ALTERNATIVE CIVIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: A CASE OF DAP'S DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL
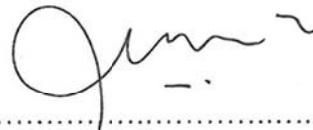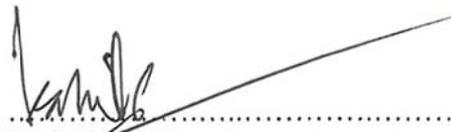
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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Thesis
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ALTERNATIVE CIVIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: A CASE OF DAP'S DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

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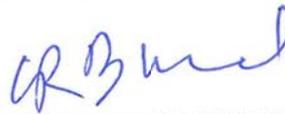# ALTERNATIVE CIVIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: A CASE OF DAP'S DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

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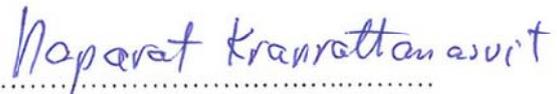on
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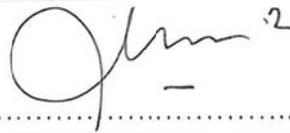
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ALTERNATIVE CIVIC EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF DAP'S DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The alternative civic education is a civic education in informal sectors such as NGOs, individuals, political parties, and youth organizations which promotes political socialization and citizen participation by establishing links between citizens and political systems that allow the meaningful participation of the citizens. The Democratic School (SEKDEM) was established by Democratic Action Party (DAP) to share knowledge with youth on politics and democracy, debate the role of the state and interest of people in the economy, as well as providing the platform to create a democratic youth generation. By using a collection of interviews and secondary data, the study categorized respondents into three groups, the main facilitator or organizer, the participants or alumni, and the individuals involved with another alternative civic education besides SEKDEM. The study identified five impetus of DAP for the establishment of SEKDEM, controversial allegations, decreasing of youth political participation, the exclusivity of new politics discourses, creating of democratic youth, and weaknesses of formal civic education. This study argued that the emergence of alternative civic education in particular SEKDEM is an evolution of civic education vision from good citizenship to democratic citizenship, which in turn impacts the critical thinking of participants on social, economic, and political issues. In addition, the study also argued that SEKDEM not only enhances youth political participation in informal politics but also formal politics.

KEY WORDS: ALTERNATIVE CIVIC EDUCATION / NEW POLITICS / DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP / YOUTH PARTICIPATION / POLITICS

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CONTENTS (cont.)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABU	Anything But UMNO
ALIRAN	Society for the Flow of National Consciousness
AMANAH	National Trust Party
BERSIH 2.0	Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections 2.0
BERSIH Booth Camp	Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections 2.0 Booth Camp
BICDEM	Speak Democracy
BJCK	Buku Jalanan Chow Kit
BN	National Front
BNYV	National Front Youth Volunteer
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
DAP	Democratic Action Party
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
FNF	Friedrich Naumann Foundation
GE	General Election
GMI	Abolish ISA Movement
GPMS	Federation of Malay Students Union
HINDRAF	Hindu Rights Action Force
IBM'15	Malaysia Youth Index 2015
IDEAS	Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
IKD	Institute for Policy Research
ISA	Internal Security Act
IYRES	Malaysian Youth Development Research Institute
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Foundation
KBSM	Integrated Secondary School Curriculum
KSJT	Telawi Street Art Communities
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (cont.)

MEGC	Middle East Graduate Center
MPU	General Education Subjects
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	Islamic Party of Malaysia
PERKASA	Malay for Mighty Native Organization
PH	Alliance of Hope
PKR	People's Justice Party
PLKN	National Service Training Program
PR	People's Alliance PLKN - National Service Training Program
PRM	People's Party of Malaysia
SAMM	Young People Solidarity Malaysia
SCHOLAR	AMANAH School of Leadership
SDP	Social-Democratic Party
SEKDEM	Democratic School
SKOP	School of Political Communication
SMM	Students Solidarity Malaysia
SPF	Sasakawa Peace Foundation
SUARAM	Voice of the Malaysian People
TITAS	Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization
UBU	Universiti Bangsar Utama
UCCA	Universities and University Colleges Act
UMNO	United Malays National Organisational
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

The education system is an essential component of driving citizens and countries towards a better and sustainable development for democracy. Generally known, Malaysia is a pluralistic country which is diverse in racial, cultural and religious backgrounds. Therefore, the education policy created by the government is not only aimed at educating student at schools or universities, but also as one of the tools to build a national unity[1] to bridge between citizens in a larger context. National unity is a process aimed at uniting people of different ethnic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds for beneficial purposes (Amienyi, 2005). Beneficial goals can be interpreted as adaptability of purpose, place and time. The concept of national unity is a process of uniting people of diverse races and different cultures under one national identity (Ismail, 2003). Whereas, the application of national unity in education often uses good citizenship values such as glorifying leaders, respecting older people and obeying the law. Hence, in the context of the educational system in Malaysia, it can be defined as a situation that reflects the unification of good values that are shared by all citizens of various ancestries, racial and ethnic groups to create good citizenship. One of the subjects closely related to the development of democracy is civic education[2].

In Malaysia, civic education has been taught at school since 1954 following the proposal of Education Ordinance 1952 (Sidin and Aziz, 1992, p. 20). After independence, the government continued to introduce civic education to the school but had went through some evolutions and changes. The aim is for sowing, instilling and cultivating, the spirit of love of the nation, self-esteem, and the spirit of

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[1] In Malaysia, the term of national unity is often used to describe integration, good citizenship, loyalty, unity of society, nation building and nation-building identity.

[2] In addition to civic education, it is also known as civic education, democratic education or political education.

wanting and being able to understand the problems of society as well as willing to act or to get involved in solving the problems (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1979, p. 73). Civic education has been taught as a separate subject from 1954 until 1983 and 2005 until 2013 for primary school and 2017 for secondary school respectively. Also, it has been taught through the application of civic values in other subjects such as Science, Geography, History and Health (Tejima, 2007) and Islamic Education, Moral Education and History (Sinar Online, 2014).

Not only at the school level, the government had also introduced civic education subjects in public and private higher education level. In 2007, subjects of Ethnic Relations, Malaysian Citizenship and Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization (TITAS) were created and used as a tool for socialization of politics for students. In this regard, it prioritizes knowledge of national history, governmental system, basic constitutional principles, governmental procedures and legislative matters (Shaari, Besar and Jali, 2017).

Post-2008, in the wake of the political tsunami, civic education also emerged in the alternative[3] or informal sectors such as opposition political parties and civil societies in more structured programs. Although, generally, the political party is primarily to champion the party's manifesto, but there are also some social activities they got involved in (Baginda, 1992, p. 72). Political party promotes political socialization and citizen participation by establishing links between citizens and political systems that allow the political participation of individual and group with socialization and participation functions (Hofmeister and Grabow, 2011, p. 16).

The main discussion of this development phenomenon is the evolution of civic education in the context of Malaysia from being a good citizen to a democratic citizen. According to Bandu, Awang and Ahmad (2016, p. 736), a good citizen is a balanced and harmonious group which consisted of a person who is knowledgeable, noble and glorious in terms of spiritual, mentally and physically healthy and clean and able to serve the religion, race and nation. Meanwhile, democratic citizenship is sincerity, independence and public mindedness in democracy (Gardner, 2011, pp. 934-

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[3] Alternative civic education is a civic education in informal sectors such as NGOs, individuals, political parties and youth organizations. In this study, researchers will use alternative civic education to refer an informal civic education which is believed to be the catalyst for the process of political development in Malaysia.

936). In this context, sincerity in general is to speak and express in the political arena by acting in accordance with their actual beliefs. The independence means political reasoning or opinion of citizens based on their own analysis without the reasoning of others. To add further, public mindedness is an obligation for the citizens to believe in the conception of the collective good. The idea of good citizens is emphasized in the development of citizen as individuals and members of the community but affected less on the active and critical participation of citizens such as democracy, politics and human rights.

According to that, political parties, such as the Democratic Action Party (DAP) has established a Democratic School (SEKDEM) as an effort to share knowledge with today's youth about politics, democracy and the equilibrium point between the clash of people's interests in the economy, and to be a platform to create democratic youth (Faizal, 2015). The need to continue democratic reform in Malaysia and the evolution of good citizenship into democratic citizenship has become a catalyst or impetus of alternative civic education more flourish.

1.2 Research problems

Malaysia's vision of the role of citizens is still a passive one which highlights characteristics such as patriotic citizens, loyal to the nation, willing to sacrifice defending the homeland and society (Murniati and Radhi, 2012, p. 70). Both of them argues that the content is not align with the development of civic education globally, especially regarding the concept of a good citizen in Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM). They also argue, Malaysia is left behind compared to recent development of good citizen concept at a global level such as the ability to assess public policies, the courage to speak and express views, and the spirit of defending the freedom and individual possessions. In other words, it is not compatible with the development of democratic citizenship.

In addition, the existence of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UCCA) 1971 has weakened the development of democratic citizenship. The UCCA has caused dissatisfaction in student movement when student activism must be focused only within the territory of the university campuses because the act has

banned university students from participating in off-campus political activities (Fadzil and Ku Samsu, 2015). Although the government has made an amendment of Section 15 of the UCCA in 2012, which allows the students to join a political party, the involvement of students in a political party is limited outside of campus. Still, political and critical discussions or activities are difficult to organize within the campus and need to be through a strict bureaucracy.

Those students wishing to engage in a more critical issues have to attend off-campus programs and go to alternative sectors such as opposition political parties like the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the People's Party of Malaysia (PRM) as well as several civil societies such as Aliran and Voice of the Malaysian People or SUARAM (Jaharudin, 2012). Although, alternative civic education has grown post 1998 Reformation such as the political training workshop undertaken by the Universiti Bangsar Utama (UBU), human rights workshops by SUARAM and internal training by PAS, structured civic education and open to all young people regardless of political background by the political parties are only growing after 2008.

SEKDEM organized by DAP is the first structured civic education organised by political parties for the public. Not just that, SEKDEM also the most popular and most attended, as well as being sustainable and received a welcome response among the youth compared to several alternative civic educations organized by political parties and civil societies such as School of Politics National Front Youth Volunteer (BNYV) by National Front (BN), AMANAH School of Leadership (SCHOLAR) by National Trust Party (AMANAH), School for Wise Politicians by PAS, Leadership Academy of Captain Hussein by United Malays National Organisational (UMNO), School for Politicians by Institute for Policy Research (IKD), Bersih Bootcamp by The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH 2.0), SUARAM School of Activism by SUARAM and School of Political Communication (SKOP) by SLR Institute.

On top of that, search results on the internet and government-friendly media portals which is virtually non-existent that reported positive feedbacks about SEKDEM. However, they also claimed that SEKDEM was endangering the Muslims and have been used by DAP to overthrow the political power of the Malays. Many

websites such as AIDCNews (2016), KLXpress (2016), UMNO Online (2016), Utusan Online (2015) and PRU14.TV (2016) reported that SEKDEM endangers Muslims and is one of the many weapons of DAP in diminishing the Malay's political forces. Federation of Malay Students Union (GPMS) through its chairman, Shamsul Bahar Abd Rani issued a statement that they were concerned that the subject of SEKDEM was contrary to the national constitution such as the privileges of the Malays, the Malay Rulers and the Islamic religion as the official religion (Sinar Online, 2015). Similar to GPMS is Jamawi Jaafar, who is UMNO Youth Information Chief. He said in an interview that the content of SEKDEM disrupted national security for questioning the constitution (UMNO Online, 2016).

Until now there has been very little research on alternative sectors of civic education and no specific study on SEKDEM. Besides, most studies about new politics by political parties in Malaysia after 1998 were focused on formal politics such as elections rather than alternative or informal sectors particularly to debate the role of political parties, in alternative civic education in the country.

1.3   Research objectives and questions

The objective of the study is to identify the impetus of DAP in establishing SEKDEM as an alternative civic education in Malaysia. In addition, to examine the impact of SEKDEM on democratic citizenship and youth participation in Malaysian politics. Based on the problems mentioned above, the questions that need to be answered in this study are:

i.   What is the impetus of DAP in establishing SEKDEM as an alternative civic education in Malaysia?

ii. What is the impact of SEKDEM on democratic citizenship and youth participation in Malaysian politics?

1.4 Scope of study

The focus of the study is SEKDEM which is the most well-known and controversial program organized by the opposition political party, DAP. The analysis

will focus on SEKDEM's curriculum in assessing its compatibility with civic education components and its impact on democratic citizenship and youth political participation in Malaysia. However, this study will centre its focus in the Klang Valley area as it is the most active area of SEKDEM. Moreover, the Klang Valley is a centre of activism activities and trainings, civil societies office and institutions of higher learning. The limitation of civic education in formal education system in Malaysia will not be discussed in details, but as a comparison throughout the study. The temporal scope of the study is between 2008, which is after the 12th general election until the 14th general election on 2018.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The concept to be used to further strengthen this study is civic education.

1.5.1 Civic Education

Civic education in its various forms is often found as one of the satellites required to spread the concept of citizenship and is an essential element of enlightenment for newly formed countries, especially those that existed after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Gaber, 2001). Enlightenment tools can be understood as aims to educate or disseminate understanding of human rights, freedom of expression, the right to assembly, the right to political organization and the associated rights used in liberal democracy. In constructing the civic education concept, a country must take concrete account of the state of the nation's citizens such as the history of its existence and the problems they face. Therefore, particularly the ever-colonized country, civic education must consider the historical, socio-cultural and socioeconomic journey that encompasses before, during and after independence. In that regards, each country needs to have its own mould, but must be based on the core thrusts capable of building an active citizen critically in democratic involvement.

Civic education in a democracy is an education in managing self-governance while democratic self-governance means that citizens are actively involved in their own governance (Branson and Quiqley, 1998). It consists of having three main thrusts; civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition. They are not

only passively receiving other people's instructions or follow the demands of others. This means civic education is not just a theory or concept, but it also requires actions or initiatives. In other words, the act of interpreting the analysis of the learning content gives meaning to the process of democracy.

Halstead and Pike (2006) outline that civic education needs to be analysed in three aspects, namely civic knowledge, good citizenship and active citizenship. In civic knowledge, civic education creates knowledgeable people. While good citizenship emphasizes socializing students in society, such as obedience, commitment, patriotism and civic power. Furthermore, in active citizenship, children should have active participation in the political, civil and social life of the community.

In addition, there are also scholars who use a good citizen concept in debating civic education. Shon and Hillman (2015, p. 8) outline four key elements that is required in a good citizenship. First is to learn and to remember the major historical events in the creation and development of democracy. Secondly, it has the intellectual ability to critically analyse ideas, philosophies, and interpretations, and develop active habits in judging books, texts, media, and all means of communication. Third, being actively involved in civic life, including political life, which doesn't limit to only vote regularly every few years. Fourth, it must really care about the well-being of the rest of the community in the larger community and society and reflect on idealism and personal sense of responsibility. Although these two scholars use a good citizen concept in analysing education, it does not escape the core thrusts outlined by other civic education scholars.

Thus, the debates of Branson and Quigley (1998), Halstead and Pike (2006) and Shon and Hillman (2015) can be summarized into three main thrusts; civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition. Civic knowledge is related to the question of civic, political and government life that takes into consideration the question of promoting greater understanding of the nature and importance of society or the network of voluntary associations, political, social and economic volunteers who are an important component of a nation's constitutional democracy. This is the same as stated by Gaber (2001) which encompasses the values and fundamental principles of constitutional democracy such as individual rights and responsibilities, concerns over

the good of society, the rule of law, justice, equality, diversity, truth, patriotism, federalism, and separation power that considers the context of micro and macro.

Civic skills include intellectuals and engagements that emphasize on skills to think critically about political issues. For example, one must understand an issue from its history, its relation to the current situation and the ability of the intellectual set to make meaningful considerations in resolving the issue. Next, the third component is civic disposition that has the essential characteristics of private and public character in maintaining and improving constitutional democracy. The formation of private and public features is the continuation of the second component which is still at the stage of identification and experimentation. This continuation is a process of adapting engagement into something that is necessary in the life of the citizen. The citizen voluntarily wants to engage with political and economic issues and fight for fundamental rights by engaging in a society with a sense of responsibility without the urgency or control of others.
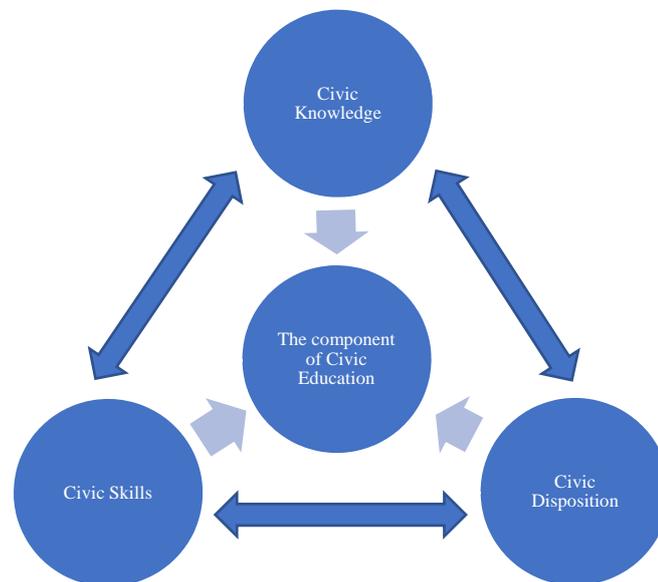
Figure 1.1 The Component of Civic Education

Source: Branson and Quiqley (1998)

1.6 Research methodology

This section discusses the methodology and the approach that has been used in the study to analyse data through formal, scientific and systematic methods. This study is using qualitative methods. The qualitative approach means that the data was collected through the interview methodology together with in-depth information collecting. Therefore, the selection of the study method will be semi-structured interview and library study.

1.6.1 Interviews

The study is a qualitative research that uses purposive sampling. Qualitative approaches will be used as the study wants to get primary data, views and understandings of the experts of the importance of alternative civic education as an initiative that is adequate on building and forming a democratic citizenship. The respondents of the interview will be categorized into three groups. The first group is related to identify the impetus that DAP has established through SEKDEM. For that, this study interviewed Hakim Ramlee, Wan Hamidi Wan Hamid and Edry Faizal as the main facilitators and organizers of SEKDEM. The second and third group is to analyse the impact of SEKDEM on democratic citizenship and youth participation.

The second group, six respondents have been interviewed to analyse from the participant's perspective. Among them is Nur Hanun, a teacher at Buku Jalanan Chow Kit (BJCK), an organisation working on stateless children's education, and Syed Syafiq, a founder of a philosophy community called Purana School. Besides the two, Fiona Wong and Zati Hanani are actively working with civil society organisation, while Jaymani Sevanathan is currently involved with student organisation and activism, and finally, Firdaus Samad, the Coordinator of BNVY School of Politics organised by the coalition of ruling parties.

The third group of interviewees was interviewed to study the alternative views on the impact of SEKDEM. Six respondents that were involved with other alternative civic educations and youth empowerments have been interviewed. Among them is Khalid Jaafar, the chairman of Institute for Policy Research (IKD), Amir Abdul Hadi, the Coordinator of School of Activism organised by SUARAM, Mandeep Singh, the former Coordinator of BERSIH Booth Camp organised by BERSIH 2.0,

Budiman Mohd Zuhdi, the former Member of Parliament from BN and the Director of Political Communication School (SKOP), Khairol Najib Hashim the coordinator of School organised by AMANAH and Jufitri Joha the President of Malaysian Youth Council.

1.6.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data sources were also used to collect existing information which includes materials related to civic education in Malaysia and internationally. Secondary resources in this context refer to information materials such as academic books, semi-academic books, journals, documentation, reports, press releases and articles. In addition, online websites and portals related to the research field are also being used as reference sources.

1.7   Importance of research

The evolution of the post-2008 alternative civic education by opposition political parties and civil societies has boosted a new politics discourse. Moreover, they were not given a fair space to deliver messages to citizens. However, the same initiative later followed by another political party, including ruling political parties. At the same time, civic education in schools and institutions of higher education was more likely to produce a good citizenship rather than democratic citizenship. Therefore, this has made room for political parties to fill the vacancy by using alternative civic education to create the democratic citizens. Although today there is many studies on the culture of new politics and the role of political parties in the country, there is yet enough studies to see alternative civic education under the framework of the new politics. Alternative civic education discussions, especially DAP's recommendations have not been given due attention. In fact, this study can provide a new perspective in assessing alternative civic education organized by political parties are often seen to be bringing indoctrination and negative agenda into positive development on democratic citizenship and youth participation in Malaysian politics.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The highlight of this study was to look into past studies on the new and old politics post-Reformasi 1998 in Malaysia. Basically, the new politics has a role in opening up opportunities for young people to engage in political spaces. However, new politics should have a broader context and not only focusing on narrow political participations. One of these is the roles of education in generating an active citizen through alternative civic education. There are many parties who provide alternative civic education to citizens where one of them is political parties. Hence, it is necessary to see the role of alternative civic education by political parties through the new politics lens.

2.2 Discourse of New Politics in Malaysia

The crisis of Anwar Ibrahim's dismissal as the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia has sparked the Reformation movement 1998 and consequently impacted the 10th GE. Loh (2003; 2009) in his study argued that based on careful analysis of the 1999 election results, evidence can be found that there was a new political culture in Malaysia. He classified Malaysia's new political culture into two components: the first one being formal political elections involving political parties while the other component is informal participation in politics, often involving NGOs and other community groups that do not necessarily focus on winning elections. New politics in the formal political elections can change as it involves the outcome of the election, which is affected by current state issues involving political, social and economic. However, in the informal political participation, even though BN might have won the next election, but BN's hegemony against the Malaysian society would not be the same as before which is a drastic change.

GE10 witnessed a significant reduction in seats for BN, when the coalition only won 148 out of 193 seats in the parliament. The Alternative Front or a coalition of opposition parties, then raised the number of seats in parliament to 45 seats. Election analysis shows the competition between the new discourse against ethnic practice and participation in democracy against economic development in politics in Malaysia. Some important issues are being discussed such as demanding justice, human rights, accountability, citizen participation in politics and autonomy of public space (Loh, 2003; 2009).

New politics in formal political elections in Malaysia can be divided into three phases, namely new politics from 1998 to 2003, Abdullah Badawi and new politics from 2004 to 2008 and new politics from 2008 to 2013 (Ismail and Daud, 2016). From the beginning, Loh (2003) has stated that there is a possibility that the 11th GE may not be the evidence or proof of the new politics. Ultimately, his prediction turned out right as BN won 198 parliamentary seats against 20 opposition coalition seats, with one independent candidate winning. BN's victory was the largest majority since the 1978 election. There are two main factors that have caused this to happen, the Alternative Front split and the appointment of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Mohamad (2012) and Ismail and Daud (2016, p. 9) argued that studies on new politics, such as Hilley (2001), Loh (2003; 2009) and Weiss (2005; 2009) tend to just give credits to opposition political parties. While the new politics should be inclusive and not exclusive, it can also occur beyond political side. Mohamad (2012) provides an example of political transformation under BN such as the abolition of the Internal Act (ISA) and 50,000 people involved in the early preparation of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Hamid and Ismail (2012), Ismail and Hamid (2013) and Ismail and Daud (2016, p.10) point out that Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's action on the agenda of combating corruption, the cancellation of the mega projects and the strengthening of democratic institutions must also be recognized as one of the contributors in the discourse of the new politics in Malaysia.

Subsequently, post 2008 showed a new politics discourse nourishes in Malaysia (Hamil et al., 2016). This study discusses two perspectives proposed by Loh (2003) and takes into account the role of the government. The 12th GE, which took

place on March 8, 2008 saw the victory of People's Alliance (PR) by winning five states that is Selangor, Perak, Penang, Kedah and Kelantan. PR also managed to win 89 seats over the total of 222 seats in the parliament to deny two-thirds majority for BN, making its mark in the Malaysian political history for being the first time of such result. At that time, the government also played a role in nurturing new politics, such as establishing the Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (EAIC), abolishing the Internal Security Act and amended the University and University College Act. This is also reinforced by the emergence of civil society which were either supporters of the government or the opposition, which increases participation in the democratic public spaces such as Malay for Mighty Native Organization (PERKASA), Young Solidarity Malaysia (SAMM), Students Solidarity Malaysia (SMM), Abolish ISA Movement (GMI) and the Anything But UMNO (ABU).

The new political wave during the 13th GE and its past show the development and reversal in process. The formal election politics continued to grow as PR won a popular vote over BN by 50.87 percent of the votes from 84.84 percent or 11,257,147 out of the 13,268,002 registered voters in 13th GE. This amount shows that there is a strong desire by Malaysians to change the ruling party and to make political reforms in the country. However, the study of Ismail and Ismail (2016, p.203) found that political culture within the governing party, particularly in UMNO, showed a reversal by using elements of fear, racial and religious sentiments and the use of biased media. Instead of UMNO, PAS was also seen to slowly return to the old politics practices. PAS conservative approaches such as the implementation of hudud and Islamic state have led to the breakdown of PR. The argument was also reinforced by Mahmud (2017) which touted this phenomenon as the green tsunami, which symbolizes the conservative approach spread and celebrated by PAS.

The role of the internet and the new media is also crucial in the spread of the information. The study by Salman and Hasim (2011) describes that the new media, specifically the internet has been widely used by various parties such as merchants, governments, organizations and individuals to conduct business transactions, services and social activities. The development and mastery of the internet as a medium of information dissemination have transformed the atmosphere of the information function of the political elite, and interested individuals have also changed (Woodly,

2008, p.109). In Malaysia, for example, the internet was chosen as an alternative to the mainstream media that was considered pro-government. The Kasim and Sani (2016) study revealed that the existence of several online newspapers such as Malaysiakini and The Malaysian Insider became an alternative to citizens in seeking independent and unbiased information to enable voters choose freely and fairly. The results of the study find that internet usage has become an important platform in politics, especially during the 12th and 13th GE.

The active democratic participation by civil society plays an important role in a new politics development since the post-1998 reformation. In addition to political parties, NGOs such as SUARAM, ALIRAN and new media, there is a youth participation in a loose organization. In Jaharudin's (2012) study, he argues that the 1998 reformation phenomenon has spawned a number of new political culture groups such as the University of Bangsar Utama (UBU) and Telawi Street Art Communities (KSJT). This group not only applies the usual political style of action such as going down the streets solely, but also thinking of the future of 1998 reformation in a cultural context. The groups are also aware that reformation movement is not merely a change of government to the opposition, but it is important to change the culture of society, which is the cultural values and strengths that are capable of supporting the bottom-up democratic framework (Omar, 2013). Intellectual discourses such as civil space, justice and human rights are an important theme in the debates and programs organized by these groups.

2.3 Youth Participation in the Malaysian Politics

A study conducted by the Federation of Malay Students Union (GPMS) in 2010 showed that 70 percent of students or young people were not interested in politics with 10 percent of pro-government, and 20 percent were open to politics (Malaysiakini, 2010). This is due to information technology and new media that encourage young people to no longer access information from conventional or mainstream media but create information and shape their own views. The study also says young people have no classic belief in politics, such as holding on to politicians'

words or promises, instead, evaluating the way an issue was raised and dealt with by the parties concerned.

Cyberspace through alternative media roles such as blogs, web pages, cyber forums, YouTube, email, Facebook and Twitter can broaden the space expression while at once increase social and political, democracy and social mobilization (Besar et al., 2012). The study found that young people wanted candidates who were honest and credible or political parties who could fight on humanitarian issues, transparency, and fundamental rights. Subsequently, the 13th GE has recorded the highest percentage of voters turnout in the total of Malaysia's general election at 11,257,147 million voters or 84.84 percent. This favorable situation is driven by young voters who, mostly, vote for the first time. The addition of young people to vote in the 13th general election does not actually increase the interest of these people to engage in politics as a whole.

This is due to the under-involvement of young people in political activities such as participating in political rallies, attending political party dinners, attending political talks, registering as political party members, becoming members of a committee program organized by a political party, doing work like hanging flags and participating in political party meetings which is still under 50 percent (Samsi, Rahman and Samsu, 2013). The analysis of this study shows that the level of youth involvement in Selangor at 65.2 percent has a low level of political involvement, 23 percent at a moderate level and only a small percentage of 12.2 percent of respondents actively involved in political engagement.

Although the study of Samsi, Rahman and Samsu (2013) was carried out in Selangor only, it was significant to the findings conducted by Yusof et al. (2015, p.13) and published by the Malaysian Youth Development Research Institute (IYRES). The Malaysia Youth Index 2015 (IBM'15) is a survey conducted from 2006 to 2012 that aimed at monitoring the development of the life well-being of young people in Malaysia. This study was conducted throughout Malaysia involving 6,098 respondents aged 13 to 30 years old. The analysis of this index found that there are two domains that need to be given more attention, first is economic well-being with a score of 54.26 at a less satisfactory level, and the second is political socialization with a score of 45.82 which is at an unsatisfactory level. In particular, the domain of

political socialization illustrates that young people are less involved with activities and lack of information about current political issues.

In the same year, another study on the involvement of Malay students at public universities in the Malaysian politics (Mamat, Rahman and Abdullah, 2015). Students' involvement can be seen through their presence in activities organized by political parties such as dialogue, talks, demonstrations, submission of memorandums, general meetings, giving talks, and election campaigns. The study also aims to look at the effectiveness of the UUCA amendments in 2012, particularly regarding the permission for students to engage with political parties. The analysis of this study focuses on three important components; membership of political parties, involvement in political activities and attendance in political programs. The researcher found that for the first component, only 16.3 percent of the 441 students interviewed became members of political parties. The rest 83.7 percent are not involved with political parties. For the second component, involvement in political activities shows that only 50.6 percent of respondents aged 21 to 27 who have voted. The rest has yet to vote. The third component shows that almost all programs organized by political parties are lukewarm when only 3.4 percent say that they often attend political programs, compared to moderate levels of 22.9 percent and lower levels of 73.7 percent.

Similarly, Merdeka Center's research on youth perception of the economy, leadership and current issues in August 2017 found that 70 percent out of 604 young people aged 21 to 30 years old were not interested in politics, and 66 percent did not believe in politicians in the country. More worryingly, 71 per cent said they did not feel their voice was able to make any changes in the country and had no influence on the government (Merdeka Center, 2017, p.9). The next finding found that 40 percent of those who have not yet register for voter and 75 percent argue that politics is difficult to understand.

Participation in political parties and registration as a voter should not be standardized for youth participation in politics. Febriansyah and Ismail (2016) argued that there was an alternative of informal political participation in the 13th GE by youth, especially after the political tsunami that broke out in the 12th GE. This has led to the emergence of new youth groups with activities in public spaces such as Pekan Frinjan, Buku Jalanan Shah Alam, Occupy Dataran and SMM. They argued that the

Pekan Frinjan and Buku Jalanan Shah Alam carried out political activities such as music staging, poetry reading, youth political talks and book bazaar but did not favor any political parties. In addition, there are also groups of young people who reject all forms of centralized power, reject the hierarchy and move without leadership but collectively such as the Occupy Dataran movement. Then, this group together with SMM championed free education for university students. The group which is a collaboration amongst SMM, BERSIH 2.0 and BERSIH 3.0 successfully mobilized young people down to the rally. However, researchers argue that these groups do not have a structured organization, loose expertise, not ideological and temporary.

In addition, there is also a study that says there is a new form of political participation among young people, especially online political participation. A study conducted by Abdulrauf, Hamid and Ishak (2017) assesses the cognitive involvement and political participation in social media among young people in Malaysia. A total of 234 undergraduate students at Universiti Utara Malaysia was surveyed for this study. The findings show that there are differences between young people who have no political knowledge and who have a political knowledge in terms of the connection between access to political information on Facebook and Twitter and online political participation on Facebook and Twitter. Finally, this study found that there were significant differences between young people who lacked political knowledge, and who had political knowledge in terms of the relationship between policy satisfaction and online political participation on Facebook and Twitter. However, this study does not examine the relationship between online political participation in Facebook and Twitter with physical participation in politics such as attending protests or political talks.

2.4 Civic Education as a Catalyst to Active Citizen Participation

Civic education is a subject taught globally to educate students or citizens involved in community and country issues. In a study conducted by Kahne and Sporte (2008) from a total of 4,057 students from 52 high schools in Chicago found that civic education subjects were able to inculcate a significant increase in student commitment to civic participation. The researchers argued that previous United State school-based

studies showed a limited civic education effect on students because they often did not focus on the content, curriculum style and teaching of the subject. This study finds a direct focus on civic and political issues and ways to respond to it such as carrying out learning projects, following current issues, discussing issues in society and how to solve the issues, and providing students with open dialogue on controversial or critical issues are very effective to foster commitment on civic participation.

The study above has relevance to the study of civic education conducted by Wojtachnia et al. (2010, p. 29-32) in Finland. Civic education subjects are taught to students at level 9 or 16 years of age at school. The content of civic education in the country is more emphasis on neutral knowledge, the rights and obligations of citizens are discussed in a narrow way, critical issues are avoided and democracy is presented as a stable structure, not as a system that is historically formed which always needs to be improved so it will work better. The curriculum also focuses on formal matters rather than practical participation, NGOs and other sensitive topics. This causes a school in Finland to discourage public affairs, civic activities or encourage students to participate in school life. In this regard, the study suggests that the content of this civic education provides Finnish students with knowledge of adequate democratic processes, but still has little chance of truly participating in democracy. Hence, this study has proposed a network involving schools, associations, religious communities, youth organizations and NGOs to connect actively more and exchange knowledge and expertise.

Besides that, there is also a study on the comparison of civic education in two countries. Bruen (2014) uses civic education subjects in high school to analyse political interests and participation in the Republic of Ireland and Germany. The findings show students' interest in politics in the Republic of Ireland is lower than in Germany. Likewise, 4 out of 6 components in political participation being involved in elections, signing petitions, product boycotts and engaging with public assemblies shows that German students are more likely to engage than the Republic of Ireland. This is because civic education in the Republic of Ireland is only taught to lower secondary students of 12 to 14 years, compared with Germany the aged is 10 to 18 years. In addition, the time allocated to this subject also affects the interest and participation of students, especially in the Republic of Ireland, which only has 40

minutes, compared to Germany for 2 hours per week. In this regard, this study proposed that civic education must be created for students at high-secondary level in the Republic of Ireland and the need for content that addresses critical issues such as economics and business.

A similar study was conducted by Fesnic (2016) to assess the implementation of civic education in the two post-communist countries which are Hungary and Poland. Both countries have similarities on the socio-economic, cultural and political background, for instance, level of economic development, degree of urbanisation, ethnic homogeneity, literacy rate and dominant religion. In Poland, the subject taught by teachers with a background in social sciences and civics, while in Hungary by history teachers. This, directly affects the quality of student learning due to the teacher's understanding of civic values and human rights. The comparison on importance of voting, being able to identify a non-democratic government, making contribution to solving problems in the community, and expressing positive attitudes towards immigrants resulted in showing that Polish students are more knowledgeable and democratic rather than Hungarian students. Subsequently, the researcher argues that young Hungarians tend to support the authoritarian parties rather than young Polish support for democratic parties, based on the general election in both countries. The three Polish elections were won by the Democratic Left Alliance, the social democrat party in 2001, Law and Justice, conservative party in 2005, and Civic Platform, the liberal party in 2007. Meanwhile, in Hungary, were won by the Hungarian Socialist Party, the socialist party in 2002 and 2006, and Fidesz, the conservative party in 2010. The young voters in the elections attended civic education taught in the 1990s. This study found the difference of choices regarding civic education policy can have several effects on democracy.

After civic education was reintroduced in Malaysia beginning in 2005, a pilot project for young journalists was introduced by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) as part of the school's learning activities. The project was conducted to 202 Form 2 students from 7 different schools. The project requires students to identify problems and impacts that occur at the local community collectively. They need to get information from various sources such as newspapers, magazines, books, television and the internet. Additionally, students also need to visit the affected areas and

conduct interviews with the parties involved. At the end of the project, students need to present their project outcomes to stakeholders such as schools or local authorities. The project was followed by a further study by Yaakub (2009) to see the level of civic competence of students who have participated in the pilot project. The findings show that students have the knowledge, interests and abilities to solve social issues. Students also choose to seek a peaceful solution, and not through violence. The project was successful in producing students who better understand their roles and responsibilities as good citizen. However, this project is very limited to selected students and not all have the opportunity to go through the learning process.

The study conducted by Ismail and Noor (2013) to see the manifestation of civic education among students in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) following the National Service Training Program (PLKN). Researchers also make comparisons with students who have never followed the PLKN to see the difference in civic level of knowledge between these groups. The findings show that on average the level of civic knowledge of students on matters involving government affairs and administration, national identity, federal constitution, democratic principles and international relations are high at 80 percent. Meanwhile, the level of respondents' knowledge on the development of current issues was moderately high at 72 per cent. The researchers' view that for the purpose of providing exposure on civic education to students, they do not have to follow PLKN, but it is sufficient to pursue formal education in schools or universities. However, the researchers found that respondents' skills in terms of involvement in the community were still at a less satisfactory level. This is because civic education in Malaysia is more emphasized on the inculcation of values and norms of society, religious and moral education as opposed to opportunities provided to students practicing democracy, discussing government policies and gaining the role of democracy. Hence, the emphasis on civic education in Malaysia has not yet been fully geared towards the development of democracy; democratic education and democratic citizenship.

Subsequently, the study of public subjects in higher education institutions, particularly those involving civic education values. The study by Shaari, Besar and Jali (2017) on the effectiveness of the Ethnic Relations subject as a political literacy initiator was conducted on 278 students of the Kuala Lumpur University of Malaysian

Institute of Information Technology between 2014 and 2016. Researchers used the Malaysia Youth Index 2015 scale to evaluate the level of student political literacy of 80 to 100 is satisfactory and 0 to 39 is very unsatisfactory. Some examples of assignments in the coursework are producing nationhood videos, making literature reviews and articles that conceptually the issues of nationhood. This is because students come from technical and vocational backgrounds, so the exam-based method affects student performance. However, researchers see that there is a gap in the way students know the functions and roles of the community in detail so that students can become more responsible, proactive and have an ideal social attitude.

2.5 The Role of Political Parties in Civic Education

It is a custom that the programs organized by party politics are considered to be merely aimed at winning votes or recruiting new members. However, it is undeniable that political parties also have a big role in civic education for the people. Ibeanu (2014, p.16) states that political parties are the main institutions for political recruitment, and the main instrument for bringing people into political society. Political recruitment should not be understood simply as supporting a political party in the election or entering a particular political party, but in a wider sense of involving a political system including elections, opposition institutions, public policy and political participation in informal structures. Hence, instead of getting votes or support, political parties also should educate the public on the vote, raise civic consciousness and invite the public going to vote via civic education programs like voter education.

The comparative study in Thailand on two political parties; Democrat Party and the Puea Fah Din Party shows differences while conducting alternative civic education for members and public, mainly youth. In general, the purpose of Democrat has organized the civic education because of an election, on the other hand, the Puea Fah Din Party to strengthen the constitutional monarchy (Sirivunnabood, 2018, p.172). The differences in political ideologies, party structures, and policies of both parties affect the approaches and processes of their civic educations. The Democrat organized a workshop called Young Democrat Program between three to five days including field trip to the parliament, government house and court. Meanwhile, the Puea Fah Din

Party provided the civic education through job bases with Asoka Community such live broadcast on television in school and election campaign. The alternative civic educations show effectiveness in term of provide platform for continuity activities, generating new knowledge, distribution party's political ideologies and different type of media used for participants. Despite having different purposes and approaches, civic education has been considered as one of the functions of political parties for political socialization between a citizen and state.

Based on lit   erature reviews, most studies on new politics are focused more on formal politics, such as victory in elections and informal political participation, such as the growth of NGOs and evolving new media. Very few studies look education as one of the forms of new politics. Formal civic education aims to provide political exposure to students at schools and institutes of higher education. However, it is inadequate to cover the loopholes, particularly the level of interest and participation of young people in democracy. Based on previous research or literature reviews most studies on civic education are focused more on formal education organized by the government rather than alternative civic education organized by political party and civil society. Thus, alternative civic education has not got constructive attention and always misinterpreted with pejorative views of citizens, especially by political parties. In this regard, this study will fill the gap in examining alternative civic educations organized by political parties, in particular the DAP to create democratic citizens and spur the youth political participation in Malaysia.

CHAPTER III

ALTERNATIVE CIVIC EDUCATIONS IN MALAYSIA: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL

3.1 Introduction

Civic education is a process of socialization of knowledge, skills and attitudes for citizens to become democratic and productive members of society (Levinson, 2014, p.1). Each country has its own history and background as it creates a civic education. After World War II, Germany realized that the democratic system would not function properly without a democratic citizen. Later, Germany decided to teach civic education at school to avoid the occurrence of the Nazi again. Besides, in the United States, civic education is created for Americanize immigrant waves were arriving in the country to ensure that they assimilate into the dominant Northern European culture (Quigley, 1999). Whereas Malaysia, the Education Ordinance 1952 outlines the need for formal education in schools to bridge the ties between students of varying heredity (Sidin and Aziz, 1992, p. 20). Whatever the reason, civic education continues to evolve and undergo complex evolution, including directions, components, concepts and pedagogy.

In civic education studies, there are two main types of civic education; formal and alternative. The formal civic education refers to institutionalized civic learning space by focusing on a set of objectives, approaches and processes of the national curriculum, while alternative civic education refers to noninstitutionalized learning space and reflects the interest and experience of young people involved as an active citizen in the wider community, society and democracy (Hong, 2014, p. 9). In a nutshell, formal civic education is associated with government institutions such as school, university and national services. Meanwhile, the alternative civic education is based on decentralization curricular other than the government institutions such as civil society, political parties, youth organizations and unions. To date, most civic education studies focus on the formal sector. A few reasons for this are formal civic

education is considered more structured, easier to measure and also falls under the government responsibility. This led to the alternative civic education being given less attention in academic studies. Since 2008, some structured alternative civic education has been created, but still lacking scientific study on it.

3.2 Alternative Civic Education in Malaysia

Groups of civil society and political party are the most active entities in organizing alternative civic education for the public in Malaysia. As the youths are often seen to be disinterested, disengaged and apathetic toward politics, it is important to educate and encourage them to engage with democratic affairs for the sustainability of a democratic system. Hence, some structured alternative civic educations with continuous activities have been created to address the issues.

3.2.1 School for Politicians

The School for Politicians that was first organized by the IKD in 2004 was sponsored by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) through the Asian Renaissance program (Nazari, 2016). IKD is a think tank group founded by Anwar Ibrahim in 1985 aimed at generating debate, discussion and producing new ideas that form the basis of government policymaking on culture, education and economy. IKD also organizes various forms of leadership training. IKD is not the only organization that sets up the School for Politicians at the beginning of its establishment. In addition to the IKD, the Middle East Graduate Center (MEGC) established by Al-Mustaqeem Mahmud Radhi in 2007 had also organized a program called the Civic Education Workshop between 2008 and 2010 through Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) sponsorship. At that time, IKD and MEGC shared offices to carry out their daily works. Therefore, in 2010, KAS requested MEGC and IKD to be consolidated and the funds were also consolidated. Then, MEGC-IKD was born, but over the time the MEGC name was dropped and only the IKD name has been used (Ramlee, 2019: interview).

Jaafar (2019: interview) said the School for Politicians' foundation was inspired by Thomas Knirsch, a KAS Malaysia Resident Representative who once witnessed a political upheaval in Malaysia through the Hindu Rights Action Force

(HINDRAF) demonstration in 2008. This turmoil was almost similar to what Germany experienced when democracy was destroyed under Nazi, they had to re-educate the society on rule of laws and democracy to produce democrats. Therefore, the aim of School for Politicians is to produce pragmatic and moralist politicians (Ramlee, 2019: interview). At the same year, the political tsunami also saw the emergence of the new politics discourse or the beginning of the second phase of new politics in Malaysia. According to Sani (2019, p. 97), this is the transition period of deliberative democracy, especially in demanding more participation in policymaking by the opposition, civil society, and new media. These factors later inspired the opening of School for Politicians in 2011 with its name being proposed by Thomas Knirsch (Jaafar, 2019: interview). Subsequently, School for Politicians was held every year until 2018.

During the period, the modules taught include universal values, values of democracy, good governance, human rights, social market economy, critical thinking, functions of political party, the importance of constitution, and political ideology like liberalism, and reforming formal civic education approaches that are indoctrinated and boring (Ramlee and Jaafar, 2019: interview). The teaching content is parallel to Branson and Quigley's (1998, p.5) emphasis on the importance of civic knowledge and civic skills in developing critical thinking that is useful for both the citizens and the politicians. The syllabus was set in three stages; Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3. Each stage was held during the weekends in a three days two nights duration. Each participant must attend Form 1 before attending Form 2. Likewise, to attend Form 3, they must have attended Form 2 beforehand. This stage is intended to provide systematic education in a short period of time and to see a gradual increment.

Although IKD activists are mostly behind the People's Justice Party (PKR), they did not run School for Politicians while also representing political parties (Jaafar, 2019: interview). Additionally, because the alumni have high democratic skills and values, some of them are actively involved with political activism, campaigns and some even became election candidates. However, most who have attended the School for Politicians eventually joined PKR as compared to other political parties. Whether or not it was the intention, it can never be denied that it also served as a recruitment process from the party even though IKD and PKR are two different entities. This can be seen from two different angles; one perspective is it being an advantage because it

can increase the youth participation in formal politics and secondly as a disadvantage because there may be elements of bias towards PKR which is contrary to critical and independent thinking in civic skills. As of today, School for Politicians succeeded in producing one State Chief Minister, two Deputy Ministers and 24 Members of Parliament and State Assemblymen.

3.2.2 BERSIH Booth Camp

BERSIH Booth Camp is an alternative civic education run by BERSIH 2.0, a civil society focused on election reform issues in 2016. History of the BERSIH Booth Camp establishment was inspired by the existence of SEKDEM and School for Politicians who have succeeded in generating community activists and political activists (Singh, 2019: interview). However, this process is not done by a completely free and independent civil society groups like BERSIH 2.0. According to Loh (2009, p.44), civil society plays an important role in participatory democracy whether in the formal politics, such as lobbying the government to enact or amend laws or alternative politics such as organizing seminars, petitions and demonstrations. Therefore, the BERSIH Booth Camp is aimed at recruiting and attracting those who are not interested in political parties to involve in civil society activism.

The main focus of BERSIH Booth Camp is the electoral system because that's the BERSIH 2.0 expertise. Basically, the component of civic knowledge mainly focuses on an election, which including fundamental rights such as freedom of speech or freedom of assembly, and alternative electoral systems such as proportional systems. Mobilization is also taught to drive and instil democracy at the grassroots level. In addition, the introduction to the constitution, the history of the people's movements and the parliamentary debates were also taught within three days and two nights. Although this workshop is unlike the School for Politicians who has three levels, BERSIH 2.0 provides a follow-up program so that participants can continue to engage with the process of democracy. Participants are given the opportunity to become an observer during the re-election. The platform gives youth the opportunity to instill civic dispositions within themselves when engaging with communities and assessing how the electoral system works during elections. BERSIH Booth Camp

successfully trained 80 participants and had active alumni of 15 people (Singh, 2019: interview).

3.2.3 SUARAM School of Activism

SUARAM is an NGO established in 1989 by activists and ex-detainee of ISA. The main focus of SUARAM on human rights is such as detention without trial, and police misconduct and torture. In 2017, SUARAM established an alternative civic education named School of Activism. The main purpose is to promote human rights so that people can accept and discuss it openly. In Malaysia, human rights are unpopular issues, even considered as a western agenda (Hadi, 2019: interview). Therefore, topics such as human rights, racial equality and freedom of religion are sensitive to public discussion and do not receive a favourable response from the public. Additionally, other goals for bringing young people who can become agents to advocate human rights agenda at the national level. Therefore, the focus of the participants was university students.

School of Activism has three levels: Form 1, Form and Form 3. Content taught for Form 1 is the introduction of human rights which covers the constitution and international human rights laws. Next, Form 2 focuses on soft skills such as holding press conferences, mobilization, providing press statement and memorandum submission. While Form 3 makes visits and dialogues with communities involved with human rights issues such as indigenous people. After that, they need to create an event such as a public forum or flash mob. The purpose of the completion of Form 3 is that they have experience in activist work. According to Kahne and Sport (2008) if students are exposed to civic and political issues through carrying out learning projects, following, discussing and solving issues in society and providing students with open dialogue on controversial or critical issues is a very effective way to foster commitment on civic participation.

3.2.4 School of Political Communications (SKOP)

SKOP was founded to educate young people with soft skills. Founded in 2018 under the SLR Institute, headed by Budiman Mohd Zohdi. He was a member of the parliament and state assemblyman between 2013 to 2018. SLR Institute is a think

tank that conducts research in social and political fields. Although he is a politician, according to Budiman, SKOP is not intended to increase the membership of UMNO (Iskandar, 2018). As a result, the participants also have the tendency to join other political parties such as the PAS, PKR and DAP. SKOP is a skill school for young people interested in learning political communication and is not limited to any political party.

There are three main contents provided for the participants. The first is the discussion of national philosophy and the principles of democracy. Secondly, communication skills such as public speaking and political speech which includes the management of press conferences. The third is managing propaganda. Propaganda is a part of a political strategy and is not necessarily intended to attack the enemy but gives a good image to our own team (Zohdi, 2019: interview). The program is run weekly for four months on every Wednesday from 8.00 pm to 11.00 pm. Invited speakers vary according to the theme provided by the organizer. In general, SKOP is more focused on civic skills such as critical thinking which is one of the soft skills criteria as compared to civic knowledge and civic dispositions. Even though participants learn about the principles of democracy and national philosophy, it is similar to civic education in Finland studied by Wojtachnia et al. (2010) where democracy is presented as a stable structure instead of a system that is historically formed which always has to be improved to work better while also discouraging critical topics like human rights, public policy, political ideology and racial equality. This is acknowledged by Zohdi, (2019: interview) who says SKOP is more focused on soft skills than doctrines from schools of thought.

3.2.5 Captain Hussein Leadership Academy (AKHI)

AKHI started operating in October 2014 and was named after Tun Hussein Onn, who was the first UMNO Youth Chief known as Captain Hussein. Although the idea of the establishment was proposed by Khairy Jamaluddin, the former Youth and Sports Minister cum UMNO Youth Chief, it was undeniable that the establishment was inspired by SEKDEM and the School for Politicians that were established earlier. AKHI is the earliest alternative civic education undertaken by ruling political parties during that time. In addition, AKHI is also a think tank organization conducting

research and public discourse on important issues such as cost of living, democracy, autonomy university and anti-radicalism. However, clearly, AKHI is declared as a centre to recruit the party's future leaders (Zuhri, cited in Iskandar, 2016). Thus, AKHI adopted the idea of Malay ethno-nationalism in line with UMNO's vision and direction. In terms of political ideology discussion, it is significant to understand the Malay ethno-nationalism, however, in the long run, it will be in the contrary to the ideals of liberal democracy, in particular, every citizen has an equal right and should not have one ethnic group superior than another. This has happened like in Hungary where civic education students were more likely to express negative attitudes towards immigrants and choose authoritarian political regimes than democratic political parties because the teachers failed to tell the students to ignore a law that violates human rights (Fesnic, 2016). This is closely related to the construction of civic dispositions that are important characters for the survival of a healthy democracy.

3.2.6 BNYV School of Politics

The BNYV is an NGO or a movement set up by Khairy Jamaluddin which aims to provide a platform for youths aged between 18 to 35, to volunteer and give back to the community. BNYV organizes discussions, sharing sessions, volunteer work, flood missions and natural disasters, election work and activism, but through the party's channels (Samad, 2019: interview). In 2016, the BNVY School of Politics was created to train, educate and provide exposure to young people on basic political theory and principles through the BN party channel. Among the contents taught include political ideology, the concept of consociationalism, the independence history of homeland, dialogue with political leaders and election works. In contrast to AKHI, the BNVY School of Politics focuses on consociationalism that is integral to BN's cooperation. Although UMNO is one of the BN's members but when it comes to the BNYV School of Politics, the contents emphasizing on the unity values between the component parties compared to Malay ethno-nationalism. This is important to maintain the cooperation among the component parties within BN.

There are certainly civic knowledge criteria such as political ideology, but emphasizing on the context of a coalition ideology of consociationalism and maintaining the status quo. Whereas topics are related to human rights and equality is

not a topic of discussion. In the context of civic skills, participants have the opportunity to engage with the wider community, but the ability to think critically has been limited by the limitations of the topics taught. Indirectly affects the development of individual characters towards active citizens, especially the missing of topics on fundamental rights and critical thinking (Ahmad, 2004). There are three levels of BNYV School of Politics; first at the state level around 50 participants, second at the federal level and third also at the federal but in smaller scales than the second. During the state-level program, federal representatives will come to evaluate eligible participants to the federal level. This model aims to find political leaders at the grassroots level that understand the basic democratic principles and consociationalism (Samad, 2019: interview).

3.2.7 School of Leadership (SCHOLAR)

SCHOLAR is an alternative civic education organized by AMANAH since 2016. AMANAH is the second Islamic party in Malaysia after PAS. The purpose of setting up SCHOLAR is to educate young people on economy, laws, political theory, civics, team building and party recruitments. The syllabus is debated through the perspective of *maqasid al-shariah*, or goals or objectives of sharia. The program is not organized anymore due to time management of the organizers who have a full-time job and only SCHOLAR as a part-time work. The program is open to everyone and it does not necessarily have to be qualified to attend (Najib, 2019: interview). For those who are interested in further engagement, they are given the opportunity to be a research assistant to the parliamentarian such as writing a speech text and making questions in parliament (Najib, 2019: interview).

3.3 Democratic Action Party in Malaysia's Political Lens

DAP was first established in October 1965, two months after the People's Action Party (PAP) came out of Malaysia. PAP who was a political party originating from Singapore was first established in 1954. Later, when the merger of the Federation of Malaysia between the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak in 1963, the PAP expanded its party's networks to Peninsular Malaysia by contesting the

1964 General Election. When Singapore came out of Malaysia in August 1965, the rest of the PAP members in Malaysia established DAP (Aziz, Ismail and Abdullah, 2018, p.33). According to Ibrahim (2011), despite the fact that DAP's history has been linked to the PAP in Singapore, it has no continuity in its struggle, especially when DAP accepted the Federal Constitution and fights for the freedom and democratic rights in the true sense.

Later, on March 18, 1966, DAP was officially registered as a political party. Basically, DAP is a party that professes democratic social. In the 1967 Declaration, it describes that DAP is committed to the struggle for a Malaysian nation' freedom and social democratic Malaysians, based on the principles of human rights, equality, social and economic justice and based on parliamentary democratic institutions. This declaration emphasizes ethnic equality for every Malaysian citizen and no lower or higher group than the others in relation to policy such as culture and education. In other words, meritocracy is prioritized as the main value. The Federal Constitution is the cornerstone of the national construction and must be respected, as well as accepting Bahasa Malaysia as a national language. At the same time, the right to use other languages must also be maintained. Although, DAP is championing meritocracy, they also accept positive discrimination or affirmative action in ensuring social justice is implemented.

Although DAP is an ideological and cross-racial and non-racial-based party, undeniably the current situation is clearly a party dominated by the Chinese (Dzaki, 2013, p.84). Indirectly, the issues that DAP fought towards for non-discrimination led to frequent controversies in local newspapers such as anti-Malay, anti-Islam, anti-Sultan and anti-constitution (Karim, 2019). Moreover, DAP defends the concept of democracy and opposes openly the concept of Islamic state brought by PAS since the 1970s (Yaakop, 2011, p.131). To this day, despite being a part of the Alliance of Hope (PH) and succeeded to form a government on 9th May 2018, DAP still in the face of this controversy. Looking at racial and religious issues that are being played persistently through political lenses, DAP feels it is necessary to create a new medium to critically discuss new political cultures that should replace the old ones.

3.4 The Impetus for the Establishment of the Democratic School

There are five factors that motivated DAP to establish SEKDEM; i) controversial allegations, ii) decreasing of youth political participation, iii) exclusivity of new politics discourses, iv) creates democratic youth and v) weaknesses of formal civic education. The fact that DAP was always associated with controversial allegations such as anti-racial, anti-religious, anti-Sultan (monarch) and suffocating the politics of the Malays. These allegations indicate that the old political culture still exists in the political scene in Malaysia (Ismail and Ismail, 2016, p.203). Therefore, DAP feels there is a need for a platform to explain the party's vision and ideas in the Malay language. Then, in 2011, DAP established a Malay-language media portal named Roketkini. Describing this matter is Hamidi, who was a former Roketkini Editor (2019: interview):

We want a website in Malay to bring people who speak Malay, and usually the Malays who have not known about DAP. They only hear the slander, and this time, hear exactly what DAP is. If you know about it but still do not like it, it doesn't matter anymore because at least you know it and not just believe in defamation.

At the same time, when Roketkini was established, the trend of youth involvement in politics was at an unsatisfactory level. Based on the Malaysia Youth Index 2015 (IBM'15) study conducted between 2006 and 2012, out of 10 domains, the political socialization was at the lowest level of 45.82. Another study conducted by the Federation of Malay Students Union (GPMS) in 2010 showed that 70 percent of students or youth were not interested in politics. This was realized by Roketkini because they were not able to attract young people if they were merely creating a portal. According to Hamidi (2019: interview), this phenomenon occurs because of the interest of young people changes, for example the interest in writing books and novels has increased compared to around the late 80's to the 90's. Later, this affects the indie phenomenon that occurs in Malaysia between 2013 and 2015, especially in book publishing (Ashaari et al., 2018, p.169).

Although the culture of writing was back, it doesn't mean anything if not strategically channelled into politics that benefits the society. As such, civic education emphasizes civic knowledge to create citizens who are knowledgeable and able to actively engage in political and social affairs (Halstead and Pike, 2006). These changes and problems are identified by DAP. They established SEKDEM to educate the principles of democracy and the political foundation in order to increase the involvement of youth in politics (Ahmad, 2011; Faizal, 2019: interview). In addition, the setting up of School for Politicians has also been a driving force for the establishment of SEKDEM. This is explained by Hamidi, who was a SEKDEM principal (2019: interview):

> *Frankly speaking, I was interested in School for Politicians. Jaafar invited me that time for a talk and I realized he was from PKR. So, why didn't I do one for DAP? I was imitating the idea, but making sure that the modules are different because the School for Politicians aims to train people to be politicians but our goal is to get acquainted with democracy and may be involved in democracy-based activism.*

Also, to agree with this statement is Ramlee who is the trainer for School for Politicians and SEKDEM (2019: interview):

> *My discussion with Hamidi at that time was why should we create "politicians" and not Democrats who actually have a wider role because not everyone would end up as a politician. Many want to know about democracy, but he or she could be a housewife, a pilot or a teacher and not a politician.*

After the 2008 political tsunami, new politics discourse in the public sphere was growing. However, the discourses are still limited, exclusive and did not reach broader groups such as university students, young people and people in the rural area. The change of government administration in five states by the opposition gives space to the public to be more actively involved and get informed about how a good

governance should be. However, active engagement is meaningless without having a basic knowledge of democracy. Because of that, Faizal (2019: interview) emphasized the need to create more people who are politically literate and democratic. According to Pybas (2004, p.18) the stability of the liberal community depends on the education or civic knowledge based on the liberal values that the youth receives. The factors of the exclusivity of new politics discourses and to create democratic youth are complementary and have a significant correlation. To create democratic citizens, the discourse of new politics needs to be expanded and more inclusive so that more people can understand and adopt civic and democratic values. Therefore, DAP sees there is a need to interact and educate the people they rarely can reach; which is Malay and the youths.

Political and social issues such as racism, lack of involvement of youth in politics and low political literacy, can be attributed to the failure of formal civic education. Look at the history of formal civic education in Malaysia, the government introduced it as a separate subject in 1954 before it was abolished in 1983. Later, it was re-introduced in 2005 and finally repealed again in 2013 in primary schools and 2017 in secondary schools. In general, this shows a commitment of the government to provide civic education to citizens. However, it can also be seen from the opposite point of view, in particular, the government's action to abolish the civic education subject in primary and secondary school in the new curriculum made the government's commitment to be questioned. The uncertainty in the implementation of civic education subjects may have an impact on the construction of democratic citizens.

While in the higher education level, the government introduced a General Education Subjects (MPU) which can be considered under the provision of civic education. There are 4 groups of MPU namely U1: philosophy appreciation, value and history, U2: the mastery of soft skills, U3: the extension of knowledge about Malaysia and U4: practical community management skills such as community service and co-curriculum.

The students, especially at the Bachelor's Degree level, they have to complete the U1 and U2 Group subjects that are higher than U3 and U4 between 6 to 9 credit hours compared to 4 to 5 credit hours. This has led to the debates on democratic citizenship such as human rights, political rights, religious rights and good governance

were not getting a place among students rather than good citizenship. A student needs to be provided and prepared with more credit hours to engage with critical issues in order to form a mature democracy in the country. Hence, the active participation of citizens in debating issues that are considered sensitive to discuss in public such as human rights, political rights, religious rights and good governance should be emphasized more. In addition, subjects U1 and U2 have less impact on students' daily lives, in particular involving politics, public policy and active involvement in society compared to U3 and U4. This is an important factor in ensuring that young people or students are able to practice civic skills such as critical thinking and civic engagement in every day's life while also developing civic dispositions such as tolerance and building confidence in talking about politics (Vasiljevic, 2009, p.58).

Table 3.1 Scope for Each Groups

Groups	Objective	Subjects
U1	Forming or cultivating students with the knowledge and appreciation of Malaysia's history and noble values.	Ethnic relations; Asia Civilization and Islamic Civilization (TITAS); Malaysia Studies
U2	Cultivating the mastery of soft skills	Ethics and Professionalism; Language Proficiency Skills; Property Management Skills;
U3	Producing students who have the mastery of Malaysia's mould knowledge.	Constitution and Society; Law and Society; Human rights; Politics and Leadership
U4	Produce students who are able to apply soft skills.	Community Involvement; Student Volunteerisms

Source: *Garis Panduan Mata Pengajian Umum (MPU) Edisi Kedua* or Guidelines for General Studies Second Edition: 2016

Formal civic education issues either in schools or universities that lack emphasis and exposure of political systems, ideologies, democracy, human rights, good governance, economic systems and critical thinking lead to youths seeking alternatives other than formal education institutions (Hanani, 2019: interview; Najib, 2019: interview). This was further acknowledged by Faizal (2019: interview), a SEKDEM Coordinator who sees the alternative civic education as a criticism and response to the existing educational system. Therefore, SEKDEM emphasizes several key topics in the syllabus taught at each level, which include political, economic and social discussions.

Table 3.2 The Syllabus of SEKDEM

Level	Contents
Form 1	• Political system; feudalism, authoritarianism and democracy. • Political ideologies; socialism, social democracy and liberalism. • Economic system • Human rights • Malaysia political system and constitutions • Local culture and values
Form 2	• Type of government; federal, state and local. • Formulation and advocacy public policy • Implementation of ideology in public policy • Good governance
Form 3	• DAP policies on public policy; education, economic and social • Political event management • Research skills • Public speaking

3.5 Comparison of Alternative Civic Educations in Malaysia

Basically, the establishment of alternative civic education aims to educate the foundations of democracy to Malaysian citizens. However, whether it is a political party or civil society, each has its own reasons for establishing alternative civic

educations. It has been discussed that at least there is five impetus of DAP for the establishment of SEKDEM; controversial allegations, decreasing of youth political participation, the exclusivity of new politics discourses, creating democratic youth and weaknesses of formal civic education. One out of five is a common impetus for either political party or civil society, decreasing of youth political participation. For example, BNVY School of Politics wants to attract young professionals to join BN, SUARAM School of Activism and BERSIH Booth Camp want to recruit young activists, and SEKPOL, SKOP and SCHOLAR to produce young politicians. The results of the IBM'15 study showed that the domain of political socialization was at the lowest level as a reflection of the phenomenon of youth less involved in politics. This phenomenon, it affects political parties and civil society with fewer members by youth.

Subsequently, the impetus for the inclusivity of new politics discourses was shared by AKHI, SUARAM School of Activism, BERSIH Booth CAMP and SEKPOL. This can be seen from the content discussed by every alternative civic education, such as human rights, anti-radicalism, electoral democracy and public policy. This discourse is not only intended to be a check and balance for the government and to demand clean and fair elections, but also to create an autonomous public sphere (Loh, 2009, p.43). Based on the interviews conducted, although most admitted they were organizing alternative civic education, but only SEKDEM and SCHOLAR claimed their role in filling the gaps of formal civic education, while others did not (Faizal, 2019: interview; Najib, 2019: interview). In addition, almost all alternative civic education is set up in reaction to the establishment of SEKPOL and SEKDEM. This was acknowledged by organizers of the BNYV School of Politics, SUARAM School of Activism, BERSIH Booth Camp and SCHOLAR. While SKOP does not directly acknowledge it, it can be seen when Zohdi (2019: interview) says that most alternative civic education focuses on political thoughts rather than soft skills and that is why SKOP was established and recognizes SEKDEM and SEKPOL can contribute to a more open political discourse. Among all the organizers of alternative civic education, only DAP has a history in controversies of allegations by people such as anti-Malay, anti-Islam and anti-King. The other organizers did not face this problem.

Each alternative civic education has a different focus and approach due to three main factors: first, avoiding overlapping syllabuses with other programs, secondly filling the gaps of the other programs and thirdly focusing on organizational goals. The following are the goals or objectives of alternative civic education conducted by different organizations. In general, each alternative civic education has been conducted to teach three components of civic education; civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions. Almost all alternative civic education teaches important topics in civic knowledge, such as democracy, constitution, public policy, political and economic systems, and ideology.

Table 3.3 Goals of Alternative Civic Educations

Alternative Civic Educations	Goals
School for Politicians	Pragmatic and moralist politicians
BERSIH Booth Camp	Civil society activist
School of Activism	Human rights activist
SKOP	Mastering soft skills
AKHI	UMNO activist
BNYV School of Politics	BN activist
SCHOLAR	AMANAH activist
SEKDEM	Democratic youth and DAP activist

However, a different emphasis is given on debating a topic based on the goals outlined by each organisation. For example, although political ideologies were taught, but School for Politicians emphasized on liberalism, SEKDEM focused on social democracy, AKHI on Malay ethno-nationalism and BNYV School of Politics on consociationalism. Meanwhile, civic education alternatives conducted by civil society such as BERSIH, SUARAM and SLR Institute do not emphasize the political ideology, but emphasize more practical matters such as human rights, elections and soft skills.

Furthermore, when discussing more critical topics such as human rights and equality, there is a syllabus difference in the programs. Particularly among

alternative civic education conducted by political parties or government-friendly organizations such as AKHI, the BNYV School of Politics and SKOP compared to opposition political parties and critical civil society towards government such as School for Politicians, BERSIH Booth Camp, School of Activism and SEKDEM. Political parties or government-friendly organizations have less emphasis on human rights and equality and promotes the status quo in contrast with the critical opposition political parties and civil society that make human rights one of the key pillars. The discussion of human rights creates the need to go beyond a passive model of good citizenship that requires non-critical allegiance to the nation and prevents the mobilization of political conflict around identity issues (Vasiljevic, 2009, p.9).

Subsequently, an important component of civic skills is that critical thinking skills and civic engagement have different approaches based on the nature of the program. Generally, programs are conducted in workshops or classes that require participants to analyze, debate and find solutions to each topic being discussed. Only School of Activism has a core syllabus for field trips to meet the community. Whereas except for AKHI and SKOP who conduct public lecture activities instead of workshops, almost all have followed-up programs such as field visit and internal discussions. Simulation in the workshop builds the ability to think critically and view from a variety of angles based on critical topics (King, 1994, p.178). Although an engagement is somewhat limited as only among participants and some invited speakers or experts, the issues discussed are based on real issues happening in the community and the country. This does not diminish the effectiveness and quality of civic skills compared to field trips. This also relates to the role of the instructor in conducting the workshop by giving participants the opportunity to share their views. Trainers should not indoctrinate students and should encourage students to diversify sources of information can increase confidence in democracy and freedom (Murniati and Radhi, 2012, p. 88). Whether workshops, field trips or public lectures, all have room for discussions that can stimulate civic skills. However, compared to workshops and field trips, public lectures have limited time and not everyone can talk in two-ways communications which affect the quality of civic skills.

In addition, alternative civic education also emphasizes the development of behaviours and characteristics that are essential to the sustainability of democracy or

known as civic disposition. During the discussion, participants are not only taught to be critical thinkers, but also respect other people's views whether they agree or disagree. This is important to ensure that the discussion continues and opens up space for others to listen and express their views to diversify the inputs (Kymlicka, 2001, p.289). Participating in discussions is one of the exercises for the right to free speech guaranteed by the constitution. However, civic dispositions are closely related to the approach of alternative civic education because it takes time to build self-confidence. Therefore, workshops and excursions such as School for Politicians, BERSIH Booth Camp, School of Activism, BNYV School of Politics and SEKDEM are more effective than two or three-hour programs such as AKHI and SKOP.

Among the alternative civic educations conducted, six out of eight were organized in the form of workshops. Only four of these six are structured and have a clear syllabus in every stage; School for Politicians, School of Activism, BNYV School of Politics and SEKDEM. However, only School for Politicians and SEKDEM discuss civic knowledge comprehensively covering political systems, ideologies, public policy, economic systems, local culture, law and human rights. Although both have similarities, the main difference is that School for Politicians has a primary focus on producing pragmatic and moral politicians compared to SEKDEM who want to develop young democrats either from inside or outside the party. Because not everyone is interested in becoming a politician, SEKDEM is the best option for studying democracy and good governance. In turn, it is more like the original purpose of civic education in building citizens who are active in their own governance (Branson and Quiqley, 1998).

3.6 Conclusion

New politics discourse began in 1998, but it took over ten years to expand it. Such developments are not easy, there are many obstacles that need to be dealt with, for instances; the interest of young people to engage in politics or democratic activism that has fallen down and the discourse only occurs in small and very limited circles. At least, these two problems require a long period of time to overcome. Political culture is not something that is easy to change because, for some, politics is the belief that needs

to be obeyed. For Malaysians who have a long history of conserving the values of conservatism either from a political or social point of view, it requires a continuing education process at the grassroots level or from bottom to top. The democratic system will not function properly or it may be a reversal of democracy if there are no democratic citizens. Education is the most important tool in delivering ideas and values of democracy, thus creating a democratic citizen. Alternative civic education is an important aspect of providing a lifelong education, more flexible and more important democratic values than a formal civic education that has time constraints, less critical and less attractive.

Therefore, the role of alternative sectors such as political parties and civil society is very important to accommodate these shortcomings. In particular, political parties are often viewed negatively because they are linked to power, but it is important to recognize that there is an important segment in the development of society. There is no doubt that political party have tendency to use alternative civic education to recruit youth to join political party or gain supports. However, this argument must be judged fairly because political parties have the responsibility to educate civic values to the society. Hence, the efforts of political parties on alternative civic education must be evaluated and criticized in order to benefit the development of society and the nation.

CHAPTER IV
DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND YOUTH PARTICIPATIONS

4.1 Introduction

To produce a democratic and active citizen, civic education needs to have three main features; civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition (Branson and Quigley, 1998). The functions of these three components are complementary and need to be blended in order to have a link between knowledge, individuals and society. Knowledge plays a critical role in giving individuals the insight and critical thinking, while individuals have the responsibility to communicate knowledge to the society. Subsequently, forming a knowledgeable and responsible society for what are happening around them such as the development of public policy, respecting cultural diversity, recognizing human rights and monitoring national governance.

Whether formal or alternative civic education, these three features needs to be included in the syllabus. However, formal civic education requires a policymaking process by governments that have bureaucracy and it is time-consuming. Democratic issues are constantly evolving from time to time and require new input, analysis and approach. Alternative civic education has the advantage of flexibility in designing its content to be more relevant and creative in line with current circumstances. Hands-on engagement or experience is an important element in stimulating the cognitive ability to assess the situation in a holistic manner.

4.2 From Good Citizenship to Democratic Citizenship

The main question of civic education that must be addressed is the direction and vision of the subject. Basically, there are two civic education insights that have become a major debate among civic education scholars; good citizenship and democratic citizenship. The concept of good citizens practiced in Malaysia creates balanced and harmonious citizens who are knowledgeable, noble and glorious in terms

of spiritual, mental and physical health while also being hygienic and able to serve the religion, race and nation. Although there are elements of society in the concept of good citizens, problems for conservative countries such as Malaysia focus primarily in regularity, comfort, and stability or in other words instil discipline, obedience or adhere to all rules and norms in the society and country (Suyato et al., 2013, p. 138). This means that involvement in society is more than the norms that are existing and are not critical. According to Mohamed (2017, p.108), the characteristics of a good citizen proposed by Malaysia are to accept the government, obey the law and vote in an organized election. This can be seen in the implementation of civic and historical education taught in formal education by emphasizing the elements of patriotism, but no emphasis on fundamental rights and critical thinking (Ahmad, 2004, p. 200).

Undoubtedly, there is a definition of progressive good citizenship, but it is similar to democratic citizenship. According to Galston (cited, in Kymlicka, 2001, p. 288) democratic citizenship has four important components; general virtues, social virtues, economic virtues and political virtues. In short, (i) general virtues of courage in defending the legitimacy of the law, (ii) social virtues on independent and open-mindedness in assessing and establishing issues, (iii) economic virtues about adaptability of change in economic and technological and (iv) political virtues is the ability to discern rationally and respect the rights of others, willingness to demand the rights, ability to evaluate the elected representative performances and participate in public discourse. These four virtues are a combination of three main components of civic education, namely civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions. These virtues also include abilities, courage and participation in public discourse to question the political authority regarding public policy (Kymlicka, 2002, p.289). Good citizenship emphasizes the development of citizens as individuals and members of the community, but less or not at all touching the active participation and critical thinking such as democracy, politics, government action, human rights and public policy compared to democratic citizen.

SEKDEM has three levels; Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 and each level are organised for three days and two nights in a relaxed way. Besides, SEKDEM also uses an interactive format during the programs such as group works, shared decision-making, simulation of parliamentary debates, games and "pirate ships" as the main

theme to form groups (Jaymani, 2019: interview; Faizal, 2019: interview). Form 1 and Form 2 are open to all Malaysian citizens aged between 18 and 30 years old. Anyone who wishes to pursue Form 2 must have attended the Form 1. While Form 3 is only open to party members who have attended Form 1 and Form 2. The syllabus taught in Form 1 is about the differences in political systems such as feudalism, authoritarianism and democracy, and the introduction of political ideologies such as socialism, social democracy and liberalism (Faizal, 2019: interview). In the presentation and discussion, it also debates the history of a political system as an example of a change from feudalism to a democracy that included political and economic aspects (Ramlee, 2019: interview). One of the participants, Hanun (2019: interview) argued that studying the political system provided an opportunity to understand and admit that democracy is not a perfect system but has many advantages and arguably better as compared to other political systems such as authoritarian or feudalism. The ability of participants to argue and debate like this shows that critical thinking which is an important component of civic skills is practised in SEKDEM.

In addition to debating international political history, there are also discussions on the political system in Malaysia such as the roles of the House of Representatives and the Dewan Negara. According to Hanani (2019: interview), Malaysia's political system is good topic to discuss in SEKDEM because in school it was touched only on the surfaces. Similarly, Jaymani (2019: interview) argues that it is necessary to know political ideologies because ideologies refer to a set of ideas and values that provides a base for an organized political action. Discussions on values are essential in understanding the political and social realities that occur in Malaysia so that participants can critically analyse the differences in history, background and local context. Meanwhile for Joha (2019: interview), programs such as SEKDEM has the ability to build a way to think for the youths and how they act in order to abide by idealism. Discussing the local ideology, human rights and universal values, Syafiq (2019: interview) says:

> *The ideologies are indeed something important in civic education. When we are proficient in ideology we know where the origin of the value and how it is functioning. For example, there are sessions discussing the origins of this*

country that started from the Sultan. Then, this system develops and forms a country today. In addition, it is important to understand that it doesn't matter where it comes from but how to adapt the values to the current situation or local culture.

Civic education not only teaches critical thinking about politics and democracy, but also values and beliefs inherited from parents and society (Pybas, 2004, p.18). Studying topics regarding international and local political systems, political ideologies, economic systems and universal values, as well as local cultures, can generate critical thinking and triggers respect towards the diversity of views among participants. In particular, topics such as human rights are still unpopular among Malaysians but through discussion in SEKDEM, it provides the opportunity to debate these sensitive matters in a safe and open way. This learning is important for exposing individuals to different sociocultural settings, interactions and experiences that encourage or discourage effective learning (Carretero, Haste and Bermeduz, 2016, p.295). This is because engagement in political discourse is not intended to create only one political view, but educates to engage in conversation, listening, speaking and understanding what others are saying and respecting the views of others so that discussions can proceed well (Kymlicka, 2001, p.289). One of the important components of civic dispositions is political tolerance which is to respect the differences and views of others and celebrate the diversity of cultures, beliefs and religions (Owen, 2015, p.4). Agreeing to this, Hadi (2019: interview) said most SEKDEM alumni have progressive thinking and are not trapped in the outdated racial narratives.

Subsequently, Form 2 focuses more on public policy, such as policy formation at local, state and federal levels. This is to emphasize the reality of the political system as opposed to theory or ideology which may be too utopia (Faizal, 2019: interview). Public policy is a matter that directly affects the public in either a citizen or a non-citizen. According to Murniati and Radhi (2012, p.93), public policy is one of the important components in civic knowledge and political maturity is achieved only when citizens know about the fundamentals of a state's policy. For example, taxes that should be paid by citizens or visa fee that must be paid by

foreigners. Basically, public policy encompasses all directions, rules and regulations to achieve the government's goal of a country towards a sustainable development. Public policy also involves law enforcement that is impactful if it is not implemented or not complied with. As a citizen who is directly affected by public policy formed by the government, it is very important to engage and express views. The government has the authority and legitimacy to make policy, but must be based on the principles of democracy and respect the human rights. However, the government has often missed and violated these principles. Hence, discussions on public policy are very important to train citizens to actively participate in the political, economic and social affairs. Subsequently, to be a watchdog of government's performances.

Telling the experience of attending Form 2, Hanani (2019: interview) says this module is important as most of us do not know how the basic policy process is going on, so this module gives an overview of how policy formulation is done and advocacy role in influencing the policy. Advocacy is one of the components of civic skills needed to build a proposal and influence public policy (Schulz et al., 2016, p. 20). In addition, Hanun (2019: interview) also emphasized the importance of public policy when she said that although the street protest was one of the channels in a healthy democracy, it doesn't always get heard by the government, while advocacy has greater potential to be accepted by the government and made a better impact. According to Ramlee (2019: interview), ideology has a role in increasing the demand of citizens to manage the nation's wealth resources transparently. However, ideology applications in public policy need not be too rigid and need to look at the contextual occurrence at the time (Syafiq, 2019: interview; Ramlee, 2019: interview).

Form 3 is just for alumni who have joined the DAP and attended Form 1 and Form 2. More focus are given on refining the ideology of party members and ensuring that they are able to implement what they have learnt into politics (Faizal, 2019: interview). Among the modules being conducted, the participants need to organize a simulation of political talks that debate the party policies on public policy applications such as education, economic and social. Participants are split into groups and each group needs to have a manager, researchers and speakers. The manager is responsible for ensuring the concept of talk. While researchers need to find information and content for speakers. These three parties need to take on their role to

ensure that the talk is successful. According to Sirivunnabood (2016, p.170) debating party's policies on public policy is one of the key topics in alternative civic education. This module trains participant to use a variety of perspectives, including the application of political ideology, the criticism of public policy, problem-solving and critical thinking which reflects civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions.

4.3 Nurturing Meaningful Youth Political Participations

The National Youth Development Policy 1997 can be defined as youths that are aged between 15 and 40 years. The National Youth Development Policy Amendment 2015 emphasizes the importance of programs and development activities that are focused towards youths aged 15 to 30 years old. In Malaysia, the majority of political development programs involving young people between 18 and 30 years old. This fact is also shared by SEKDEM. Hence, the focus will be given to participants 18 to 30 years old.

Forbrig (2005, p. 21) says in the theory of democracy, there is a concept of youth involvement in good governance. It is important to understand that youth involvement is not limited to formal politics, but also alternative politics. It is explained by Chisholm and Kovacheva (2002, p. 34) that there are three types of youth participation which cover formal and alternative politics; (i) participation in institutional politics, such as elections, campaigns and political party members, (ii) involvement in protest politics, such as movement social and demonstration and (iii) associative civic associative life or involvement with groups or associations, community participation and volunteerism. In a nutshell, youth political participation is the manifestation of civic dispositions resulting from learning and experiences at homes, schools, communities, and civil society organizations (Branson and Quigley, 1998, p.11). The phenomenon of youth political participation, especially in this political alternative is happening globally. Also, not to mention Malaysia, when some youth groups had emerged after the political tsunami (Febriansyah and Ismail, 2016). Hence, youth participation in politics can be formulated as involvement in formal and alternative politics in affecting good governance and development of society.

The completion of Form 2 is not the end of an alternative civic education initiative to SEKDEM participants. An alumni network was set up to provide a platform for the alumni to continue engaging in activism-based programs (Faizal, 2019: interview). They are encouraged to attend a follow-up program organized by SEKDEM to give space for young people to share their views and debate critical issues in a relaxed manner. The program is called Democracy Talk or Bicara Demokrasi (BICDEM). The BICDEM provides the opportunity for any topic to be voluntarily discussed by the alumni. This includes football, politics, Uber and taxis, local government issues, economy, films, songs and big data (Faizal, 2019: interview; Hanani, 2019: interview). These topics are self-selected by alumni based on their individual interests that they want to share with the other alumni. Encouraging voluntary presentations enables the development of open and independent thinking to critically analyse an issue (Galston, cited, in Kymlicka, 2001, p.288). Explaining the experience involved in BICDEM, Hanun (2019: interview) says it aims to celebrate various opinions, but if one does not agree, he can express his argument and from that participants can exchange their opinions. In addition to BICDEM, there are also trips to strengthen the bonding of alumni and exchange ideas such as a visit to the Penang Chief Minister's office to learn about state government administration (Faizal, 2019: interview, Syafiq, 2019: interview).

SEKDEM has successfully injected enthusiasm for youth involved with activism which is not just limited to SEKDEM but in the context of wider activism. Among them is involved in social movements such as BERSIH 4.0 and BERSIH 5.0 demonstration that demanded free and fair elections. In addition, the alumni network had also attended a demonstration demanding academic freedom at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 2015 when two students were unfairly suspended for organizing a political forum on campus. The alumni network also plays a role in informing and mobilizing street protests. This information dissemination is done through the Whatsapp group that was established as a communication platform for the alumni (Hanani, 2019: interview, Faizal, 2019: interview). According to Fisher (2012, p.123) the youth involvement with social movements exposes individuals to social networks that facilitate long-term engagement and retention in civic life.

Besides that, it can also influence and build civic-mindedness citizens which is important for the sustainability of democracy.

After completing SEKDEM, there are some alums who have started their own programs as an initiative or be more actively involved in democratic activism (Ramlee, 2019: interview). Singh (2019: interview) also acknowledged that there were participants from BERSIH Booth Camp who had finished the module and did not want to enter any party that was actively involved with activities organized by BERSIH 2.0. Among those involved in advocating public discussion is Syafiq who founded Purana School and Hanani who was involved with the Enlightenment Class. Purana School is a youth organization established for the purpose of nurturing philosophical discussions in Malaysia. This effort is very important because in Malaysia philosophical discussions are less popular than political discussions. Indirectly, it fills the vacuum that was once invisible to the public. The Enlightenment Class is an independent organization mobilized by a group of young people from various backgrounds to deal with various issues from the fields of religious, civilizations and government policies. Both groups manage to run their organizations without taking any fund from any political party. Describing the Purana School's initiative, Syafiq (2019: interview) said most of the funds came from their own pocket money or from generous participants. While Hanani (2019: interview) shared that the Enlightenment Class receives funding from an independent think tank, the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) which was invited to co-organize the program. According to McFarland and Thomas (2006, p.401), involvement in civic organizations such as representation, speaking in public forums and generating community identity can increase involvement in politics which is important in building self-confidence to practice the rights of a citizen.

Besides being involved in public discourse, there are also alumni who are active in education. Hanun, who had previously worked in hotel management, had resigned and chose to be a full-time teacher at Buku Jalanan Chow Kit (BJCK). BJCK is a non-governmental organization that provides free education to children who are unable to attend public school due to difficulties in meeting the documentation requirement. Most students studying at BJCK are undocumented children. The main

focus of BJCK now is to produce students who are able to read, write and count. Describing this matter is Hanun herself (2019: interview):

If we want to wait for the state to do it, it will be too slow. So, we need to start the initiative first. For example, previously the voices of undocumented children were not heard, but after we founded BJCK, and we met the Minister of Education and the National Welfare Foundation, their voices are now heard and taken into account.

The biggest achievement of BJCK was when the Ministry of Education agreed to accept the children that doesn't have a complete document to enrol in public schools as long as one of the parents is a Malaysian citizen starting in 2019 (News Straits Times, 2018). Although this policy is not comprehensive to cover all categories of undocumented children's cases, but at least there is a progress (Hanun, 2019: interview). In addition, Hanun also participates in formal politics as an observer of elections in a series of by-elections through BERSIH 2.0.

Those who have attended Form 3, some of them were able to hold a position in the party which means participating in formal political structures. However, according to Hamidi (2019: interview), DAP doesn't promise any posts, but if anyone managed to acquire a position, it's due to their own merits. Similarly, Faizal (2019: interview) said they could not get it in a simple way because doing party works after they have been an official member shapes them to be a better member. Some of them are Edry Faizal (Dusun Tua Assemblyman), Young Syefura Othman (Ketari Assemblyman), Ahmad Irfan (Kajang Municipal Councillor), and Farhan Haziq (Petaling Jaya City Councilor). However, there are disadvantages to being a party member because they are bound by party policy and are not free to speak if there is a violation of the democratic values by DAP. In addition, there are also alumni who are not DAP members, but are involved in the election campaign during by-election or general election. This could be considered as one of the forms of youth political participation that shaped civic knowledge as youth from the Asoka community helped the Puea Fah Din Party in Thailand (Sirivunnabood, 2016, p. 173). In a nutshell,

SEKDEM's alumni political participation can be categorized into two categories, alternative politics and formal politics as shown below.

Table 4.1 SEKDEM's Alumni Political Participation

Alternative Politics		Formal Politics
Protest Politics	Civic Associative Life	Institutional Politics
• Social movement: Bersih 4.0 and Bersih 5.0 • Street Protest: academic freedom	• Alumni • Speak Democracy (BICDEM) • Purana School • Enlightenment Class • Buku Jalanan Chow Kit	• Election observers • Party members • Election candidates • Election campaign • Local Councillor • State Assemblyman

4.4 Criticisms to Democratic School

Although it has been discussed about the role of SEKDEM as an alternative for civic education, there are a few criticisms towards this initiative. Moreover, the fact that it is being run by a political party which often seen tends to use education for the sake of political power instead of freedom. One of the participants, Fiona (2019: interview) thought she will be studying democracy in general, but ultimately the module focused too much on social democracy and seemed to promote the party's ideology that financed the program. According to Dahal (2014), civic education that was based on indoctrination of political ideology creates ignorance and a mind that will be controlled by the party while preventing its cadres and voters from understanding both the context of the human condition in which they live and the principles of ethics because it does not give an awareness of reality. Besides that, Zohdi (2019: interview) also said there were some alumni of SEKDEM who attended SKOP who were uncomfortable with the SEKDEM syllabus for promoting the idea of the opposition parties. This argument is considered to be genuine because there is indeed some members of the parliaments or assemblymen or DAP party representatives came to present or dialogue with SEKDEM participants such as Tony

Pua, Wong Shu Qi and Howard Lee. Therefore, there is no doubt that there were DAP elements or ideologies has been applied. However, Joha (2019: interview) argues that ideology is so important that every action or decision is made based on idealism and not just following the others.

Secondly, the majority of SEKDEM participants are Malays which is almost 90 percent (Aziz, Ismail and Abdullah, 2018, p. 150). It must be known that DAP is not a race-based party but instead a Chinese-majority party. DAP has often said they are multi-racial parties, but the failure of SEKDEM to get multi-racial participants in numbers have been seen as a platform for DAP to gain support from the Malays instead of encouraging formal youth political participations. Indirectly, giving the perception that it is one of the indoctrinating projects by DAP.

Subsequently, form 3 receives the biggest criticisms of SEKDEM as an alternative civic education. In particular, placing the conditions that say only qualified party members are eligible to attend. Undoubtedly, there is a tiny and blurry line to say that DAP doesn't have a political interest. This is acknowledged by both alumni whether they are present like Syafiq, Fiona, Hanani, Hanun or those from the outside such as Joha, Hadi, Singh, Samad and Najib. All of them agree that there is indeed a recruitment element in SEKDEM (2019: interview). However, it also can be seen from the context of soft politics or persuasion rather than coercion. Recognizing this matter, Hanani (2019: interview) explains that there are indeed persuasions to join the party, but when we they 2are involved with various programs that open up the mind and know many people, we have the choice and are more critical toward the party itself. Answering this criticism, (Faizal, 2019: interview) said:

> *It is more like a bonus and not an objective to have this kind of return of investment. We also informed that we are not forcing anyone to join the party and whoever enters the party is a bonus for us. We informed that Form 1 and Form 2 are open to all, and Form 3 is specifically to those who want to join the party because the syllabus is more relevant to them.*

Placing alternative civic education directly under the party or funded by the political party has disadvantages and controversial perceptions. The structure itself

could not avoid the particular doctrines of political ideology such as SEKDEM which is biased on social democracy. However, DAP is not the only political party or political entity organizing an alternative civic education based on political ideology in this world. In Germany, where plural multi-party system is adapeted, there are political foundations established by political parties such as the KAS by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) by the Social-Democratic Party (SDP) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that aim to promote people's civic participations. According to Ismail and Abadi (2017, p.554) the political foundation or *Stiftungen* is the oldest donor organization in the modern world and is the most experienced in working with political actors abroad including helping with the critical political transition in Spain, Portugal and Chile. Each political foundation has its own ideology which is also applied in their civic education programs such as KAS in adapting conservatism, FES in adapting social democracy and FNF in adapting liberalism.

Each of these foundations is funded by public funds through Ministry of Internal Affairs and the amount received depends on the number of representatives of each political party represented in the Bundestag (Dakowska, 2005, p.1). Although each foundation is affiliated with a political party, they are financially and legally independent to organize and select partners and employees, and fully autonomous in the spirit of openness, transparency and accountability (Unmüssig, 2017). The financial, legal and autonomous structure that clearly distinguishes between alternative civic educations by political foundations and SEKDEM. Indirectly, the absence of a clear structure causes the direction of SEKDEM controlled under DAP's policies and not autonomous.

Finally, the organization of SEKDEM is too focused on Klang Valley which is one of the main problems faced by most civil societies in Malaysia. The programs are too concentrated in the urban areas as compared to the rural areas, Sabah and Sarawak. Indirectly affecting democratization takes place as a whole. Recognizing this, Hamidi (2019: interview) said that there have been several times since SEKDEM was established in 2011 when it was organized outside the Klang Valley such as Kedah and Perak but the number of attendees was insufficient. Therefore, they decided to organize only in the Klang Valley. Also criticizing this is Samad (2019: interview),

for him, activism in the Klang Valley is too much, too difficult to grow and too elite He also believes that it's time to go to every state for a more comprehensive civic development.

4.5 Conclusion

An excellent alternative civic education is able to inspire participants to be actively involved in politics with independent thinking. Although there is no doubt the existence of persuasive element for entering the DAP, the number of entrants is very small compared to the total number of participants. As a result, Form 3 for members has only been successful once with a total of fourteen participants. Based on the data discussed, there are three important things that can be summarized. First, SEKDEM does not force participants into political parties, but gives them the option of engaging with advanced programs such as BICDEM and boot-camping trips. Secondly, the respondents show the existence of critical thinking in debating issues related to politics, public policy and to DAP itself. Third, SEKDEM has successfully inspired alumni to be more active in politics, whether formal or alternative such as creating public discourse groups, education for undocumented children, election observers, assemblymen and councillor.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

The study aims to evaluate the role of alternative civic education in Malaysia which is rarely addressed in most studies of civic education. When the future of formal civic education in Malaysia becomes uncertainty over the government policy, alternative civic education is growing rapidly, especially after the 2008 political tsunami. Among those who have taken on the role are political parties that are often seen and linked to political power and pragmatism rather than to promote the values of democracy and human rights. However, the existence of alternative civic education has shown that there is new a hope towards the application of democratic citizenship and increase youth participation in politics.

After the emergence of a new politics in 1998, the form of youth participation in the Malaysian political landscape has changed. In particular, involvement in formal politics, such as joining the party or participating in the election campaign is diminishing. Furthermore, it is further reinforced by the findings of studies that the interest of young people in politics is diminishing. Youth see that political parties are an unreliable entity because they are practising corruption rather than focusing on the welfare of citizens and good governance. However, most studies have focused on formal politics and do not deeply assess the changing forms of youth participation in politics after the emergence of a new politics. Alternative political spaces have created room for youth to participate in a wider and more flexible of the political framework. However, this engagement doesn't promise something meaningful if youth have no knowledge and idealism based on democratic values and human rights, and critical thinking skills. The absence of democratic values can create undemocratic citizens. Subsequently, it will have negative impacts on the entire democratic system that includes social, political and economic.

Political parties and civil societies see that there is a loophole in fulfilling this responsibility to eradicate old politics and produce democratic citizens through

alternative civic education channels. Although political party and civil society have long been involved in alternative civic education, almost all programs are organized were one-off and do not have a follow-up program. The programs have been organized more on smaller themes compared to democracies in the structured and organized syllabus. The programs were only circulated in small circles. Meanwhile, the new politics discourses that has just evolved haven't been spread to larger groups. Therefore, the learning process couldn't give a deep impact on the thinking and attitude of the youth. In fact, the majority of youth are still not exposed to the political ideas, democratic processes and critical thinking. Old political cultures such as racial and religious politics and feudalism still hold the minds of most youth. At the same time, the education system at the school or university level doesn't take a holistic role to give exposure to democracy. Moreover, when civic education subjects are abolished in schools, while at the university level, critical social science subjects such as the Law and Society, Human Rights and Politics and Leadership are less emphasized than less critical social science subjects. DAP, which has a long history of controversy and often associated with negative allegations on racial politics, has taken a progressive approach by creating SEKDEM with the aim to provide a platform for youth to learn democracy, human rights, good governance and public policy.

Through the results of the study, SEKDEM has important components in civic education; civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition. The functions of these three components are complementary and need to be blended together in order to have a link between knowledge, individuals and society. Knowledge plays a critical role in giving individuals the insight and critical thinking, while individuals have the responsibility to communicate knowledge to the society. Subsequently, forming a knowledgeable and responsible society for what has happened around them such as the development of public policy, respecting cultural diversity, recognizing human rights and monitoring national governance. Through the module, alumni have shown positive impacts on democratic citizenship. Alumni are able to debate the importance of ideology, differences in political and economic systems, the adaptability of local context and culture, and the importance of engaging in public discourse including public policy. The study also found that SEKDEM also had a positive impact to increase the participation of youth in politics. There are alumni who have created their

own initiative in disseminating new politics discourse to the public. Some also engage in educational activism and advocate for the right to education for undocumented children. Although there are criticisms saying that there is a hidden agenda like recruitment, the number of alumni registering as DAP members is very small and insignificant. In fact, from another point of view, it opens up space for youth to participate in formal political structures. SEKDEM has successfully opened up space for youth to involve in both formal or alternative political structures.

The future research proposals for other researchers can be extended further by comparing the syllabus between existing alternative civic education or the role of alternative civic education as complementary to formal civic education.

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