

The Development of Professional Certification Module for History Excellent Teachers (HET) In Malaysia: A Needs Analysis

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Abstract

This study conducts an in-depth analysis of developing a Professional Certification Module for History Excellent Teachers (HET) in Malaysia. The primary objective of this module is to empower history educators with improved teaching methodologies, eventually aiding their pursuit of the coveted Excellent Teachers title. Additionally, the module endeavours to bridge educational gaps and align with the requirements of the national curriculum. Employing a qualitative research approach, this study relies on semi-structured interviews with HET as key informants. These interviews were conducted both face-to-face and online, with a sample size of 11 HETs hailing from diverse regions in Malaysia. The findings highlight three important

elements for the development of this module and outline six essential components to be incorporated within its content. This research underlines the profound importance of the Professional Certification Module for HETs, emphasizing its potential to enhance student performance, stimulate interest in history subjects, and raise the professionalism of history educators, thus contributing to the development of Malaysia's educational landscape.

Keywords: History, Teacher, Module Development, Need Analysis, Education.

Introduction

History assumes a fundamental role in the Malaysian Secondary School Standard Curriculum (KSSM), being a mandatory subject for students from Form One to Form Five. This curriculum encapsulates a comprehensive blend of knowledge content, historical thinking skills, citizenship elements, and civic values. The sequential organization of content enables students to comprehend the evolution of societal and national life, spanning political, economic, and social dimensions (Curriculum Development Center [PPK], 2018). History education not only fosters global competitiveness among students but also facilitates cross-cultural comparisons of civilizations. However, the realization of these educational aspirations hinges significantly upon the appropriateness of teaching approaches, methods, and strategies, which regrettably have not met expectations (Ahmad & Jinggan, 2017; Ariffin & Ibrahim, 2019). Notably, despite the heightened status of history subjects and their inclusion as a compulsory pass subject in national examinations, the anticipated academic achievements have remained questionable (Ahmad & Jinggan, 2017).

The predicament is largely attributable to students' lack of interest in history, frequently regarding it as a difficult and boring subject (Kaviza, 2020; Lui & Ahmad, 2021). The research by Jaafar (2017) elucidates that this disinterest in history can be traced back to the very educators responsible for imparting historical knowledge. Regrettably, history teachers often fall short in promoting active student engagement in history education, despite the paramount importance of effective planning and quality execution in this pedagogical domain (Absor, 2020). A further exacerbating factor is the dearth of historical thinking skills employed within history teaching and learning, notwithstanding teachers' acquisition of diverse knowledge and skills concerning suitable pedagogical strategies throughout their professional journey (Lovorn, 2017; Ozmen, 2015). This reluctance to integrate historical thinking skills hampers the knowledge acquisition process and impedes students' active participation, hindering the creation of a dynamic and comprehensive history learning environment (Buchanan, 2015; Neumann, 2012).

In light of these challenges, there is an imperative need to propel Malaysian history teachers toward excellence in their chosen profession. This entails motivating them to aspire to the prestigious title of History Excellent Teachers (HET) and equipping them with the requisite skills and knowledge. Consequently, this study advocates for the development of a Professional Certification Module tailored for aspiring HETs, which will not only empower teachers but also augment their contributions to the field of history education. HETs are viewed as innovators in history education, initiating novel teaching methods, producing scholarly work, and discovering new pedagogical approaches (Jemaah Nazir Sekolah, 2007). Their instructional efficacy transcends the realms of conventional teaching, offering students an enriched learning experience (Ibrahim Aziz, & Nambiar, 2013; Mansor & Masran, 2021). Additionally, this module aims to bridge existing knowledge gaps by aligning with the national educational roadmap outlined in the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013; Seman et al., 2017). This alignment is evident in the

pursuit of Shift 1 (Providing Equal Access to Quality International Standard Education) and Shift 7 (Leveraging ICT to Enhance Quality Learning Nationwide), as envisaged in the plan.

Literature Review

A needs analysis is a systematic study conducted to identify the current requirements of a specific target group (Norlidah, 2013). It serves as a diagnostic tool for pinpointing challenges that necessitate attention (Ramlan, 2017). In the context of this study, the needs analysis endeavours to address emerging issues and delineate the prerequisites for crafting a Professional Certification Module tailored for history teachers under the purview of the Ministry of Education Malaysia. The Reference Book for Excellent Teacher Concept (KPM, 2010) defines an Excellent Teacher as a paragon of knowledge, skills, and expertise, particularly in the realm of teaching and learning. They consistently exhibit solid dedication and motivation in the execution of their teaching responsibilities.

Additionally, a prototype mobile application hosted on Google Sites has been conceptualized to complement the learning journey of history teachers. This prototype can serve as a repository of information and references curated by seasoned HET. Ewais and Troyer's (2019) research underscores the efficacy of mobile applications in simplifying the comprehension of abstract and intricate concepts, outperforming traditional learning materials such as textbooks, two-dimensional visuals, and videos.

Moreover, this initiative facilitates the fulfillment of students' needs, offering diverse teaching methodologies and learning sessions that reignite their enthusiasm for the history subject. These enjoyable teaching techniques not only foster cognitive development but also act as motivational catalysts, stimulating students to delve deeper into historical topics (Chen, Wang, Chen, & Chen, 2014; Md. Zabit et al., 2020). Consequently, students are more inclined to participate actively in interactive and engaging learning sessions, transcending passive and monotonous classroom experiences.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, grounded in semi-structured interviews conducted individually. These interviews were administered both in-person and online, featuring 11 History Excellent Teachers representing various regions in Malaysia. The selection process employed purposive sampling, focusing on History teachers who have attained the designation of History Excellent Teachers. The sampled educators span a range of rankings from DG 44 to DG 52, with teaching experiences ranging from 14 to 25 years. The gender distribution comprises six male and five female teachers. The semi-structured interview questions were meticulously formulated to align with the research objectives, subsequently validated by a panel of five expert reviewers spanning diverse fields. This study aims to elucidate the fundamental needs that underscore the development of the Professional Certification Module tailored for History Excellent Teachers within the Malaysian educational landscape.

Finding and Discussion

Through a comprehensive thematic analysis employing ATLAS.ti software version 22, the research has discerned two pivotal objectives in the analysis of module development needs and content composition. The investigation into the development needs of this module has unearthed three core components: (i) a comprehensive guide module for teachers, (ii) encouragement of teacher professionalism, and (iii) a certification module attuned to current

requisites. In the context of module content, six key elements have emerged from interviews with History Excellent Teachers: (i) a comprehensive application and filling guideline, (ii) an interactive learning module, (iii) avenues for fostering innovation, (iv) a framework for conducting action research, (v) opportunities for scholarly contributions, and (vi) diversified teaching and learning methodologies. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 encapsulate a concise summary of these findings, elucidated through ATLAS.ti software.

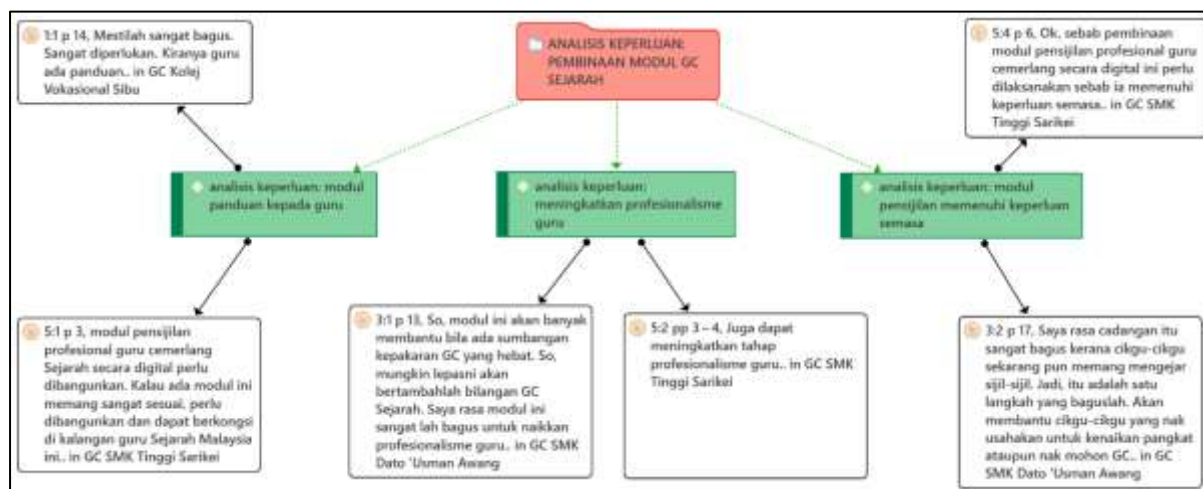


Figure 1.1: Need analysis of History Excellent Teachers module development

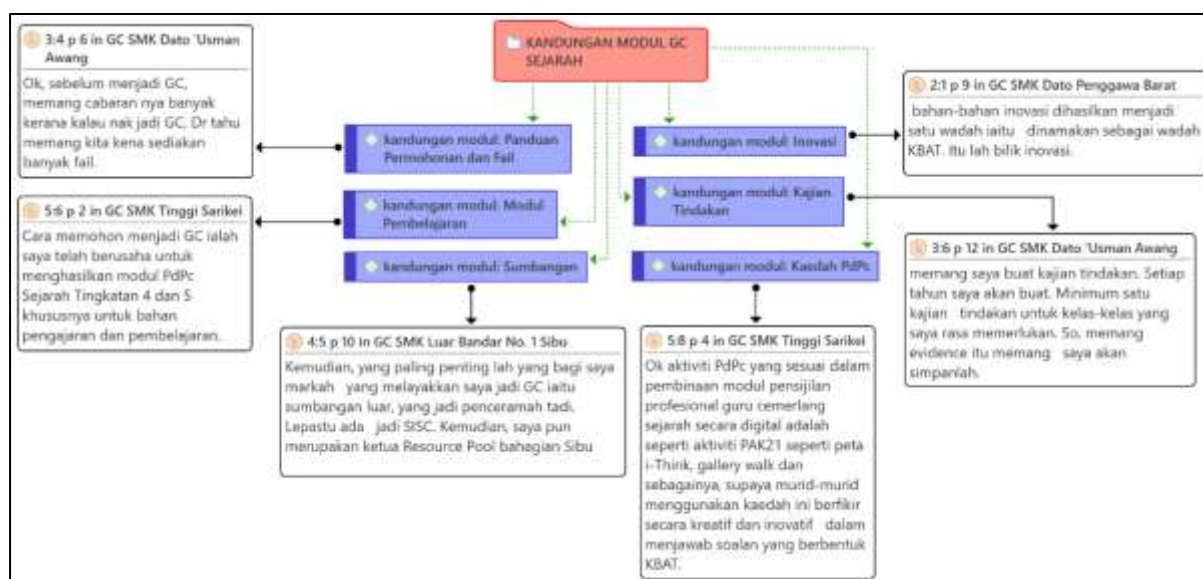


Figure 1.2: Content of the History Excellent Teachers module development

Three key elements related to the development needs of this module were identified:

(i) A comprehensive guide module for teachers

The Professional Certification Module tailored for History Excellent Teachers (HET) should provide a comprehensive guide module for teachers to learn. Teacher requires a guide module to assist them in their teaching to clearly articulate conceptual goals for the suggested activity in the classroom. An informant from Vocational College said, *"It is great and essential for teachers to have a guide module"*. This shows that the guide module is necessary for teachers as it offers assistance and knowledge for teachers to comprehend to become HETs. Another informant stated, *"Module certificate for professional teachers should be developed."*

The development of this module is needed and can be used and shared with other history teachers in Malaysia". However, The findings of this research underscore the pressing need for a well-structured and comprehensive guide module for HETs. This module should not only serve as a roadmap for their professional development but also address their specific needs and challenges in the context of history education. Thus, the module needs to be developed thoroughly while keeping an eye on the specific needs and challenges of teachers.

(ii) The enhancement of teacher professionalism

The development of this module also should take into account of the enhancement of teacher professionalism as it needs to provide clear guides for teachers in the module. Guide modules are capable of getting teachers ready for the teaching lessons and this is one of the important characteristics that demonstrates professionalism in educators. This entails knowing the fundamental ideas behind the subject field and organising the best resources and exercises for students. Two of the informants stated *"The module will help a lot if there is knowledge and expertise assistance from other excellent teachers. Teachers' expertise and knowledge can be shared with other teachers which can increase the amount of HETs. I think that this module is very great to enhance teachers' professionalism", "This module definitely can increase the level of teachers' professionalism"*. Despite that, the emphasis on enhancing teacher professionalism is critical to the proposed module. HETs should be equipped not only with pedagogical skills but also with the ability to inspire and engage students in history subjects. These abilities need to be possessed by teachers from outside of the module itself.

(iii) The creation of a certification module that aligns with current needs

The creation of a certification module that aligns with current needs is essential to provide multiple knowledge and preparation for teachers. The education sector has been experiencing rapid changes these days since the past years and it has been a challenge for teachers to keep up. Having some sort of certification provides proof of teachers' additional abilities and qualifications in certain aspects. Two informants expressed *"Digital certification module of professional teachers should be developed because it fulfills the current needs.", "I think the idea is very good because teachers nowadays are chasing for certification as it will help them in promotion as well as requesting for excellent teacher position."* Therefore, the development of a certification module that aligns with current educational needs is pivotal. It ensures that HETs are not only recognized for their commitment and expertise but are also equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in the contemporary educational landscape. These skills and knowledge can be used to efficiently adapt lessons to meet the demands of each student's learning and needs.

For the content of the module, six key elements were identified based on interviews with Excellent History Teachers:

(i) A comprehensive application and file guide

The module should include a comprehensive guide on the application process for HET certification. This guide should provide step-by-step instructions, checklists, and templates to streamline the application procedure. As stated by an informant *"Before I became a HET, there were a lot of obstacles because I had to prepare loads of files for the application"*. This shows that to become a HET, teacher has to go through a complex process with a great deal

of applications to fill in. Therefore, the implication of a comprehensive application and file guide in the module will ease the whole process and make it systematic and organised.

(ii) An interactive and engaging learning module

To address the issue of students' lack of interest in history, the module should incorporate an interactive and engaging learning module. This module is required to include innovative teaching methods, multimedia resources, and strategies to make history lessons captivating. An informant said, *"The way to apply for an excellent teacher position was that I strived to create a learning and teaching module for Form 4 and Form 5, especially in creating teaching aids"*. This explains that by having an interactive and engaging learning module in the content, teachers can make use of it for in-class teaching, which can be added or modified with their ideas to make the classroom more synergistic.

(iii) Avenues for fostering innovation

Innovation is pivotal in education. HETs should be encouraged to innovate in their teaching methods, curriculum design, and assessment strategies. The module should provide avenues and resources for fostering innovation in history education. An informant from SMK Dato Penggawa Barat stated *"Innovation materials that are created becoming the tools for High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). That is the innovation"*. Innovation in education is essential and it is not only needed to surpass the current state of performance standards but also to exceed them to have a significant effect to satisfy the demands of the unpredictable and rapidly changing globalised world. By having avenues for fostering innovation in the module, teacher would strive to create new invention and solution to cater students in an enjoyable teaching and learning process in classroom and solving possible problem that arises.

(iv) A framework for conducting action research

Action research is a powerful tool for educators. HETs should be adept at conducting action research to continually improve their teaching practices. The module should offer a framework for conducting action research projects in history education. This will facilitate HETs in performing action research as they will be given a framework that explains what they need to know about action research. One of the informants said, *"I did an action research before applying for HET position. The minimum action research that has to be done is one and I did it for the classroom that I thought needed it. I also kept the evidence"*. This shows that HETs are expected to conduct action research and having the framework specifically developed to assist the teachers is crucial.

(v) Opportunities for scholarly contributions

HETs should be encouraged to contribute to the scholarly discourse in history education. The module should highlight opportunities for research, publication, and presentation at educational conferences. As stated by an informant *"The most important thing to do to achieve HET to me is the external contribution as this part holds the most marks. My contribution is like what I did just now by being a speaker in a talk and I am also a leader in Resource Pool in Sibu"*. With the emphasis on opportunities for research, publication, and presentation in the module, HETs could grasp the idea of what kind of contribution needed to be made in education nationally or globally. Ultimately, HETs will be motivated to give their contributions in scholarly discourse with all the opportunities provided in the module.

(vi) Diversified teaching and learning methodologies

To cater to diverse learning styles and needs, the module should emphasize diversified teaching and learning methodologies. HETs should be proficient in using a variety of teaching approaches to engage students effectively. Classroom is a dynamic environment where students from all origins, personalities and skill levels come together. Using wide teaching and learning methods that are adapted to each individual in the classroom can aid them in their learning and improvement. This is proven by the statement of one of the informants that said *“Teaching and Learning method that is suitable for the development of The Professional Certification Module tailored for HET is like 21st century teaching style that includes i-think map, gallery walk and others. This is because these methods can make students think creatively and be innovative while answering questions in HOTS”*.

Conclusion

Considering the extensive needs analysis conducted in this study, it is clear that there exists a persistent necessity for research-driven development of the Professional Certification Module tailored for History Excellent Teachers under the support of the Ministry of Education Malaysia. This module assumes multifaceted significance, serving as an invaluable guide for educators, elevating their professionalism, and ensuring alignment with contemporary educational imperatives. Furthermore, it encompasses a diverse array of content facets that necessitate meticulous crafting, encompassing guidelines for application, interactive learning modules, avenues for innovation, action research frameworks, opportunities for scholarly contributions, and the incorporation of varied teaching and learning methodologies. Consequently, history teachers are encouraged to proactively leverage this opportunity to enhance their professional acumen, thereby ascending to the esteemed rank of History Excellent Teachers (HETs) and contributing significantly to the advancement of Malaysia's educational landscape.

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Contribution/Originality

This study is a new empirical study conducted in Malaysia in developing a novel module for History Excellent Teachers. Collectively, the findings of the study provide an impact on the professional development of teachers and educators as well as the innovation of educational system for student's advancement in History subject.

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