

# The National Heroes in the Indonesian History Curriculum

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**Abstract:** Indonesia has plenty of national heroes. In education, they have the potential as a medium for transmitting values and character education. From 1959 to 2023, the president awarded the title of hero to 206 people. This number will continue to increase every year. However, the contribution of learning about national heroes has not been studied in depth. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze how national heroes' mapping in history class and the heroes' position in the Indonesian History curriculum. This paper also examines the internalization of heroic values and obstacles encountered in historical learning. Data was collected on policies related to hero titles, curriculum documents, history textbooks, and learning cases about national heroes in Semarang City. The results showed that historical learning in the Indonesian curriculum accommodated the teaching of heroes. Some material addressed the role of the hero explicitly. However, not all heroes were conveyed in the lesson. Overproduction of heroes was counterproductive to students' recognition of the value of heroism. On the one hand, the role of local heroes had not been optimally reviewed. As a result, history learning was stuck on the term "learning about heroes." History learning has not entirely made students "learn from heroes" or "learn to be heroes."

**Abstrak:** Indonesia memiliki banyak pahlawan nasional. Dalam dunia pendidikan, mereka memiliki potensi sebagai media transmisi nilai-nilai dan pendidikan karakter. Sejak tahun 1959 hingga 2023, presiden telah menganugerahkan gelar pahlawan kepada 206 orang. Jumlah tersebut akan terus bertambah setiap tahunnya. Namun, kontribusi pembelajaran tentang pahlawan nasional belum dikaji secara mendalam. Oleh karena itu, tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana pemetaan pahlawan nasional dalam pelajaran sejarah dan kedudukan pahlawan dalam kurikulum Sejarah Indonesia. Tulisan ini juga mengkaji internalisasi nilai-nilai kepahlawanan dan kendala yang ditemui dalam pembelajaran sejarah. Data yang dikumpulkan berupa kebijakan terkait gelar pahlawan, dokumen kurikulum, buku teks sejarah, dan kasus pembelajaran tentang pahlawan nasional di Kota Semarang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran sejarah di Indonesia dalam kurikulum (K13) dan Kurikulum Merdeka (KM) telah mengakomodir pengajaran tentang pahlawan. Beberapa materi membahas peran pahlawan secara eksplisit. Namun, tidak semua pahlawan tersampaikan dalam pembelajaran. Overproduksi pahlawan justru kontraproduktif terhadap pengenalan siswa terhadap nilai kepahlawanan. Di satu sisi, peran pahlawan lokal belum dikaji secara optimal. Akibatnya, pembelajaran sejarah hanya terpaku pada istilah "belajar tentang pahlawan". Pembelajaran sejarah belum sepenuhnya membuat siswa "belajar dari pahlawan" atau "belajar menjadi pahlawan".



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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a long history that has been going on since prehistoric times. Hominid culture developed more than 1.5 million years ago (Zaim et al., 2011). In early AD, the Indonesian region was known as a spice producer, attracting powerful nations' attention to trade in the Indonesian archipelago (Brierley, 1994). As a result, India, China, and Islam's influence has shaped Indonesia's face since centuries ago (Abdullah & Lopian, 2012). This process has also shaped Indonesia's face as an Indonesian territory with a reasonably prosperous plurality level. This condition also underlies the birth of various important events in Indonesian history, from the traditional to the modern era (Ricklefs, 1993; Vickers, 2005). A series of events that occurred gave rise to figures as actors driving forces of change in history. The emergence of figures who played roles in Indonesian history gave birth to the concept of heroes. A hero is a title given to someone who plays a role in every crucial situation: war, resistance, movement, to independence. This tradition continues today.

Heroes are the actors in history. Sidney Hook (1945, p. 60) saw that heroes have two aspects: 'man of thought' and 'man of action.' The first category is those with thoughts and ideas preparing humans to face changes and challenges. Second is a figure who becomes an organizer of the struggle through certain actions. In Indonesia, a hero is a title given to someone who has contributed to Indonesia's independence. Therefore, the title of hero is regulated in a separate law. Initially, Sukarno in 1957 issued Presidential Decree number 217. The regulation decided that every November 10th would be a heroes' day to commemorate the services of Indonesian independence fighters. (Keputusan Presiden RI No 217 Tahun 1957 Tentang Pahlawan Kemerdekaan Nasional, 1957). After that, in 1958, the president again issued a regulation on heroes. This time the regulation was on the procedure for determining national independence heroes. This regulation was stated in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia number 241 of 1958 (Keputusan Presiden RI No 241 Tahun 1958 Tentang Tata Cara Penetapan Pahlawan Kemerdekaan Nasional, 1958) This rule was then supplemented by issuing Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia number 33 of 1964 concerning the Determination, Awards, and Development of Heroes. Based on this rule, the title of hero is awarded to someone who has services and struggles in defending the country and nation (Peraturan

Presiden RI No 33 Tahun 1964 Tentang Penetapan, Penghargaan, Dan Pembinaan Terhadap Pahlawan, 1964).

Since 1959 to 2023, Indonesia has had 206 national heroes appointed by the president. This number has always increased every year. Of the 206 heroes, the oldest period when the national hero lived was in the 16th century, namely Ratu Kalinyamat (died 1579). Meanwhile, the youngest were Harun and Janatin, who died in 1968 due to the death penalty from the Singapore government. The figure who first received the title of hero was Abdoel Moeis. He is considered a hero for his services, especially in literature and national movements. He was determined by Presidential Decree number 218 in 1959, dated 30 August 1959. Since then, on average, the president has conferred three national hero titles each year. The president has presented 5-6 titles yearly in the last few years. Therefore, the number of national heroes will continue to increase. Compared to the United States, the figure considered a national hero is more of the figures involved in the war for the independence revolution. In France, national figures are marked by the presence of their graves in the Pantheon. It is even found in less than 100 (Adam, 2017).

In the context of history education, there is no research to deny its essential position in learning. The existence of heroes is relevant in strengthening national identity and patriotic spirit (Eriksonas, 2004; Hasan, 2012; Vähä, 2002). Through heroes, students can be encouraged to learn about values (Sanchez, 1998). Besides, heroes can become intermediaries to build students' historical thinking skills (Perrotta, 2017). They also act as a role model in the value of education (Yazıcı & Aslan, 2011). In America, heroes are used as a representation of strengthening national identity (Hutchins, 2011). In Turkey, one of the relevant heroes to teach is Atatürk. He is considered a role model for children, so he must be taught in class (Altıkulaç, 2016). In Hungary, Imre Nagy is still the hero with the most significant popularity in teaching. As an anti-Soviet figure, he inspired political circles and academics to promote political liberalization in the second half of the 20th century. His figure's memory continues to be nurtured through learning at school to honor his name (Benziger, 2000). Several studies on heroes have also been carried out in the Indonesian context. The study was conducted primarily to see how teachers teach about heroic figures, such as Sukarno and Hatta (Amri, 2016; Gunawan, 2013). By looking at the features of previous studies, the mission of building

nationalism and patriotism, and the character of society, it is still very much dependent on political and militaristic narratives, including learning about the history of hero activities. More fundamentally, studies on heroes have been carried out partially, and their overall position has not yet been seen.

Based on the above matters, it can be seen that a study on the mapping of national heroes in the 2013 curriculum has not been initiated. Curriculum 2013 is a term that refers to the curriculum that has been applied in Indonesian schools since 2013. Therefore, it is fascinating to see the position of national heroes in history education. This study analyzes the mapping of heroes in the 2013 curriculum and its empirical implementation in Indonesia's learning history.

## METHOD

This study used a mixed-methods approach combining content analysis, survey, and case study. The content analysis focused on curriculum documents, textbooks, and policies related to national heroes from 1959 to 2023. This method identified how national heroes are depicted in the Indonesian history curriculum, highlighting various regimes' political and historical contexts, such as Sukarno, Soeharto, and the Reformasi era. The documents used in this study include various regulations and guidelines related to implementing the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 36 of 2018 contains amendments to Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 24 of 2016, which regulates Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD) for subjects in elementary and secondary education, including history. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 59 of 2014 establishes a framework for implementing the 2013 Curriculum in Senior High Schools/ Islamic Senior High Schools. Meanwhile, the Decree of the Head of BSKAP Number 032/H/KR/2024 stipulates learning outcomes in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at various levels of education, which will be the main reference in this study. The researcher also used the 2013 and independent curriculum textbooks as complementary research data sources. To analyze these documents, this study uses a content analysis approach to deeply understand how national heroes are represented in the Indonesian history curriculum in various periods, especially in the 2013 Curriculum and the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The first step is to conduct a descriptive analysis of regulatory documents, such as

Permendikbud No. 36 of 2018, which contains amendments to Permendikbud No. 24 of 2016 and Permendikbud No. 59 of 2014. These documents guide Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD) that are relevant to history learning and the position of national heroes in the curriculum. Furthermore, these documents will be compared with the Decree of the Head of BSKAP No. 032/H/KR/2024, which stipulates learning outcomes in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The researcher will identify similarities and differences in the curriculum approach to teaching the history of national heroes in these two curricula. Thematic analysis will be used to look at key themes, such as the narratives of heroes that are prioritized, the geographic and gender distribution of heroes, and their impact on the values of patriotism that are taught.

## NATIONAL HEROES IN INDONESIA, 1959-2024

After independence in 1945, Indonesia began to confer the title of hero to historical figures. A hero is a title assigned to people who contributed to Indonesia's independence. In 64 years (1959-2023), the president had awarded the title of hero to 206 figures. Of these 186 heroes, the oldest period of national heroes lived was the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, the youngest was Harun and Janatin, who died in 1968 due to the Singapore government's death penalty.

Based on the period, the researchers divided the national heroes into several periodizations: (1) the Early Colonization period (Portuguese and VOC) (17-18 centuries) was 8,3%, (2) The period of Dutch East Indies colonialism (19<sup>th</sup> century) was 15,5%, (3) The National Awakening Period (early 20<sup>th</sup> century) was 18,4%, (4) the Revolutionary Period (1945-1950) was 28,6%, and (5) Post-revolutionary period (above 1950) was 29,1%.

Based on gender, it turned out that there were only 16 heroines. This number was very low because it was only 8.06% of the total heroes. The national heroines are (1) Malahayati (Aceh), (2) Cut Nyak Dhien (Aceh), (3) Cut Nyak Meutia (Aceh), (4) Fatmawati (Bengkulu), (5) Siti Walidah (Yogyakarta), (6) Dewi Sartika (West Java), (7) Nyi Ageng Serang (Central Java), (8) Kartini (Central Java), (9) Siti Hartinah (Central Java), (10) Martha Christina Tiahahu (Maluku), (11) Andi Depu (West Sulawesi), (12) Opu Daeng Risaju (South Sulawesi), (13) Maria Walanda Maramis, (North Sulawesi), (14) Ruhana Kuddus (West Sumatra), (15) Rasuna Said (West Sumatra), and (16) Ratu

to rep-



Figure 1. Map of the distribution of national heroes in Indonesia from 1959-2023

Kalinyamat (Central Java) (Kementerian Sosial RI, 2014; Pramono et al., 2019)

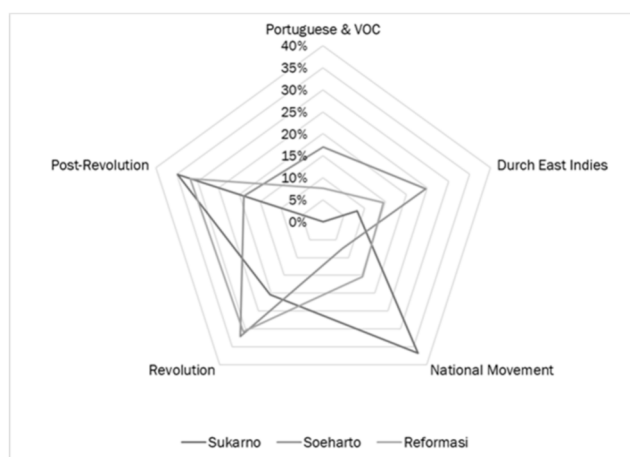
The map shows the distribution of national heroes. The darker it is, the more national heroes it has. The map shows that most national heroes come from Java Island, namely Central Java (35), East Java (24), and Yogyakarta (21). Meanwhile, those from outside Java came from West Sumatra (15). The large number of national heroes who come from the Java region shows a tendency towards a Java-centric nature in historiography.

During Sukarno's era, national heroes tended

represent the developing political views at that time. Politically, Sukarno's government has had power since the issuance of the presidential decree in 1959. Previously, the government was dominated by a parliamentary government dominated by political parties. The period of Sukarno's reign was often referred to as guided democracy. At this time, Sukarno's political power was dominant, and he tried to govern the existing political power (Bhakti, 2004). This, in turn, gave birth to the concepts of nationalism, religion, and communism (Nasakom). Therefore, the heroes appointed by Sukarno came from

Table 1. Distribution of National heroes based on their inauguration

Region	Inaugurated Period							Total
	Sukarno	Soeharto	Habibie	Gus Dur	Megawati	SBY	Jokowi	
Sumatra	10	13	4	1	1	9	8	46
Java	37	25	0	0	2	18	23	105
Kalimantan	0	1	2	1	0	1	3	8
Sulawesi	1	5	1	1	3	7	8	26
Bali & Nusa Tenggara	0	3	0	0	0	4	2	9
Maluku & Papua	1	6	0	0	0	2	3	12
Total	49	53	7	3	6	41	47	206



**Figure 2.** National heroes viewed from the period of Indonesian history

different ideological backgrounds. He did not hesitate to raise heroes from the Communists (Alimin and Tan Malaka) and Islam (Kiai Fachruddin and Kiai Mas Mansur) simultaneously. The aim was to ensure a certain ideological balance between communists and Muslims (Schreiner, 2013). On the one hand, Sukarno preferred to raise heroes from the period of the national movement. The period began in the early 20th century and was marked by many movement organizations fighting for Indonesian independence.

During Soeharto's era, the political environment changed. He strongly emphasized political and economic stability, with the military as the supporting pillar. During his reign, the military entered all government lines with the concept of dual functions (Berger, 1997). The dual function is the military's role in the defense sector, politics, and government. As a result, some of the national heroes raised came from the military and were dominated by the revolutionary period. However, the geographic distribution of heroes was more balanced than in the previous period.

The period after Soeharto was known as *Reformasi*. *Reformasi* was interpreted in two ways: first as an event and second as a period. As an event, *Reformasi* was a movement that began at the end of 1997 and wanted changes in Indonesia's politics and economy (Cribb & Kahin, 2004). The climax of this movement was Suharto's downfall as president in 1998. Meanwhile, *Reformasi* was considered a post-Suharto leadership period. During the *Reformasi* Era, from 1998 to 2019, Indonesia had experienced several presidential changes. The first president in the *Reformasi* Era was B.J. Habibie (1998-1999). After Habibie, successive Presidents of the Republic of Indonesia were Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001), Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001-

2004), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014), and Joko Widodo (2014-present).

By entering the *Reformasi* era, the Java-centric trend seemed to begin to displace. Since 1998, proposals for national heroes have started to diversify, although recommendations from Java still dominate. Sulawesi, followed by Sumatra, received the most significant number of heroes after reform. The change towards decentralization was driven by regional autonomy's spirit with the issuance of a law on regional governance in 1999 (Erb et al., 2005).

After the reform, the politic of determining heroes changed towards decentralization. The spirit of decentralization and autonomy also contributed to developing the policy that promoted national heroes. This can be seen from the distribution of national heroes who accommodate regional figures' roles in the national scene. This is shown in the figure below.

A large number of national heroes is also an indicator of the region's existence and contribution to the national scene. For local people, the National Heroes' album is seen more as a regional representation on the national stage, namely whether the region is recognized for its progress and struggle for the Indonesian nation. Not surprisingly, many regions compete to propose their figures as national heroes. The national hero represents almost all regions in Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke.

#### NATIONAL HEROES IN HISTORY CURRICULUM

In the 2013 curriculum, heroes or historical figures are placed as an important part of the content of the history subject, especially in forming national character, strengthening national values, and understanding Indonesian and world history. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of appreciating the values of the struggle of heroes and national figures in Indonesian history. Basic competencies in history subjects encourage students to analyze the role of national and regional figures in fighting for Indonesian independence. Basic competencies for learning Indonesian History have been regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 37 of 2018 as a compulsory subject. In this regulation, national heroes appeared in class X on basic competencies "3.8. analyze the development of community life, government, and culture during the era of the Islamic kingdoms in Indonesia and show examples of evidence that are still valid in Indonesian society today." Therefore, the

basic competency regarding skills in number 4.8 followed competency 3.8. However, in practice, the value of heroism only became apparent when there was resistance to colonialism (Permendikbud RI No 37 Tahun 2018 Tentang Perubahan Atas Permendikbud RI No 24 Tahun 2016 Tentang Kompetensi Inti Dan Kompetensi Dasar Pelajaran Pada Kurikulum 2013, 2018)

In class XI, basic competencies related to national heroes appeared more dominant. In class XI, the material covered the period from the entry of colonialism to the revolution. In this period, there were 117 national heroes. It indicated that 62.9% of national heroes lived during this period. Of these basic competencies, specific basic competencies emphasized the importance of national and regional figures' efforts in Indonesian history. This was in the Basic Competency numbers 3.6 and 3.9. Basic Competency number 3.6. read "analyze the role of national and regional figures in fighting for Indonesian independence." Basic Competence 3.9 reads, "Analyze the role and value of the effort of Bung Karno and Bung Hatta as proclaimers and other figures around the proclamation." (Permendikbud RI No 37 Tahun 2018 Tentang Perubahan Atas Permendikbud RI No 24 Tahun 2016 Tentang Kompetensi Inti Dan Kompetensi Dasar Pelajaran Pada Kurikulum 2013, 2018) Accordingly, the internalization of heroic values was accommodated in the 2013 curriculum for the subject of Indonesian history. In class XII, the scope of material presented in Indonesian History lessons covered the post-revolutionary period, namely from the recognition of sovereignty in 1949 until the reform period. In this period, the progress of national heroes appeared in the following basic competencies. The competency explicitly focused on the internalization of heroic values was KD (Basic Competence) 3.2, which read, "evaluating the role and values of the struggle of national and regional figures in maintaining the integrity of the state and Indonesian nation during the 1945–1965 period." (Permendikbud RI No 37 Tahun 2018 Tentang Perubahan Atas Permendikbud RI No 24 Tahun 2016 Tentang Kompetensi Inti Dan Kompetensi Dasar Pelajaran Pada Kurikulum 2013, 2018). However, other KDs can still be integrated with the improvement of heroic values because several national heroes took part after 1965, as well as science and technology. Overall, the 2013 Curriculum places historical figures and heroes as an integral part of history learning to build historical awareness, national character, and inspiration for the younger generation in facing current and future challenges.

During the Pandemic, learning in Indonesia experienced adjustments by implementing the curriculum in special conditions. National heroes are raised through basic competencies that ask students to analyze the role of national and regional figures in fighting for Indonesian independence (Keputusan Kepala Balitbang Dan Perbukuan No 019/H/KR/2020, 2020). In this case, heroes such as Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, Panglima Soedirman, and local figures are given space to be studied in the context of the nation's struggle against the colonizers. Students are asked to analyze and present events and figures surrounding the proclamation of Indonesian independence. This allows students to understand the contributions of figures such as Soekarno and Hatta in the proclamation and independence process. The curriculum also positions heroes as important figures in fighting European colonialism and threats to national disintegration, such as the PKI, DI/TII, and other separatist movements. Students are asked to understand the resistance strategies carried out by these figures. The basic competencies also include a discussion of the figures involved in forming the first government of the Republic of Indonesia.

In the *Kurikulum Merdeka* document, hero figures are explained implicitly in the context of understanding history and developing historical awareness of the Indonesian nation (Keputusan Kepala BSKAP Nomor 032/H/KR/2024 Tentang Capaian Pembelajaran Pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Jenjang Pendidikan Dasar, Dan Jenjang Pendidikan Menengah Pada Kurikulum Merdeka, 2024). National hero figures are not explicitly mentioned as specific subjects. However, they are included in various important historical events that are studied, such as the struggle for independence, resistance against colonialists, and the national movement. Some relevant things from this document related to heroes in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* are as follows. In the learning phase, students study various historical events, including the colonial period, people's resistance, the proclamation of independence, and Sukarno's reign. In this context, hero figures appear as part of the narrative of these important events. In the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, learning emphasizes awareness of History and Nationalism. Hero figures build a sense of love for the homeland and national spirit, even without explicit mention in the curriculum. Historical actors, including heroes, are analyzed in the context of historical thinking based on their contributions to the nation's development and the long-term impacts caused by their actions. Overall, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* plac-

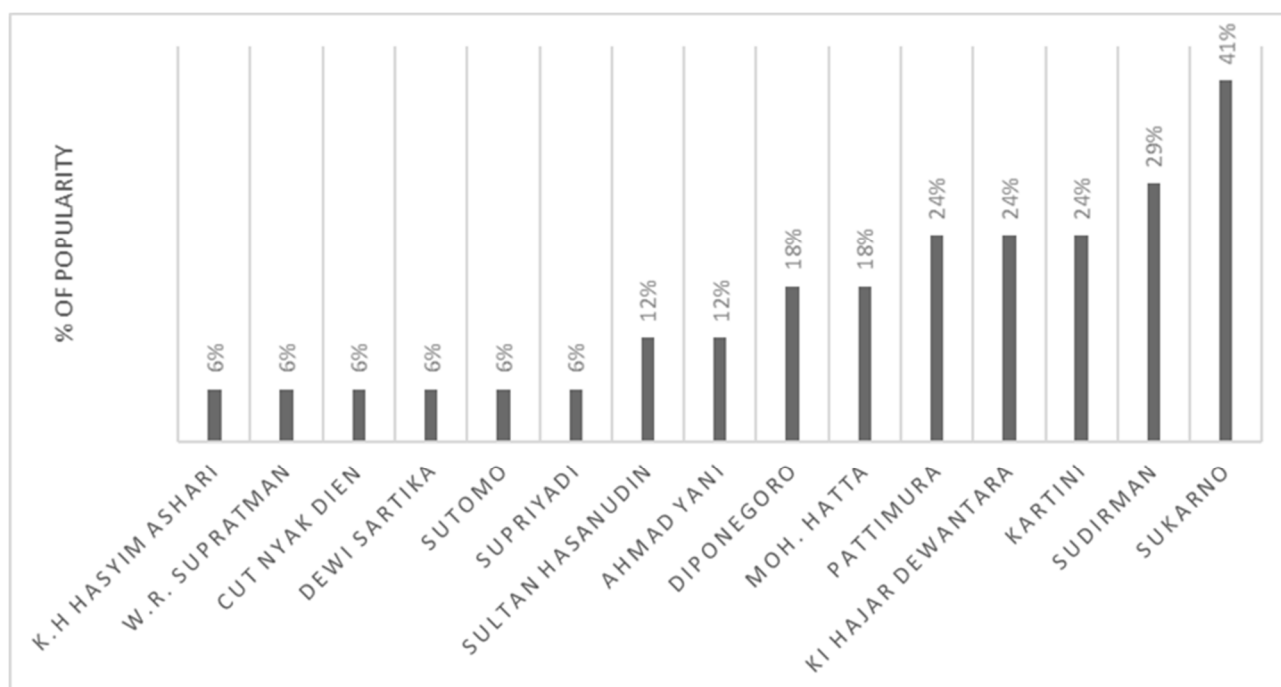


Figure 3. The Popularity of Heroes in the Perspective of High School Students in Semarang City

es hero figures as an integral part of the narrative of Indonesian history, strengthening historical awareness and building national character. However, these figures are more often integrated through the study of historical events than mentioned explicitly in documents.

In comparison, the 2013 Curriculum gives a larger portion to heroes as part of history learning, focusing on teaching national values and patriotism through heroic figures. The Special Conditions Curriculum still highlights heroes but with simplified materials adapted for emergency conditions, focusing on the essence of history and important events without reducing the importance of the role of heroes. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* emphasizes a broader understanding of historical events, with heroes placed as part of major events without explicitly emphasizing individual heroes. This curriculum emphasizes critical and reflective thinking rather than simply memorizing historical figures. So, in terms of the portion and explicitness of the discussion about heroes, the 2013 Curriculum gives the most attention, followed by the Special Conditions Curriculum, while the Independent Curriculum focuses more on a broader historical context without highlighting heroes in depth.

In line with previous findings, the historical narrative of heroism, dominated by figures taking part in politics and the military, had implications for shaping students' understanding of heroes. As the primary source, textbooks were the compulsory reading material teachers relied on most; they tend-

ed to be the only ones. Alternative learning resources on heroism were rarely used, such as scientific or popular articles containing many new perspectives on heroism. Teachers still see historical learning as indoctrinating political understanding (Cochet & Gillis, 1995; Robinson & Robinson, 2018; Verovšek, 2016).

This study surveyed Semarang City High School students to determine heroes' popularity. The survey showed that the popularity of Soekarno and Sudirman was the highest. The construction of students' memories of the two characters was the strongest. This also proved that textbooks and teachers' teaching methods in the classroom still emphasized only heroes' existence from a political and military perspective. This reduced the understanding that history has a role in the cultural, economic, social, and even educational fields, especially those that influence the local level. Unfortunately, during the study, the teacher did not use the current opportunities to build students' mindsets about the broader heroes and heroism. The old standards in history education on heroism were still used. Figure 3 illustrates how Sukarno's character is still the most popular.

In the survey above, students were asked to write down or directly mention the names of heroes idolized and known in history learning. Continuing the previous findings, the dominance of political and military figures was still apparent. Even their popularity beat female heroes, heroes in arts, economics, and education. This understanding was

constructed in student knowledge. This showed that historical learning had not provided a more open and dynamic perspective regarding heroes' meaning. Besides, the variety of historical heroes that were taught was still minimal.

To further explore the findings above, a further investigation was carried out, with a clue from which students understood that this hero deserves to be idolized and what media is the source of the transmission of knowledge regarding this matter. Students' answers pointed to textbooks as the primary source and the internet and posters in school as secondary sources that have influenced their knowledge. It indicated that the internalization of knowledge about heroes and heroism was still limited by learning media.

On the one hand, teachers did not take the initiative to utilize further sources containing alternative knowledge. This made the impression that history lessons on national heroes are boring. Students assessed that names such as Sukarno, Sudirman, Hatta, and Diponegoro were mentioned too much. Since elementary school, they had been consuming stories about these characters. This repetitive process made the image of the hero's history lesson less fun and too monotonous. It should be realized, especially by teachers, that the lecture method, picture media, and evaluation using multiple-choice types are not enough. For that, it took courage to innovate by utilizing alternative learning components.

The teacher did not use Every available opportunity enthusiastically to present more critical and humanist heroes. Thus, the hero's position as an ordinary human with flaws had not become part of the learning process. When referring to the use of history, the experience that will participate in developing students' knowledge came from positive traits that were dramatized to appear irrational (Carlyle et al., 2013; Friedman, 1992; Hobsbawm, 2012). Explaining hero material by relating it to myths was still common. It impacted the development of students' logic, and the rationality of the knowledge they received did not work academically. For example, Sukarno, considered to have many lives, and Sudirman, considered immune to bullets, are still a part of the discussion in academic spaces, free of irrational thoughts.

From the student's perspective, they initiated the renewal of the heroes' historical learning style by urging discussion and alternative sources. This initiation appears during an investigation into the historical learning clue of heroes and heroism. Students also commented that it is unfortunate if his-

torical figures who influence the local level do not get space in learning. By looking at the proximity of locations and almost similar social conditions, the internalization of local figures' heroic and exemplary values may be easier (Cros, 2013; Hoskins, 1987). This argument supported the teacher that the potential to teach heroes from such alternative perspectives was significant to explore. It was none other than too much teaching capacity, limited skills, inaccessible media, and slow technology adaptation. This series of events made the historical learning of heroes "walking in place." Learning did not experience significant changes. As a result, the formation of hero knowledge in students' minds tended to be political, militaristic, and elitist. Heroes were not interpreted as individual traits with important and influential roles in various fields. This kind of discourse should be put forward to learn about heroes, learn from heroes, and learn to be heroes in the present and future.

## **DISCUSSION**

National heroes are always an interesting topic of discussion in Indonesia. This is because national heroes can raise a region's prestige. However, this also raises long-term problems, especially about the interests of the meaning of the national hero itself. The concept of a national hero itself, according to the government, is a title given to Indonesian citizens who fought against colonialism in the territory of the Republic of Indonesia, who died or died defending the nation and state, or who, during their lives, carried out various heroic acts that resulted in extraordinary achievements and works for the development and progress of the Republic of Indonesia (UU RI No 20 Tahun 2009 Tentang Gelar, Tanda Jasa, Dan Tanda Kehormatan, 2009)

Before the number of national heroes "exploded" to more than 200 people, the concept of a national hero was considered unfair in the regions, especially outside Java. Most people in these regions only knew that most national heroes were in Java. Only after President Soeharto stepped down did studies begin to emerge regarding heroic figures in the regions. Almost all provinces in Indonesia now have national heroes; some that do not have them are newly formed provinces such as North Kalimantan and several provinces in Papua. However, this does not yet answer the criteria for heroism in a more microscope. In several cases regarding heroic actions that resulted in the figure being appointed a national hero, there were also many in the regions. This can be traced from various oral traditions of the community regarding



similar events (Zuhdi, 2014, pp. 309–311). This oral tradition was then validated by various symbols of struggle built during the New Order era. Quite a few monuments depicting the region's situation then were built. Although this is important as part of the History of Society, it must be viewed differently. The New Order Government also instilled symbolic politics through these monuments (McGregor, 2008; Vickers, 2008). The New Order Government tended to glorify several periods in Indonesian History, one of which was during the 1945-1949 Independence Revolution, where quite a lot of people became National Heroes because they became martyrs then. The government tried to glorify the events of that era so that the community understood it as an era of struggle. On the other hand, there were efforts to elevate the army's role at that time as another form of glorification of that era. In that era, too, much historiography would later be published by dilettantisms. The problem is that this historiography was written as if, at that time, it was purely just years of struggle. There were many conflicts outside the TNI-Dutch between the TNI and other parties within the Indonesian nation (Leksana, 2022). One case that may be quite interesting is related to Tan Malaka. This case is not seen from the controversy that he was a communist figure who was appointed as a National Hero, but his execution by the army killed him. Ironically, one of the heroes died at the hands of the army, but the soldier in question had a good military and political career in the future (Poeze, 2008).

Then, several appointments of National Heroes are suspected of having political interests of those who appointed them. For example, President Soekarno appointed communist figures as national heroes to support his thoughts regarding *Nasakom* (Nationalist Religion Communist). Although full of political interests, the appointed figures provided great services during the Indonesian National Movement (Basundoro, 2012). The same is true of the appointment of Basuki Rahmat, who was also full of political interests because he witnessed the Supersemar Incident (Letter of Command of March 11). He was not the only one who witnessed the incident; there were the names of Amir Machmud and M. Jusuf, who did not receive the same title as Basuki Rachmat. Basuki Rachmat was immediately appointed as a national hero in the same year when he died by the New Order government (Soebantardjo, 1996). Interestingly, apart from Basuki Rachmat, several other figures were immediately appointed as National Heroes in the

same year they died, such as RE Martadinata, Harun Bin Sain, Usman Bin Ali, Alimin, Abdul Muis, including the heroes of the Revolution. Some of these names were raised closely related to the political interests of the Old Order and the New Order.

This problem also narrowed down to the local level, where it became a form of competition for each region to nominate National Heroes. For example, if referring to the events that caused people to become martyrs during the independence revolution, where in the regions, there were so many similar things happening. If only certain people are appointed, there is an impression that the appointment of national heroes does have a certain purpose that tends to shift from its main purpose as a form of appreciation for those who have services to the country. However, on the other hand, the government has criteria related to the determination of National Heroes, one of which is that studies submitted by the proposer must be scientific and comprehensive. Only then is it tested by a special team formed by the government to carry out strict selection? Many regions that submit their studies do not pass the central level. Historical evidence is very essential in this submission (Sitompul, 2017)

Interestingly, from this regional scope, the appointment of national heroes is essentially expected to be able to foster the value of national integration. However, in some cases, the appointment of national heroes can trigger negative collective memories of the figure when viewed from the perspective of other regions. Relevant examples may occur often when national heroes emerged in the pre-independence era (Colonial and Pre-Colonial). The strong regional aspect of their struggles makes it very possible for friction to occur in other regions. The case of Sultan Hasanuddin and Arung Palakka can be a reflection of the present. In a macro context, Sultan Hasanuddin is considered a national hero and is recognized for his determination as a national hero. Meanwhile, Arung Palakka has a negative image because he is considered a collaborator with European powers against Sultan Hasanuddin. In fact, at the micro level, Arung Palakka has a good name for the Bone Kingdom Community (Bone Regency). Memories of Arung Palakka are still clearly depicted in the symbols and oral traditions of the Bone Community. Cases like this cannot be seen in a national context because the ideas of nationhood and nationalism have not yet emerged, so the concept of heroes and rebels will be irrelevant. It

would be wiser to place this event in the context of that time (Fajar & Bahri, 2023). A similar case can be correlated with the appointment of Ratu Kalinyamat from Jepara as a National Hero. She was appointed because Ratu Kalinyamat led Jepara and made it a maritime axis in trade and military. The plus point is that she is a woman who is considered to have defeated the hegemony of men. However, interestingly, the local community's memories of Ratu Kalinyamat are mostly mythology that emphasizes the erotic side (Said, 2013). However, with in-depth research using Portuguese sources, the heroic aspect of Ratu Kalinyamat becomes clear. The problem is that this heroic aspect is seen from the outside. The aspect seen is how her actions made Jepara great from a maritime aspect and her actions in fighting the Portuguese. Regarding regionalism, Ratu Kalinyamat had a bad relationship with several local figures in Demak, Arya Penangsang, and Kudus, Sunan Kudus. The two figures were respected in their regions, even in the regional context. This appointment may remind the community of local events that once happened to these three figures (Sitompul, 2023). Therefore, teaching national heroes in society needs to highlight the contextual side taken from the heroic side of the figure. Including being careful in writing narratives related to it, unwise choice of sentences can hurt the understanding of the national hero himself, especially from the perspective of the opposing party.

Regardless of the pros and cons of national heroes, there are at least two reasons in the educational context: theoretically, heroes have an essential role in learning history. Learning with heroic values can generate emotional and affective aspects. It is in line with the opinion of Albert Bandura on social learning theory and social cognitive theory. He stated that individuals learn behavior by observe imitating models. He claimed that influential people are among the most imitated models in society, some known as heroes. The point of social learning is modeling. This modeling is one of the essential steps in integrated learning (Nabavi, 2012). Modeling is the most trusted way of learning to develop student character. When referring to social learning theory, this theory's theoretical argument focuses on three aspects: seeing, identifying, and relishing. The three of them play a significant role in helping students develop their mental attitude. Through Indonesia's heroes' political and militaristic history, the mental attitude that occurred after the learning process tends to

give birth to identifying and narrowing the hero's meaning. Every hero is a political and military figure. This opinion supports the results of the studies of Eriksonas (2004), Vähä (2002), and Benziger (2000), which stated that learning the history of heroes cannot be separated from political and militaristic narratives. The history of heroes is political, influenced by Great Man Theory (Carlyle et al., 2013).

The second reason that strengthens the role of heroes in learning is the conceptual relationship between values and heroes. It is because an essential thing about heroes is the value they have. A person is considered a hero because of his values. In broad terms, heroes differ from ordinary people. They are supposed to carry out significant duties and responsibilities and contribute to society. Therefore, the heroes' moral character is universal and reflects the values and emotions of society's society (Sanchez, 1998, 2000). However, this ideal view is difficult to apply if the people's mindset still tends to cultivate and submit to political power. As in Indonesian history and lessons learned, Sanchez's (2000) arguments are tough to prove. In the students' view, the discourse on the universality of heroes' nature, which should be studied since elementary school, has been ignored. As a result, a narrow perspective on heroes creates imagination and modeling that does not hone critical reasoning and creativity.

In historical learning, historical figures become best practices in nurturing values. Internalizing character values in historical learning is a necessity. This is because historical learning has the potential as a medium for transmitting character values through past events and role models for heroes. However, there are several obstacles to internalizing the character values. Some characters are protagonists in historical learning, such as heroes who provide role models for positive values. Besides, antagonistic figures, such as colonialists, are the triggering factors for the emergence of the importance of values (Ahmad, 2014). are the triggering factors for the emergence of the importance of values (Ahmad, 2014). Various studies have seen the critical role of historical narrative heroes in history learning and their role in character-building (Colby, 2008; Perrotta, 2017; Pramono et al., 2019; Sanchez, 1998, 2000).

Besides, the importance of a hero as a role model in character education has not been developed optimally. Latif noted that we failed to provide examples of the nation's heroes. History lessons are narrowed down to a series of years, wars, and royal genealogies to help find moral messages in events

and figures (Latif, 2014). Furthermore, Ahmad explained that character improvement was still not optimal, especially with heroic values. These obstacles are found in teacher understanding, student behavior, implementation of learning, and the undeveloped school culture that supports character education (Ahmad, 2014). The role of heroes in learning has not been optimal due to their uneven popularity. Not all heroes are promoted for their roles in textbooks. In the official government textbooks, 69 national heroes are mentioned.

Meanwhile, there are 78 national heroes mentioned (Pramono et al., 2019). It should be understood that the universality of a hero's character cannot be borne by just one character, Sukarno, for example. He is known as Indonesia's first president and proclaimer of independence. Cultivating one person is undoubtedly less rational in the educational process. Of course, every character has limitations. Therefore, another character is needed to balance the narrative. Moreover, Indonesia has many figures at the local level who are taking part. They are also still influential in society today.

Another factor that causes obstacles in internalizing heroic values is changes in people's lifestyles. A study is conducted by Bischooping & Gao (2020) on the heroism of Lei Feng against several different generations. Generational differences affect their assessment of the figure of a national hero. The older generation tends to accept Lei Feng's values. However, the younger generation tends to interpret it differently. There has been a shift from a state-planned, revolutionary, and "virtuocratic" society to a society that lives in an era of economic freedom, consumerism, and meritocracy (Bischooping & Gao, 2020). Following the research findings, students are bored with monotonous narratives related to heroes. Historical lessons become a place for the same characters and the same scenes all the time. It is essential to understand Burke's opinion that history must be analyzed along with its social context. Present patriotism will be different from future patriotism; therefore, lessons must be packaged as creatively and dynamically as possible to provide democratic understanding to students (Kuntowijoyo, 2018; Mahan & Burke, 1994).

On the one hand, learning about national heroes faces obstacles because the teacher's efforts to encourage historical empathy have not been optimal. The number of military and political figures in history makes students' historical empathy led to a narrow point. Concerning history and local figures, students do not have much empathy; this

makes the plenty and diversity of local history fade and disappear one by one (Kurniawan, 2019)

Another problem that has been found is that local figures are still not accommodated in learning. Local figures are actors in events at the local level. Local history lessons facilitate more significant knowledge of the context in which they live, both geographically and culturally (Goksu & Somen, 2019). Therefore, by presenting local figures, the learning will be more contextual. However, learning still does not optimally present local figures in learning. For example, in Semarang city, local figures have not become integral to learning. The presence of local figures can build historical empathy among students more optimally (Kurniawan, 2019). Such a hero is not an official narrative but is called the history of local heroes. However, they also deserve to be reckoned with in history class: read, discuss, and contemplate the results of their hard work.

Incorporating hero figures into history learning is essential, but it must be enriched by narratives that emphasize the importance of local figures (Barnard, 1997; Kurniawan et al., 2018; Pramono & Ahmad, 2019; Shavab et al., 2023) and highlight the significant roles women have played throughout history (Kurniawan, 2023; Nuraedah, 2023). This approach ensures a more comprehensive understanding of history by acknowledging diverse contributions beyond the traditional focus on national heroes. Including local figures fosters a sense of community pride and relevance while recognizing women's roles, which challenges the often male-dominated historical narratives, promotes gender equality, and offers students a broader perspective on past events. Such inclusive storytelling helps students connect more deeply with history, reflecting themselves in the stories of prominent and often overlooked contributors to societal progress.

Therefore, a strategy is needed to instill heroic values. Sanchez (1998) emphasizes that character education can be done by presenting a hero in learning. A hero can emulate various values. These values can be seen from the attitude of self-sacrifice and action to prioritize the wider community's interests. Therefore, heroes can become inspirational figures for students. In his study, Sanchez recommended developing various learning sources and media so that the learning atmosphere becomes more effective (Sanchez, 1998).

Another strategy for instilling heroic values is through a narrative strategy. This is in line with Colby's opinion (Colby, 2008), emphasizing the importance of narrative-based learning. In this case,

students are invited to conduct investigations based on stories from heroes as historical actors. Learning by analyzing the life stories of heroes has been able to facilitate students in achieving a more humanist and empathetic understanding of history and how historical actors perceive the past (Colby, 2008). This study aligns with Vansover Field's (2015) research, which sees the need for a literary approach to learning history, especially when teaching about heroes. With a literary approach, the relationship between students and the narrative will be more developed.

Ultimately, the primary document can also be used to understand heroes better. It is in line with the study conducted by Perrotta (Perrotta, 2017). In his study, he observes how students reconstruct the concept of heroes for the local context. Using primary documents, students are invited to investigate the existence of local figures in their neighborhood. With this, it turns out that students' historical thinking abilities are increased. On the one hand, students actively participate in exploring the hero being studied further. Therefore, they feel close and attached to the role of the character being studied. This process can make learning more constructive in forming a democratic society.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, national heroes play an important role in history education in Indonesia, especially in building national identity and patriotic values. The 2013 Curriculum explicitly places heroes as an integral part of history learning, focusing on instilling national values through heroic figures, while the *Kurikulum Merdeka* emphasizes reflective and critical analysis of historical events without placing great emphasis on hero figures. However, the challenge faced in teaching about heroes is the tendency for political and military narratives to dominate, which makes students' understanding of heroes narrow and limited. Moreover, local and female hero figures receive less attention in history learning, which can reduce the relevance of learning for students. To overcome this, a more inclusive approach is needed in teaching history, which includes local and female heroes, as well as learning strategies that use alternative sources and narrative approaches. This strategy will help build a deeper and broader understanding of history and internalize more diverse heroic values. Thus, students can be more connected to history and find inspiration from figures who may have been overlooked.

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