

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING NATIONAL HEROES IN MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: AN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

‘Aisyah Kamaruddin¹, Nurul Huda Ibrahim²

¹School of Education, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah
School of Education, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah

Aisyah@uum.edu.my¹
nhuda_i@uum.edu.my²

Abstract

This research examines secondary school teachers' perspectives on the teaching of national heroes in Malaysia while emphasizing the embedding of Islamic moral principles. To study teachers' perspectives on what hinders and aids in the teaching of national heroes, with special reference to the consideration of Islamic values, especially akhlaq (moral character), adl (justice), and jihad ilmu (striving for knowledge), in the curriculum. Through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions based on ten teachers from the North of Malaysia, the study finds that teachers use various methods to engage their students such as storytelling, project-based learning, and local content. Besides obstacles such as a rigid curriculum and scarce resources, teachers have nevertheless established the integration of Islamic values with critical thinking, student involvement, and moral reflection. It shows that integrating Islamic principles encourages students' understanding of national heroes, paving the road for national unity and character building. The study highlights the need for the enhancement of teachers' professional development to enable them to teach values across the curriculum and gives a fresh perspective on this kind of values teaching in Malaysian history, thus, contributing to a more inclusive and holistic approach toward education.

Keywords: National heroes, Islamic education, Pedagogy, Malaysian secondary schools, Character development

Introduction

From an even deeper standpoint, the exploration of teachers' perspectives on teaching national heroes has proved a significant investigation that demands a comprehensive understanding of the very complicated interplay between pedagogical approaches, curriculum design, and the overarching national philosophy of education (Lessani et al., 2014). This study therefore goes much deeper into the nuanced perceptions of these educators as agents in molding and shaping students' understanding and appreciation of what is considered national identity, cultural values, and historical narratives. Teachers, in this context, are not only educators but also cultural mediators who interpret and transmit the significance of national heroes to the younger generation (Dirsa et al., 2022). They are vital to the development of a sense of national pride and solidarity among students, encompassing the gap between the official curriculum and the diversely experienced cultural lifestyles of their multicultural student population. Since Malaysian society is very complex-the vast characterization of ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds-the teaching of national heroes offers both opportunities and challenges for teachers. These dialogues become very complicated given the need for teachers to navigate around national identity, historic interpretations, and inclusive representations to make the lessons relevant to all and that move closer together within the ideals of belonging and citizenship. Besides, the research aims at identifying the pedagogy or methods employed by teachers to teach the subject matter which creates an enjoyable, relevant, challenging, and critical engagement for students beyond mere regurgitation of facts and figures.

Not only does it impart ethical depth, but it also spiritualizes the subject matter while teaching national heroes in Malaysian secondary schools from an Islamic point of view. Some aspects

of integration are moral and character development. The focusing point of teaching Islamic students would be, with the basic importance of akhlaq, or moral character and conduct. When heroes are taught in schools, it should not only suffice to state the facts in history about these heroes but should also try to incorporate those values that speak to them, things such as honesty, bravery, humility, and selfless sacrificial service. Not all these values can be attributed only to Islamic heroes, for examples of these values also appear in non-Islamic Malaysian national heroes, with the shared ethical entries through boundaries of religion and culture. By pointing out to the students that these heroes had taken on and upheld these virtues, teachers can instill in them an appreciation of character and integrity towards true heroism, then inspire awe within them to emulate this quality in their lives and for the country. On the other hand, Justice and Fairness could be adapted in teaching the historical event. This emphasis has been given to principles of justice (adl) and fairness (ihsan) for a harmonious and just society in the Islamic tradition. It should then hold true for most national heroes who staged a straightforward fight against oppression, injustice, and inequality—they should be represented as champions of such Islamic values regardless of their religious backgrounds. Critical thinking, reflection, and indefatigable harboring of knowledge. This is very much in sync with and exemplifies the true Islamic ethical framework which tells that in society every individual has his or her own obligations in making justice and standing up for the rights of the oppressed. Teachers must implant spiritual values and great ethics.

Teachers may connect the lives and actions of national heroes and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, thus serving as a paradigm for courage, justice, and leadership. Such an approach teaches students to be inspired by a heroism with values rather than mere nationalism; this is barely more than a year old. To instill these values in their students by means of simulation, from heroes who had built up such qualitative Islamic values strength so that students can walk in their footsteps, learning to later walk along a line where honesty, integrity, and altruism are the main qualities they must possess, and, finally, they become participants in leadership opportunities for the moral and ethical development of the nation. By calling upon those same Islamic principles, the lessons learned to extend the ideas of justice, compassion, and humane dignity across religious, cultural, and interpersonal divides; such work shall serve to rekindle a sense of purpose and national identity among diverse student populations. This primarily fosters ethics, which only embodies patriotism. Moreover, the introduction of Islamic perspectives in the treatment of national heroes can also extricate the real potential of inter-religious interaction and understanding in Malaysian schools. By celebrating the contribution of individuals from confessing backgrounds to complement the advancement and advancement of Malaysia, a teacher will help students understand the amazing diversity of Malaysian society, thereby giving to develop feelings upon unity from inclusivity.

The stories of heroes who worked for national unity are thus a reflection of the Islamic concept of ukhuwah that upholds brotherhood across religious and ethnic divides. Islamic teachings assert that the ummah is a divine entity, permissible yet vibrant in diversity. This approach places emphasis on imparting to students a sense of common responsibility and national identity that would promote inclusivity and mutual understanding between people of different backgrounds. With reference to national heroes' actions in relation to Islamic values, such as compassion, justice, and service, teachers can guide and inspire students to becoming ethical leaders who commit themselves to the upliftment of their communities and the nation at large.

Islamic leadership has its roots in the concept of amanah, which relates to trustworthiness,

responsibility, and integrity in service. Teachers can illustrate how national heroes carry this amanah for the good of the country by demonstrating those illuminating attributes of exemplary leadership which are deeply rooted in Islamic ideals. Teachers can encourage students to strive to have that sama in their own roles as future leaders by talking about how the heroes have guarded the trust placed in them and worked hard for the betterment of the country. It does also instill in them a sense of ethical responsibility and allow fresh depth to their understanding of the spiritual and moral aspects of heroism and leadership, encouraging them to become agents of change in their own localities and in the whole country. Islamic intellectual tradition lays much emphasis on a critical process of thinking, reflection, and relentless pursuit of knowledge (Yusuf et al., 2022).

Education in Islam teaches people that being a believer means learning as much as you can. In that context, teachers could imagine the national heroes as mujahid who have made contributions either by thinking or making social reforms, telling their stories of lifelong learning whose values were aligned in Islam on contribution to society. This concept emphasizes the interconnectedness between scholarship and spiritual development with civic responsibility in Islam and helps form a reference for students as they view national heroes as standards of holistic, impactful leadership. Introducing an Islamic dimension in teaching the national heroes ensures a total framework for ethical leadership, national unity, and spiritual upliftment of the students in the context of Malaysian secondary schooling. A teacher can put in place a factor that differentiates the norms of heroism between a context-Heroism in an Islamic Context and contexts outside Islam. Thus, a teacher has a very special opportunity to educate students on heroism, with national aspirations and religious principles (Gusliana & Nurlala, 2022; Samal et al., 2023).

Research Objectives

This research focused on the following objectives.

1. To investigate the views of secondary school teachers on teaching national heroes in the context of the Malaysian education system.
2. To investigate the teaching methods of Malaysian secondary school teachers to engage students effectively in studying national heroes.
3. To determine the factors and challenges faced by Malaysian secondary school teachers in teaching national heroes in an Islamic context of education and to recommend solutions.

Literature Review

The discussions around the teaching of national heroes in secondary education represent a tangled web in which prescribed narratives confront the actual life experiences of students, calling for a move toward multiple approaches that accommodate the complexities of national identity (Pramono et al., 2019). Teachers must strive toward prodding students into critically engaging with various alternative positions and experiences beyond a two-dimensional approach to heroism (Curaming, 2017). Central to the shift must be changes in teaching that bring in primary materials and multimedia resources and interactive activities to spark student interest and build understanding (Rusiyono & Apriani, 2020). Accordingly, the present study examines the teacher perspectives with the focus on opportunities and challenges they face while teaching national heroes in Malaysian secondary schools (Nuryadi & Widiatmaka, 2022). Further, an aspect of ongoing teacher professional development that cannot be overlooked is equipping teachers with the skills, knowledge, and resources to address sensitive topics,

promote critical thinking, and achieve inclusive within the classroom setting. Integrating digital tools and platforms into the teaching-learning process would also be an effective and viable approach to engage students and enhance their comprehension (Lessani et al., 2014). An effective curriculum design considers how it affects teaching and learning methods applied by teachers and what impacts they have on student academic performance and holistic development.

Character education, included in the Malaysian school curriculum, affirming greater commitment to the development of the whole child. This approach is in line with the National Philosophy of Education (NPE), which aims to produce individuals equipped not only with knowledge and skills but also with values. Thereby the curriculum promotes the development of responsible citizens through embedding values, such as honesty, respect, and empathy, which lead to positive contributions to society. The Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025 promotes the significance of instructional leadership in enhancing principals' focus on developing schools' academic performance (Rahman et al., 2020). However, issues arising from limited resources, heavy workloads, stress, and lack of sufficient leadership training programs should be addressed (Jaafar & Ghazali, 2018).

Technology has revolutionized the teaching and learning processes of social studies by providing digital tools and artificial intelligence into traditional teaching methodologies. Interactive simulations, online databases, and other multimedia resources enhance a student's engagement and broaden the horizon for seeing historical events from varied perspectives. With technology, students can even learn effective exploration of quite complex social concepts. Besides, the role of school principal-technological leadership competency also determines the extent to which technology is integrated into education successfully (Aurangzeb et al., 2019). School principals should provide means aimed at empowering and enlightening teachers on issues raised by digital leadership and technology (Alajmi, 2022). This competency encompasses not just an understanding of digital tools but also the fostering of a school culture using digital means to enhance teaching and learning (Isa et al., 2020). Principals who actively lead and facilitate technology adoption in their schools have a great effect on the willingness of teachers to adopt and effectively use digital resources for effective instruction (Yahya & Raman, 2020). They also improve efficiency and effectiveness, thereby enhancing the practical and effective instruction of the school (Tahir et al., 2021). This approach needs to be comprehensive because it will consider the availability of ICT tools, school regulations, division of labor among members of the school community, among many others for ICT integration in schools in Malaysia (Razak et al., 2018). Challenges that exist should be addressed, and more efforts should be made to bring additional support to teachers to hone their ICT skills to make the use of technology more productive in teaching.

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into teaching is crucial for modern education. Teachers' acceptance and preparedness in Malaysian schools used for ICT integration in the educational process is highly essential. Studies have shown that teachers' positive attitude towards ICT truly affects the successful implementation of ICT in the classrooms for their students' learning experience and skill acquisition (Ayub et al., 2015). Among the factors that affect the integration of ICT in teaching practices are insufficient training and limited access to reliable technology as well as inadequate technical support by the educational institutions (Singh & Muniandi, 2012). These issues called for effective professional development programs and provision of resources that can contribute to better digital tools within the education institution (Asad et al., 2020; Yahya & Raman, 2020). Creating an environment that encourages teachers to share experiences as well as diverse approaches to ICT usage will certainly create a huge impact in successful learning outcomes for students (Shoraevna et al., 2021). In addition, the willingness of teachers, the provision of

hardware, and professional development of the staff are some factors that influence the technology integration in the classroom (Machado & Chung, 2015). The principals play a very important role in guiding the use of information communications technology in schools (Abdullah et al., 2013; Ibrahim et al., 2013).

Secondary school teachers in Malaysia find exploits integrating digital information literacy (DIL) into their practices. Such matters would take some innovative methods of teaching, engagement from stakeholders, and a culture change of adaptability that seeks to empower teachers to impart DIL competencies to students. This, in turn, will ensure that teachers are empowered to give students the requisite DIL skills to thrive in the digital age (Luma et al., 2014) (Edu et al., 2012). Some of the factors that influence teachers' classroom decisions regarding ICT are resource availability, the usability of software and hardware, ease of use, motivation to change, support and collegiality in their school, school and national policies, commitment to professional learning, and previous background in formal computer training (Mumtaz, 2000). Furthermore, teachers' belief systems with respect to ICT and teaching and learning are at the center of integration (Mumtaz, 2000).

In conjunction with the ICT and technology integration in Malaysian schools, a more holistic view is necessary to underscore the crucial role of instilling values and principles from the Islamic perspective. While technology is an enhancer of the educational process and the curriculum, what is central is the very ethos of instilling ethics, moral, and spiritual values. The Islamic perspective stresses that nurturing the whole person is important; the gifts of wisdom and the development of character, compassion, and responsibility toward oneself, others, and God should coexist. Therefore, when any new technology for education comes into being, there should also be a concerted effort to blend that technology with the timeless teachings and wisdom of the Islamic tradition. The synergy between technological innovation and the unchanging tenets of the Islamic faith to transform this duality will make the educational experience one that touches and transforms the very essence of a student.

The introduction of Islamic values into the pedagogic nature of the national education system continues to pose innumerable challenges that bear emphasis against the backdrop of globalization and the changing roles of an educator (Mardiani et al., 2023). An important consideration is teaching about national heroes, requiring a more sophisticated arrangement that weighs national identity against Islamic values. Teachers must go through a maze in instilling patriotism in a way consistent with Islamic ethics and values (Nashuddin, 2020). The educators themselves must be the representation of spiritual and ethical values that correspond with the idea behind the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which called for the holistic development of the person (Ayub et al., 2020). The challenge will be in narrating the stories of national heroes that reflect teachings in Islam that espouse justice, integrity, and compassion (Jasmi et al., 2022). Teachers in Malaysia are concerned with educational reforms, and their job satisfaction and effectiveness are thus critical (Ibrahim & Mamat, n.d.). Strategies supported by school leadership to address these systemic problems will improve teacher effectiveness and morale, creating a conducive environment for professional growth and innovation. To overcome these challenges will require comprehensive support for school leaders to transform their leadership styles in a way that clearly creates and fosters a positive and effective teaching and learning environment. This will motivate teachers and give them satisfaction and increased commitment to play their pivotal role in building future generations. However, integrating Islamic values into the national education system presents unique challenges, especially in the face of globalization and changing identities of teachers (Mardiani et al. 2023). One more problematic aspect is teaching national heroes, whereby it would be more important to strike a balance between national identity and Islamic principles; educators would be faced with infusing patriotism borne from Islamic ethics and values, like in case of

Nashuddin, 2020. While instilling strong spirituality, educators must also uphold high ethical standards. The aspirations of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 seeking to develop a person holistically emphasize what is needed (Ayub et al., 2020). However, even this needs to be strengthened: present the story of national heroes around Islamic teachings which promote virtues like justice, integrity, and compassion (Jasmi et al., 2022). Furthermore, the level of performance efficiency and job satisfaction of teachers plays a critical role in the implementation of educational reform in Malaysia. The school leadership needs to implement strategies that probably will bring about addressing these systemic problems to achieve this objective for developing effective and morally inclined teachers. Thus, creating the above challenges necessary should require comprehensive support for school leadership so that they themselves can successfully adopt transformational leadership approaches-alternate paths to very effective and conducive learning environments, which could ultimately lead to external motivation, satisfaction, and commitment for much-need roles by teachers in transforming future generations (Ibrahim & Mamat, n.d.).

Teachers in Malaysia require different qualifications to practice in a centralized education system such as in Malaysia that only has one ministry-the Ministry of Education-who governs all schools including under the Education Act 1996 (Choy et al., 2021). The curriculum comprises a commitment towards nationally standardized unity, values, and preparation for higher education and the wider economic world. Under this arrangement, it clearly pursues a dual objective of conserving national identity and values while simultaneously preparing students for the global integration process (Amalia, 2019).

Besides, this integration complicates the matters in an already complicated scenario, where religious schools tend to retain their significance in so fast-changing society especially with respect to competence in English (Adnan, 2017). It is said that the education system in Malaysia is an ongoing effort to develop its men holistically, integrating intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects, all based on a firm belief and robust above reasonable doubt belief in God (Dhamotharan & Loh, 2019). Since Malaysia is a multiracial nation, character education is integrated into subjects such as Islamic Education, Moral Education, History, and Civic and Citizenship Education in the understanding of humanity, development of intellectual skills, and the ability to solve problems (Setambah & Rahim, 2021). Teachers must lead and channel school staff towards the realization of the school's vision through the development of clear-cut policies aligned with the mission of the school and by adopting different leadership behaviors according to different situations (Kamrozzaman et al., 2023). In this regard, the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025 highlighted instructional leadership to alleviate administrators from bureaucratic hurdles toward concentrating on activities meant to uplift the academic performance, reflecting a transformational change to improve national education quality.

To properly teach national heroes from an Islamic perspective, teachers must undergo quite a thorough knowledge of Islamic principles and Malaysian history. This means that they should know and learn about how to convey complex topics to students. The education policy of Malaysia is directed to eventually bring together children of all races under a national education system within which their national language serves as the primary medium of instruction (Bakar, 2014). Teachers are also encouraged to follow courses on effective learning strategies to ameliorate their knowledge and weaknesses (Saptri et al., 2021). Other skills include classroom management, curriculum design, and assessment as well as planning, resource management, and collaboration with parents and community for principals. It means teachers are highly trained in how to put the new educational policies into practice.

Teachers are said to lead a very complex double or multidimensional role beyond teaching.

Their accountabilities for nurturing and shaping future generations are paramount, contributing greatly to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual development of a nation (Ibrahim et al., 2013). These role models activate values, nurture passions, and develop multidisciplinary personalities who can act as change agents in the lifespan of the nation. With a mandate this weighty, teachers must conduct themselves as paragons of ethical and professional conduct, true beacons of virtue and wisdom for the pupils in their charge. On the part of teachers, the creation of a supportive, intellectually stimulating environment through transformational leadership enhances motivation in several ways offering emotional support, promoting collaborative decision-making, and providing access to continuous professional development opportunities.

According to Adnan and Matore (2022), teachers in the Malaysian educational system are not just transmitters but also managers who investigate the holistic quality of their students. It recognizes the importance of teacher quality and has instituted initiatives such as the “Excellent Teachers Scheme” aimed at recognizing and preparing expert teachers, who are essential to schools in providing professional guidance and who keep best practices in effective innovative learning environments. Intellectual stimulation provides much support in developing commitment and advocacy among teachers towards their schools and towards student performance through enhancing critical thought and new ideas to encourage teachers to find creative solutions for teaching and learning challenges. Essential for achieving the school's vision, it requires effective leadership for the school, clear policies aligned with the school's mission, and adaptable leadership styles that suit the different situations.

Modern pedagogy is student-centered, with active learning having become the trademark of these humane approaches, and a new dawn began for it under effectiveness (Nahar et al., 2021). This situation necessitates transformational leadership that would provide an empowered leader to articulate a shared vision and formulate policies that underpin continuous improvement. Educational leaders shall extend transformational leadership towards inspiring, intellectually stimulating, and offer individual consideration to teachers, students, and some stakeholders such as parents (Supermane et al., 2018). However, these leadership ideals can arguably be rejected amidst practical challenges emanating from lack of resources, heavy workloads, and lack of supportive systems, which somewhat negate their ability to collectively fulfill their duties and responsibilities (Selamat et al., 2013) (Rasidi et al., 2021) and disallow momentum of the overall improvement and effectiveness of educational programs.

Methodology

Qualitative approaches

The study adopts a qualitative research design to delve into the experiences, meanings, and reflections of secondary school teachers regarding teaching national heroes in Malaysia. The qualitative method is ideally suited to gain a clear nuanced understanding of how teachers conceptualize the curriculum content, challenges they encounter, and how they internalize the values, including Islamic principles, through instruction. Employing a qualitative research design, this study aimed to explore in-depth the experiences, meanings, and reflections of secondary school teachers with regards to the teaching of national heroes in Malaysia. Qualitative method is particularly suitable to achieve a clear understanding of nuanced ways by which the teachers engage with the curriculum content, challenges in pedagogy, and values-including the Islamic principles-transmitted through their instruction.

Respondent Selection

A purposive sampling is conduction to participants, who are engaged in teaching history or civic education subjects in the Malaysian secondary school environment, are selected directly.

Further, the criteria for selection also include diversity with respect to school location in rural area where the locations in North Malaysia-teaching experience, and cultural considerations to accommodate a range of views. A total of 10 teachers are selected for purposes of in-depth analysis without exposing manageability.

Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interview methods along with focus group discussion methods are the main form of data gathering. The interview protocol comprises open-ended questions relating to:

1. Teaching strategies and content choices,
2. Perception regarding student engagement and its impact,
3. Challenges encountered (e.g., curriculum limitations, representation issues),
4. Approaches toward inculcating Islamic educational values of akhlak, 'adl, ihsan, and jihad ilmu.

Interviews conducted face-to-face or through online platforms which is Webex meeting. These interviews were conducted depending on the availability of the teachers and their geographical location. All sessions are audio-recorded after complete consent and then transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis Method

The thematic analysis method analyzes the data gathered from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions on such a way that it matches with identifying, analyzing and interpreting within qualitative data. Thus, the researcher endeavors to systematically explore how teachers understand their roles, strategies, challenges, and intention values in the teaching of national heroes. The analysis followed the six stages as articulated in Braun and Clarke (2006).

The Islamic paradigm serves as an analytic framework for determining specifically the contexts where the teachers mention values more generally relating to moral education, justice, excellence, self-purification, and striving in knowledge. These references are analyzed as more than just individual pedagogical choices; they indicate a culturally and spiritually embedded practice that allows on the framing of national heroes in the education setting.

Results and Discussion

Respondents Profile

The study respondents comprised ten secondary school teachers from North Malaysia, selected through purposive sampling, to get a wide variety of views with respect to the teaching of national heroes. The teaching samples were selected based on teaching experience in the field of history or civic education, such that they would have relevant expertise in the matter.

The teaching ages ranged from 29 to 37, with years of teaching experience ranging from 4 to 16 years. Such age and years of experience diversity would allow for a better understanding of how teaching practices and pedagogical strategies have changed through time, especially about infusing Islamic values in the curriculum.

Considering their geographical areas, the respondents consisted of both urban and rural areas representing the various educational issues that arise in different settings of schooling. Teachers in a rural setting usually face resource constraints compared to teachers in urban settings, who are assumed to have adequate teaching materials and professional-development information.

The cultural and religious backgrounds of the teachers were also taken into consideration, since

this influence how they integrate Islamic values, such as akhlaq (character), adl (fairness), and jihad ilmu (striving for knowledge), into the teaching of national heroes. Having a cross-section in the profile will give a wider range of perspectives about how national identity and Islamic principles are realized and taught in the classroom.

With this diverse respondent profile, the intention of the study is to grasp a range of teaching experiences and perspectives contributing to a holistic understanding of the challenges and strategies integral in the teaching of national heroes in Malaysia. Table 1 shows data distribution related to the profile of the interview respondents conducted by the researcher.

Table 1: Respondent’s Profile

No.	Age	Years of Working Experience	Location
1	29-32	10	Rural area
2	33-36	20	Rural area
3	37-40	25	Rural area
4	41-44	30	Rural area
5	Above 45	More than 31	Rural area

Table 2: Respondent’s Feedback

Respondent	Teaching Strategies	Challenges	Perceived Impact	Islamic Perspective
Teacher 1	Storytelling, documentaries, group presentation	Textbook-heavy content, low student interest	Some students become more patriotic	<i>Qasas al-Qur’an</i> (narrative teaching), <i>Shura</i> (collaboration), <i>Tarbiyyah</i> (nurturing values)
Teacher 2	Relating content to local context	Lack of student awareness	Increased curiosity and relevance when localized	<i>Urf</i> (local customs), <i>I’tibar</i> (reflection from experience), <i>Ukhuwah Wataniah</i> (national unity)
Teacher 3	Inclusion of unsung heroes	Lack of diversity and representation	Greater appreciation for diverse contributions	<i>Adl</i> (justice), <i>Ikhlas</i> (sincerity), <i>Tawadhu’</i> (humility)
Teacher 4	Creative student presentations	Limited engagement with textbook content	Strong emotional impact and moral reflection	<i>Ihsan</i> (excellence), <i>Tafakkur</i> (deep reflection), <i>Adab</i> (discipline of the heart)

Teacher 5	Comparative global-local projects	Challenge in integrating into international syllabus	Builds global-local awareness	<i>Rahmatan lil 'alamin</i> (mercy to all), <i>Al-Ta'aruf</i> (mutual understanding), <i>Tawazun</i> (balance)
Teacher 6	Project-based learning (time-limited)	Time constraints in syllabus	Potential for deeper learning if supported	<i>Jihad Ilmu</i> (striving for knowledge), <i>Amanah</i> (educational responsibility)
Teacher 7	Drama and role-play	Lack of interactive tools	Boost in student pride and engagement	<i>Tamsil</i> (symbolic representation), <i>Tarbiyyah</i> , <i>Tazkiyah al-nafs</i> (soul purification)
Teacher 8	Social media content creation	Students perceive topic as outdated	Potential for engagement through modern platforms	<i>Dakwah bil Hikmah</i> (wise communication), <i>Maslahah</i> (common benefit)
Teacher 9	Inclusion of localized heroes (e.g., Antanum)	Lack of East Malaysian content	Increased interest in local history	<i>Hurmah Insan</i> (dignity of individuals), <i>Adl</i> , <i>Al-Ukhuwwah</i> (unity)
Teacher 10	Values-based teaching (needs training)	Inadequate preparation/training	Universal values conveyed, though with limitations	<i>Akhlaq</i> (morality), <i>Qudwah Hasanah</i> (role modeling), <i>Ta'dib</i> (moral education)

Table 2 shows the distribution of the responses stated by the participants. It describes the summary of the research objectives.

Objective 1: To investigate the views of secondary school teachers on teaching national heroes in the context of the Malaysian education system.

Inferring from this, the complex and at times, incoherent nationalism, here raises the demand for a pedagogical sophistication concerning national heroes (Curaming, 2017). What serves in this regard is that this is the realm whose importance transcends the dichotomy of progress and hopelessness embodying Usman (2020). Teachers mold a tolerance among Generation Alpha. The cultural themes embedded within the material help cultivate tolerance in the younger generation by the teacher. Nevertheless, however, teachers recognize that teaching national heroes should foster positive values and enhance national unity; they also assert that the teaching of this subject area presents tremendous difficulties and represents a gray area riddled with complexities and controversies.

This research highlights the potential for national heroes to inspire and galvanize students but at the same time emphasizes that a complex and broader interpretation of history as well as critical thinking would be deserving of fostering deeper interest in the subject matter. When educators are presented with intellectual challenges and opportunities for continuous learning, they are more likely to experience a heightened sense of professional fulfillment and a greater willingness to invest their time and energy in their teaching roles (Ibrahim and Mamat, n.d.) (Gutierrez, 2019).

Moreover, the teachers noted that these efforts led to an increase in pride, engagement, and a keen interest in learning local history and the yet-to-be-past legacies of the underrepresented figures among the students. However, the teaching professionals have acknowledged that they require capacity-building and space for professional development and support that may assist in successfully handling the sensitive and complicated teaching of the national heroes. With proper training and resources, they could better promote critical thinking, foster inclusive classroom environments, and help students grapple with the nuances and contradictions inherent in these historical narratives. In this important subject, continuous investment in teachers' capacities is critical since they will be the ones who develop high-quality instructions and, hence, improve the level of experience students would have in learning.

Objective 2: To investigate the teaching methods of Malaysian secondary school teachers to engage students effectively in studying national heroes.

Interview and focus group discussion findings with teachers explained a wide range of pedagogical approaches, challenges, and impacts perceived in teaching of national heroes in the Malaysian secondary schools. The respondents represent a mix of school contexts, teaching experiences, and instructional strategies. While many teachers expressed an intention to instill in their students critical-thinking skills so that they may question, analyze, and interpret historical narratives in multiple ways, some teachers expressed concern over the limitations of the current curriculum, which promotes a rather narrow and idealistic view of national heroes, possibly overlooking the complexity and paradoxes in their lives and actions. These findings indicate a need for a more balanced and nuanced curriculum that encompasses various perspectives and facilitate critical engagement with historical narratives

The findings underscore that leadership in schools is needed to support and realize the vision and aspirations of the national education system (Kamrozzaman et al., 2023). When discussing leadership, teachers tend to think of the process whereby head teachers influence teachers and students toward common objectives (Aboudahr et al., 2023).

On the other hand, teachers have made use of some exciting pedagogy in this course; they have borrowed from telling stories by realizing much about heroes of the nation, showing documentaries to provide visions and hearing, granted group presentations, and usually learned together while relating content to local contexts, thus bonding the students with the subject matter. Teachers also included 'unsung heroes' into the lessons to develop a fundamentally different and much more dimensioned picture of national figures. They assigned creative projects like global-local comparative studies or project-based learning and so on by adding to the construction of critical thinking: analysis and problem-solving. Drama, role-play, and the amalgamation of social media content creation were used to attract participation and stimulate interest among students of some teachers. Some teachers are adopting a value-based approach to teaching: universal principles and moral lessons from life and works of national heroes could

be taught through such a method.

Each of these methods that all teachers adopt clearly speaks pronouncing volumes of how the teachers have committed enormous efforts toward making the subject matter not only engaging but also relevant and effective to their students regarding national heroes. All these teachers have come to some challenges, from textbook-oriented curricula, low student interest, and limited resources. Yet they have quite a sensitivity and creativity in the teaching approach. Their methodologies vary, including storytelling and documentary making, group presentations, relating subject matter to local context, paying attention to the "unsung heroes," and an exciting range of creative student projects or multi-media involvement. All of these intend to bring historical narratives into life, critical thinking and analysis, and higher student connection and understanding. It is indeed even more troublesome to convince students to adjust their instructions and make the topic accessible and meaningful to them. They had to overcome every hardship in doing so.

However, the interview data also reflects a common feeling among teachers justifying the teaching of national heroes as one way of building values and character in students. Several interviewees found this as a venue for promoting patriotism, civic responsibilities, and ethical behavior towards the lives of these individuals. Teachers also see this as the best way to draw on social issues of the present such as cultural diversity, inclusivity, and social justice, through a critical examination of a historical event or character with a modern perspective. Teachers could develop a certain national identity and way of viewing national values among the students with the aim of then encouraging them to discuss the past, present, and future of the country in constructive dialogue (Dasoo & Henning, 2012) (Rossi et al., 2006).

Objective 3: To determine the factors and challenges faced by Malaysian secondary school teachers in teaching national heroes in an Islamic context of education and to recommend solutions.

Many teachers also raised concerns regarding the lack of facilities and training geared toward the teaching of national heroes, thus necessitating professional development that addresses pedagogical considerations, primary data sources, and the application of digital technology. Challenges such as resource limitations, heavy teaching loads, and non-availability of professional development opportunities diminish the capacity of teachers to deliver stimulating and meaningful instruction on national heroes in the short run, which in turn is going to affect the student learning outcomes.

For these challenges to be overcome effectively, a holistic, integrative, and systematic approach toward policy directions and continuous intervention programs at different levels of the education system was perceived by teachers to be necessary (Ayenalem et al., 2023). Training for beginning academics is relevant because teachers are among those who shape the character of new generations (Nicoleta, 2013). Thus, there is an emergency need to have finely articulated responsibilities attached to resources to form an integrated and effective support system for teachers so that they may navigate the complex world of teaching national heroes with confidence and impact (Tampang & Wonggo, 2018) (Safrizal et al., 2022). Additionally, teachers are required to keep on updating themselves with training modules and seminars for inclusive education programs to meet the implementation requirements (Macabenta et al., 2023). The motivation and performance of the teachers are closely linked to several outside

factors-the factors being workload demands, availability of administrative support, and pressure exerted by stringent educational standards (Safrizal et al., 2022) (Gepila, 2020). Impacts of these pressures can result in decreased energy, heightened stress, and a sense of professional disempowerment, which can damage their ability to provide quality instruction and support beneficial student learning experiences.

However, the teachers reported a variety of positive impacts on the children's learning experiences. They were seen in the students as becoming more patriotic, curious, and well acquainted with a much more diverse representation of national heroes. The teachers saw stark emotional connections between the students and what they learned, also the blossoming of an awareness of the global-local, where the students could find parallels between national narratives with their own local contexts. They also put on record the possibility of deeper and more valuable learning made achievable through their application of interactive-situated project-based value-driven methods of teaching. Teachers, moreover, non-attendance changes in the behavior of learners signifying education's role in shaping character and values Okamoto (2020). They would approach their duties with enthusiasm and dedication hence greater adaptability to curriculum changes, along with drawing a strong commitment towards critical thinking and civic engagement in their students, if teachers were mentally challenged and empowered towards professional growth.

Everyone's personal professional needs have the most potential to be motivated when they cause a sense of valued service and inspire commitment. Self-sufficiency and the involvement of teachers significantly influence their professional growth because the same manifests itself as an increase in effectivity concerning the teachers' activities in building the classroom culture (Javorčíková et al., 2021). Ongoing professional development of educators may trigger significant qualitative changes towards a healthy school environment, citizenship, upliftment of individual teacher qualifications, and expansion of opportunities for peer learning (Aravind, 2021). Through high-quality professional development on the part of the educational systems, teachers would be more equipped to improve their skills and eventually obtain enhanced student learning outcomes across diverse settings ("Developing a Proficient and Motivated Teacher Workforce in the Philippines," 2016). Professional learning that is connected to teachers' own interests and makes them feel emotionally safe and respected, and intellectually challenged, will engage and agency teachers (Zeichner, 2019).

Conclusion

The study emphasized the importance of developing Islamic values in the teaching of national heroes at Malaysian secondary schools. It discussed how teachers manipulate the situation creatively to make student involvement and moral development possible. The results implied that values such as akhlaq, adl, and jihad ilmu would increase the understanding of national identity among students, create an inclusive atmosphere in a just society, and encourage ethical leadership. The novelty of the study lies in how it explores the ways Islamic values can enrich the study of history, creating a different and unique view of character and national pride. The results would be quite significant, especially regarding further professional development of teachers and more resources for the successful fusion of these values into the teaching-learning process. Future research will focus on the long-term effects of such pedagogical practices on civic engagement and leadership qualities in students as well as how such strategies can be applied across different contexts of education around Malaysia. A bigger national curriculum that supports these methods of integrative teaching might add to an even greater experience of

students overall.

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