

# Issues in Education

Ratnawati Mohd Asraf

IIUM PRESS

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA



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*Ratnawati Mohd Asraf*



IIUM Press

Published by:  
IUM Press  
International Islamic University Malaysia

First Edition, 2011  
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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Edited By:  
Ratnawati Mohd Asraf  
Issues in Education  
Ratnawati Mohd Asraf

ISBN: 978-967-418-055-3

Member of Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia -- MAPIM  
(Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council)

Printed by :  
IUM PRINTING SDN. BHD.  
No. 1, Jalan Industri Batu Caves 1/3  
Taman Perindustrian Batu Caves  
Batu Caves Centre Point  
68100 Batu Caves  
Selangor Darul Ehsan

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# **BALANCING CULTURAL PLURALITY AND NATIONAL UNITY THROUGH EDUCATION: THE CASE STUDY OF MALAYSIA**

**Rosnani Hashim**

## **Abstract**

*This paper analyzes the attempt made by the Malaysian educational authority to maintain a balance between the need for national unity and the need to preserve cultural diversity among its multi-cultural population. Striking the right balance in a civic society is a virtue and this problem is not only true for Malaysia but for any multi-cultural society which is more common today as the world gets more globalized. Primary education in Malaysia is conducted in three types of national schools, each using the pupils' mother tongue – Malay, Mandarin and Tamil – as the medium of instruction. This is to accommodate for, and preserve the diverse cultures. However, in view of the nation's aspiration for national unity, secondary and tertiary education is conducted using the Malay language as the medium of instruction. The paper analyzes how basic issues of a common language, affirmative actions for the under privileged race, and a common school have united or divided the nation. It also examines the extent to which the educational effort has met the goal of balancing national unity and cultural diversity. Finally, the paper looks at the problems and challenges faced by the Malaysian educational authority and suggest ways to improve the situation.*

## **Keywords**

Multicultural Education, Malaysia, Race Relations, Cultural Diversity, Language, Affirmative Actions.