate, then it will have a big impact on the community. If it is used properly, it will be able to help the formation of pure values, but the opposite will happen if it is misused. Therefore, the community needs to be guided and controlled in the use of social media. The third respondent emphasized the role of social media:

"I'm just wondering how we can use the advantages of technology to infiltrate the values of understanding into our identity. They play games to understand the context of pre-education. Understanding education through games. After the teacher, play games. And the game is very related to the subjects taught. So here the real actor is the family institution to educate but the mechanism, and the tool to deliver the education should be diverse apart from love, attention and focus on the individual and the family institution should also be diversified with training mechanisms. Mind training, communication skills training, self-management skills training, respect skills training. From pictures and technology, they learn. That's the way they are now. And we also need to change with the times. What has changed is the way the mechanism is delivered. But the filling of the philosophy, the essence is still strong to the question of Rukun Negara, the question of becoming oneself, giving birth to individuals who are physically and spiritually balanced, inclusive, so these things are the filling of us. The vehicle can be in the form of high technology. But the filling requires humanity that can apply pure values including religious understanding".

The fifth respondent is also concerned about the risk for vulnerable people:

"Has the matter been disclosed at the school level? In the assembly, has it been included in the syllabus, I have to see, I'm not sure about

this. Students are vulnerable. Maybe students need to have some kind of guidelines for students on how to use social media well". In this regard, perhaps we can take the opportunity to increase the use of social media in courses to deliver content and engage students and educators in ways that may have been impossible before. The use of social networks in education, combined with face-to-face engagement will enable appreciation among students, although the role of educators needs to be well supported in order to develop digital pedagogy (Faloon, 2012).

### **Value Development Based on the Local Context**

Value development is very important, but proper development is development in the local context. This was stated by the first respondent:

"I can't move on and talk about the word 'peace'. In Africa there is also this word, 'ubuntu' is his name. In Japan there is this word too, its name is 'ikigai'. In Sweden there is this word, 'lagom' is his name. It means that in every society there are fundamental words like this to describe the human being. It is not just Malay. It's just that there is no Western world because he's gone, right? Thereupon, we must reuse these things so that we can rebuild what is our context. I think the context is important. That's why when we have no context when we enter the Western world, we become more western. Hence, we say it's not a joke anymore, but it's because we don't have the context. We take people's identities to be our identities. Even during hot weather, wear a coat with a tie. Please google Nelson Mandela and see his image. You can count that he wears batik clothes more than he wears a coat and tie. He believes that dressing in batik is more suitable and more attractive than in western suits. This is an African. He has a selection of Indonesian Batik. If we can't change our clothes to make us more Malay in the cultural context, you can forget about changing your mind which is more difficult".

Likewise, the second respondent raised the issue of identity and original culture that has been eroded. This causes society to concern less. Accordingly, the best way is to start to appreciate the good local culture.

"... we want to strengthen our identity. However, that identity seems to be ignored when we want to improve the level of our standard of living in terms of the economy. It means we forget about aspects of identity. So for me, it makes no sense if we succeed at the regional level, we succeed at the world level, we become a great economic power but our people are on average poor in terms of identity".

Therefore, we can conclude that development needs to be done in a local mold. In this case, a strong identity is very necessary. This is in line with what was stated by Siddiq (2009) which is identity means the original qualities or character possessed by a person or a nation that forms the identity and character of that nation.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study discusses the effective initiatives in the development of the value system in Malaysia. In an effort to establish a strong value system in Malaysia, several important aspects have been identified. Findings confirm that there are various efforts that can be carried out to ensure the success of value system development. The study participants who are also experts in the field have suggested various appropriate ways and steps: the intervention of value education must be complete and have a comprehensive module or measure; special emphasis and continuous application of values; recognition and promotion of good values by providing special awards and mass promotions and involving all mediums; implementation in the form of a team and must be comprehensive rather than ad-hoc and one-off; an active discussion that involves various levels and continuous; formalize value education and provide a complete module as a guide; the creation of social imaginations and shared values; the study needs to be done continuously; guideline on the use of media and ensure development in a local context and adopting local culture. Along with these findings, further study of these findings is very important to ensure that these recommendations are fully implemented.

The results of this study also provide evidence that there should be more in-depth studies on some matters related to the development of the value system. It is meaningful that the important facts obtained in this study are further refined so that this preliminary research study will benefit everyone. Furthermore, some questions are still unclear.

Based on the findings from the suggestions of the study participants, then some things need to be expedited. In order to have a meaningful intervention, the education of values needs to start from an early age, planned and managed in a focused and comprehensive manner so that the learning process also becomes a good character-building process.

What is important is the paradigm shift in society. A serious emphasis on values and the framework of the value system in the country of Indonesia needs to be expedited. If seen in Indonesia, there are modules, syllabuses and courses that specifically apply and study Pancasila which is their national philosophy. In this country similar things also need to be implemented. Similarly, some rules that have been set to ensure the appreciation and compliance of Pancasila do not exist in the context of the Rukun Negara and the Constitution in this country.

## **CONCLUSION**

Various social problems show that society's values are becoming more fragile. Although we need progress, leaders should focus on the moral and ethical dimensions that are important ingredients for nation-building. Apart from providing educational opportunities, the formation of strong character and high morals is important in the progress of a nation and country. The focus must be on the formation and building of character especially among the younger generation because they will lead the country. A successful nation is a nation that always makes this important aspect in shaping the next generation. They need to be well guided about all aspects of life so that they will be able to become decision makers who can distinguish between good and bad. However, to instill the right values for the younger generation, it must be in line with current trends to give more impact. This study is one of the efforts to build a better society value system. It contributes to the existing work by identifying the related recommendations.

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