NEW APPROACH TO TEACHING, ISLAMIC STUDIES SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED DINI CURRICULUM AT GOVERNMENT ASSISTED RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Studies in Malaysia has begun since the 16th century AD. When the school system is focused on the areas of Islam and Arabic, the schools eventually become religious schools. The Islamic Education Division of the Ministry of Education Malaysia has implemented a j-Qaf program to empower Islamic education in primary schools. Meanwhile, institutions of National Religious Secondary Schools (NRSS), Islamic Streamed Class (ISC) and Government Assisted Religious School (GARS) were also strengthened at secondary level. In addition, it is reinforced with the Core Islamic Studies, Elective Islamic Studies, Arabic and the latest Integrated Dini Curriculum (IDC), Integrated Tahfiz Curriculum (ITC) and Tahfiz Ulul Albab Model (TMUA). This article seeks to identify the types of research related to the implementation of Dini Curriculum and identify the needs, problems and constraints of teaching and learning among the teachers and students. IDC is a new curriculum being developed and is being implemented to fulfill the government's aspiration to nurture a physically, spiritually, intellectually and socially balanced individual. In this regard, the paper analyses the previous studies on the needs for curriculum evaluations to identify the problems that occurred in the implementation of this curriculum. The methodology of the study was based on “Systematic Literature Review” (SLR) method and the content requirements analysis was adopted to obtain the results. The improvement of the curriculum should encourage the teachers to create a new approach to their teaching process to pique their students’ interest in Arabic subjects in particular. Through the theme of “Dini Curriculum”, ”New Approach for the Islamic Education Curriculum” & ”Government Assisted Religious School”, there were 4 fundamental assessments of IDC subject i.e. the needs for curriculum evaluation, teachers’ proficiency in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) latest skills, proficiency of Arabic language among students and teaching approaches. As the topic is relatively new and a comprehensive research has not been conducted, these discussions are more likely to lead to an early understanding or a beginning of the topic.


1. Introduction

IDC is a new curriculum formed by MOE, LEPAI and Department and Religious Foundation based on the Arabic-Islamic Curriculum which is also known as Dini Curriculum or Azhari. This curriculum is implemented in religious schools in Malaysia including Government Assisted Religious School (GARS), State Religious Secondary Schools (SRSS) and People Religious Secondary Schools (PRSS). For the implementation of IDC, there were several authorities that had been obtained from the relevant parties. MOE’s Central Curriculum Committee (CCC) had agreed to make Dini Curriculum and Tahfiz Curriculum as a national curriculum during the meeting No. 3/2012 on June, 2012. The efforts made
by JAKIM and LEPAI with the coordination of MOE to uphold and adopt Integrated Dini Curriculum as a national curriculum was finally introduced. According to Maimun Aqsha Lubis et.al (2014), most PRSSs and private secondary schools use the al-Azhar curriculum, which is also known as the Azhari curriculum. The al-Azhar curriculum such as Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh topics, which uses Arabic-language textbooks, is taken directly from al-Azhar University, Egypt. However, the Arabic language learning syllabus is drafted and rearranged according to the current needs. Ahmad Sabri Noh (2017) stated that Dini Curriculum is the curriculum of the Diniyyah subject which is an important identity of People Religious Secondary Schools (PRSS), State Religious Secondary School (SRSS) and Government Assisted Religious Schools (GARS). The Diniyyah curriculum is also known as Azhari / al-Azhar curriculum. For the purpose of empowering and enhancing the curriculum, the ministry had introduced Dini Integrated Curriculum in 2015 where the curriculum had been implemented in GARS.

2. Definition of Operation
According to Hassan Langgulung (1988), curriculum is very important in an academic discipline. According to Wan Yusoff and Aizan Ali (2015), curriculum is the fundamental reference book for teaching and learning that should be printed and published to guide all teachers during the (PdPc) process or when they are at home. Curriculum is not limited to textbooks. It is a broad concept covering the entire body of knowledge, all activities and learning process experienced by a student at school that has been formally and systematically planned by educational institutions according to the student’s level of knowledge. According to Nur Hidayah Hussain and Maharam Mamat (2018), textbooks play a vital role in the teaching and learning process (PdP) for Arabic language subjects. Changing a curriculum is not easy. According to Mohd Nazri Abdul Rahman & Wan Nurul Baizura Wan Mohamad Noor (2018) direct curriculum changes did not only involve the implementation of the curriculum i.e. the teacher, but the community was also affected by the curriculum changes.

Islamic Studies is defined as studies in the spirit of universal Islam and relevant to all people who have no separation between "religious" and "secular" knowledge. It aims to develop the whole human aspect in terms of physical, intellectual and spiritual and educate people the role of God’s servant and his caliph on earth. Islamic curriculum is integrated fundamentally, thus Islamic studies must be holistic covering religious knowledges derived from revelation and science. Both types of knowledge should be integrated with Divine principles or Tauhid’s paradigm.

3. Problem Statement
Teaching is defined as one of the ways to prepare students with the required knowledge and skills for them to function well (Noor Shamshinar binti Zakaria, 2018). Outstanding Arabic proficiency is crucial in order for students to secure their place in overseas’ higher learning institutions. Malaysian Higher Religious Certificate (MHRC) leavers who are interested in furthering their studies at al-Azhar University must sit for an Arabic Language Competency Test (ALCT) or Imtihan Qabul. However, there will be challenges and obstacles for students in mastering the language. In view of the problems that arose in the implementation of the al-Azhar curriculum, IDC has been the alternative in the continuation of this curriculum. The curriculum was implemented in stages for Form 1 to Form 5 students since 2015.

Maimun Aqsha Lubis et.al, (2014) stated that students exhibited a positive attitude towards teachers’ teaching practices and methods. However, students and teachers did not portray a positive attitude towards the usage of teaching aids (BBM). According to Mohamad Hazwan Faiz Mohamad Yusoff & Azmil Hashim (2017) in his research, teaching practices that featured the Model Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach gave a positive impact in increasing the level of students’ mastery by strengthening the students’ comprehension about the content and proficiency of Arabic language.
Nevertheless, the study found that teachers still preferred to use the traditional BBM compared to ICT-based BBM. This can be shown by the usage of white board BBM, textbooks and notebooks were in the high level of interpretation while ICT-based BBM such as PowerPoints, videos and audios were still in the medium-low level of interpretation.

From Arabic language learning aspects, there were still teachers who taught Arabic language but did not have any Arabic language background. There were several weaknesses that had been identified from this issue. According to Noor Shamsinar Zakaria (2018), research showed that non-option teachers still did not make use of the reference sources, instead they only focused on the usage of textbooks. In addition, they also did not make the technology facilities such as the Internet as a reference source to strengthen their knowledge and skills during the Arabic language PdPc sessions. According to Abdul Razif Zaini (2017) the problems faced by Arabic teachers include the environment, motivation, BBM, their abilities and pedagogy. This was similar with the study conducted by Mohammad Haafiz Ahmid (2018) towards 542 Form 4 Islamic streamed students from religious high schools which showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between the teaching and the motivation of Islamic streamed students towards Arabic subjects.

There is a government initiative in adopting the Islamic education system at PRSS which is by providing training of professionalism to the existing teachers in GARS in addition to their appointment as permanent staff under the Ministry. According to a study conducted by Zamri Ariffin (2014) the transformation in Arabic language in Malaysia is focused on the quality of Arabic teachers, by nurturing and providing high quality teachers and enabling them to meet the current educational challenges. According to Awatif Abdul Rahman et.al (2018), priorities in the education transformation policy need to be compiled based on consensus among scholars where the quality of a teacher is the most important factor in students’ success. Based on the initial observation in the study, teachers' competency is used to measure the ability and achievement of teachers in carrying out an assignment.

4. Objective of Study
This research aims to obtain the following:

i. Identify the forms of research related to the implementation of Dini Curriculum
ii. Identify the needs, problems and constraints of teaching and learning among teachers and students

5. Methodology of Study
This study used a systematic literature review and content analysis methods. There were three themes used in the data search which comprise of "Dini Curriculum", "New Approach of the Islamic Studies Curriculum" and "Government Assisted Religious Schools". These themes showed that there were 4 fundamental assessments of the IDC subject i.e. the needs for curriculum evaluations, teachers' proficiency in Information and Communication Technology (TMK), Arabic language mastery among students and teaching approaches.

6. Finding
Table 1 shows the findings from several articles and studies related to this topic. The researchers divided these findings into 5 categories: title, topic of discussion related to the study, authors or writers, and written materials in the forms of books, journals, proceedings or theses. The last division was focused on the form or methods used in the research.
There was a specific study on Dini curriculum learning among students at Government Assisted Religious Schools. However, the researcher found previous articles or writings that were related to the research topic. There were 9 articles on Dini curriculum learning in general, 1 article on sirah curriculum in IDC, 1 article on usuluddin (IDC), 1 article on feqh (IDC) and 5 articles on Government Assisted Religious Schools. In terms of the forms or methods used, there were 6 articles that used quantitative approach, 3 articles used qualitative approach and 2 articles used analysis approach in the studies. The writing period showed that the research articles were obtained from 2014 to 2018.

Table 1: Content Analysis Based on Relevant Issues Implementation of Dini Curriculum GARS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Design</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Al-Azhar curriculum in GARS.</td>
<td>GARS</td>
<td>Shaharuddin</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Faith and Morals in Islamic Education.</td>
<td>Usuluddin Learning</td>
<td>Ismail A.M &amp; Jasmi, K.A.</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>Qualitative / Literature Review</td>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>School Climate and Teachers' Commitment in GARS.</td>
<td>Dini Curriculum, GARS</td>
<td>Mohamad Adnan</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Proceeding of International Seminar on Generating Knowledge Through Research UUM (ICECRS) 699-708</td>
<td>Quantitative/Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Linguistic Features of Arabic Textbooks and its Correlation with Text Readability Level in Malaysia.</td>
<td>IDC, Arabic Learning</td>
<td>Kamarulzaman n Abdul Ghani, Ahmad Sabri Noh, Nik Mohd Rahimi Nik Yusuff</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Gema online, Journal of Language Studies volume 17 (3), August 2017</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
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</table>
7. Discussion and Suggestion

The findings from several studies and writings showed that the issues with Dini curriculum regarding Arabic language learning have not been discussed in depth. However, there were several studies related to the learning process at GARS. There were four main areas that were focused on in Dini curriculum learning at GARS. These include the requirement for curriculum’s objective assessment,
proficiency of the teachers in the information technology latest skills, Arabic language proficiency among students and teaching approaches used by the teachers.

7.1 Curriculum Objectives Evaluation Needs

The People Religious Secondary School (PRSS) and the State Religious Secondary School (SRSS) were registered as a Government Assisted Religious School (GARS), which had previously implemented a religious curriculum (al-Azhari) in teaching Islamic studies and Arabic language (Abdul Rashid, 2008). In 2011, the proposal for Dini curriculum to become a national curriculum was approved during the 86th Conference between the Heads of departments or the State Islamic Religious Council across Malaysia in Kangar, Perlis. According to Hafeez (2015), the implementation of ITC and IDC as a national curriculum was approved during the meeting of the Education Planning Committee. An enhancement on GARS curriculum seminar was conducted to be coordinated into a national curriculum. IDC was recognised as a national curriculum in 2012 (Kamarulzaman Abdul Ghani et al 2018).

According to Mohd. Aderi Che Noh et.al (2018) the transformation of this curriculum reflected the ministry's efforts in improving the curriculum to nurture students with six aspirations namely knowledge, thinking skills, leadership skills, bilingual skills, ethics, spirituality and national identity as set out in the Malaysia Education Development Plan (MEDP) 2013-2025. One of the objectives of Dini Curriculum becoming a national curriculum is to strengthen the teaching and learning process of Dini curriculum at schools. The Ministry also provides educational facilities to Dini curriculum that are similar to the national curriculum. In addition, the goal is to streamline the management of Dini curriculum and Tahfiz curriculum between Ministry of Education Malaysia and LEPAI religious curriculum committee. Additionally, it aims to produce professional and competent Dini and Tahfiz teachers. This curriculum is capable of producing a balanced individual in both ‘aqli and naqli fields, which eventually will develop their potentials.

As already noted, IDC is taught in Arabic and it will be assessed in Malaysian Higher Certificate (MRC) examinations starting 2019 (My Star, Muhyidin Yassin, 2014). The topics in Dini curriculum for Form 3 students include Tauhid, Quran, Hadith, prayers, Islamic dates, Akhlak and Tasawuf. Meanwhile, the topics for Shariah subjects for Form 3 students include Fiqh, Munakahat, Fiqh Ibadat and Fiqh Muamalat. In addition to learning Arabic language, students will indirectly learn the science of the religion with Dini curriculum. This is one of the transformations of Islamic Studies in which students can learn Islamic knowledge through Arabic language subject.

Al-istima ‘wa al-kalam, al-Qiraat, al-Kitabah, al-Mutalaah wa Ta‘bir topics are included in al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Mua’sirah field. In addition, Manahij al-ulum al-Islamiyah covers the field of al-Mantiq and al-Fiqh while al-Adab wa al-Balaghah include the topics of al-adab wa al-Nusus and al-Balaghah. However, Form One to Form Three students only cover three areas which are usul al-Din, al-Syariah and al-lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah (LAM) (Siti Apipah Munirah et al, 2017). The implementation of ITC and IDC is currently focused on GARS. Other types of schools such as PRSS and SRSS are encouraged to adopt this curriculum.

To date, the number of GARS that have implemented IDC are 151 schools and 12 schools are implementing ITC (Nor Hayati, 2015). Through the implementation of IDC, MOE aims to produce muthaqqah Islamic scientists (who have diversified knowledge and skills). A study was conducted by Kamarulzaman Abdul Ghani et.al (2018) to examine the level of IDC learning based on the perceptions of 466 Form 1 and Form 2 students at GARS across Malaysia. The findings showed that the implementation of this curriculum received positive feedbacks from GARS students across Malaysia.
with a mean value of 3.96. The implementation of IDC still maintains the existing subjects in Integrated High School Curriculum (KBSM) with minimal changes in terms of minimum time per week and the addition of Dini subjects in the national curriculum. The allocated time for each subject was 40 minutes.

7.2 Latest Skills
The education system of this century has become increasingly challenging, as it fulfills the needs for human development that changes from time to time. Hence, modifications to the curriculum need to be implemented, as well as the need to fulfill the aspiration of National Education Philosophy and the latest transformation of education. The modifications and these changes will not only impact the education system in general but also to Integrated Dini Curriculum (IDC) in order to align with the desired outcomes. The effective teaching approach will directly produce holistic students which is in line with the aspiration of the National Education Philosophy and Islamic Education Philosophy.

Islamic Studies teachers at GARS also need to master the Information and Communication Technology latest skills, research skills, writing skills and the development of teaching and learning modules. This is needed for the learning and facilitating (PdPc) processes to the 21st century students through high-level thinking skills (HLTS). This was mentioned in Integrated Curriculum policy in 2015 set by LEPAI and MOE. 'This curriculum can also develop students' thinking skills through various methods, approaches and techniques of learning and teaching by applying elements of the High-Level Thinking Skills (KBAT)'.

In this regard, it is required for the teachers to carry out teaching and learning researches, innovate their teaching and learning processes and publish useful materials (Ab. Halim Tamuri, Muhamad Faiz Ismail, 2012). A study by Faridah et al. (2010) showed that the majority of GARS teachers are moderately proficient in electronic and multimedia spreadsheets. Aspects of ICT knowledge and skills are lacking among teachers in GARS. Their findings showed that the majority (79 percent) of GARS teachers are lacking of ICT courses organized by various parties. In this case, teachers need to improve their knowledge and ICT skills in order to create effective learning environment.

7.3 Proficiency of Arabic Language Among Students
The use of Arabic in the teaching of IDC curriculum in GARS is a challenge for the students. Weak Arabic proficiency is one of the factors contributing to the lack of understanding among the student. Arabic is used in teaching, textbooks, learning activities and assessments in exams.

The research conducted by Anuar Sopian et al. (2013) on students in Government Assisted Religious School (SABK) showed that less effective teaching process made it difficult for the students to understand the language and led them to have negative impressions on Arabic language subject. Students will not be interested to learn Arabic language and they are less aware of the importance of this language. Therefore, it will be challenging for the students to understand the subjects of Islamic Studies taught in Arabic like usuludding. In this regard, Arabic language proficiency among students must be enhanced (Maimun et al., 2014). The students’ achievement will be affected and the planned learning objectives will not be implemented properly.

7.4 Teachers Teaching Approach
A study by Maimun Aqsha Lubis et al. (2014) showed that the usage of teaching aids by the teachers from the students’ perspective was inadequate. The findings showed that the frequency of the use of teaching aids in the classroom recorded the lowest mean value in comparison to other 26 items. These
include the usage of television (mean value of 1.40), computers (mean value of 1.75), Arabic software (mean value of 1.45), Internet (mean value of 1.35), LCD (mean value of 1.50), language lab or room (mean value of 1.50), website (mean value of 1.85) and blog (mean value of 1.25). The usage of textbooks and blackboards recorded the highest mean value. This showed that teachers preferred to use the traditional approaches or methods in their teaching process. The usage of technology still has not been implemented by Islamic Studies teachers. This is closely related to the teachers’ commitment to their teaching (Mohamad Adnan, 2016).

Accordingly, the usage of the latest approaches is needed for the 21st Century learning (PA21). Additionally, the teaching and learning processes should be in line with the complete standard curriculum requirements with Value Added Elements (VAE), Cross-Curriculum Elements (CCE), Soft Skills as well as other elements outlines in Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025. However, according to Zetty Nurzuliana Rashed & Ab Halim Tamuri (2018) the Islamic Studies syllabus is excessive and has a wide scope. Furthermore, the study found that teachers had constraints to complete the Islamic Studies syllabus within the allocated time. This problem was caused by the number of tasks given to the teachers which would be a burden to the teachers if they failed to strategise in their teaching process. In this regard, a study should be conducted on teachers and students in the process of reforming the curriculum. With this writing, it is that the implementation of the curriculum proposed by MOE can be upheld so that it can really improve students’ achievement in learning Arabic with various skills.

The construction of the existing Islamic Studies curriculum is adequate. Furthermore, the transformation of Islamic Studies in implementing Dini Curriculum makes this curriculum more challenging as well as able to nurture a knowledgeable and diverse individual. To implement the integrated teaching and learning concepts, teachers need to improve their teaching methods and style in the classroom. The changes in curriculum has to start with the teachers. They need to learn from the experienced teachers and gain knowledge from them. Teachers should also be smart in preparing the teaching materials as a way to avoid them to use longer than the allocated time.

The role of teachers in the classroom does not only involve teaching, but they should also act as educators who always care about the students. The diversity of the students requires the teachers to identify the weak students and. This not only helps the student, but the teaching and learning of a teacher will be easier. The content available in the offered curriculum is very good and it is hoped that students will be able to utilize the time they are in learning.

8. Conclusion

Research on studies or writing on subject areas in Integrated Dini Curriculum (IDC) showed that there is a need for specific studies to evaluate their effectiveness. Furthermore, there are inadequate studies focusing on the areas of such as the Fiqh, Usuluddin and Syaria’h subjects in Dini curriculum or Azhari curriculum at the Government Assisted Religious School (GARS). Majority of the studies focused on Arabic language proficiency among students and the quality of Islamic Studies teachers.

The problem of teaching Arabic language in Malaysia is not a new issue. Furthermore, with the improvement of the curriculum should make educators more compassionate. This problem requires constant attention from all teachers, especially those who teach Arabic and need to be aware of the issues and find solutions to these problems from time to time. The success of the IDC implementation
depends largely on the executors at school. High commitment and striving towards the success of the new curriculum under the framework of improving the quality of Islamic education are yearned by all parties. IDC was created to fulfill the aspiration of the National Education Philosophy, Islamic Education Philosophy and to make the aspirations of PPPM become reality. Through the implementation of the IDC, the country can offer citizens who need religious education to their children and further strengthen the Islamic studies in the mainstream curriculum. This will give more opportunities to students in determining their career path.

References


