

## **Elements of Delivering Islamic Education through Islamic Morality in Several Malaysian Schools**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study was to explore the elements of delivering Islamic education through Islamic morality. Three candidates were chosen based on purposeful sampling. The qualitative case study was used and the methods were observation, semi-structured interview and document analysis. This research, which was based on theoretical study adapted from the writings of *Al-Ghazali's Ihya' Ulumuddin* (first edition), found that there were six elements of delivering Islamic education through Islamic morality, namely, feeling love and sympathy; being sincere; contributing advice; handling error correction wisely; becoming a great role model (*qudwah hasanah*); and teaching by steps. The research findings showed that the Islamic education teachers involved in this study had learnt the elements of delivering Islamic education through Islamic morality from various sources. In addition, the research found that every respondent had implemented these six elements in their classrooms during the teaching and learning process. Thus, it is hoped that these findings will contribute towards basic knowledge regarding the teaching and learning process in Islamic education, especially the implementation of the six elements during teaching and learning in Islamic education.

*Keywords:* Islamic morality, Islamic education, qualitative study case, teaching and learning

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Good behaviour, or good *akhlaq*, is an essential characteristic required in the life of a Muslim. Teachers, in addition to parents, are responsible for developing good *akhlaq* in children. The term *akhlaq* is the plural of *khuluq*. According to Ibnu Miskawayh (1398) *akhlaq* refers to the

action performed as a result of intuition, with no thinking behaviour involved that comes into existence through habit or through exercise and repetitive practice. Meanwhile, according to al-Ghazali (n. d.), *akhlaq* can be divided into good *akhlaq*, the behaviour of the prophets and other courteous people, and bad *akhlaq*, the behaviour of the impertinent (Abdul Rauf Yusof, 1991; Abdul Salam Yusof, 2010; Asmau Imam Abdul Kabir, 2013; Manan et al., 2013).

According to the literature, researchers believed that there is a pressing need to carry out this study because previous researchers have stumbled upon a significant deficiency in the teaching and learning process of Islamic education. In addition, Ab. Halim Tamuri and Zarin Ismail (2002) found that students' perception of the leadership of Islamic education teachers, in terms of exemplary personality, guidance and cultivating love, remained average. This finding does not support the finding of a study carried out by Noor Ruziana Ismail (2004), who discovered that interesting teaching approach employed by teachers led to high internalisation of lessons taught and helped students to comprehend lessons better and to further internalise what they had learnt. Approximately 84.6% of respondents concluded that the variety of techniques applied by Islamic education teachers made lessons more interesting and effective.

Furthermore, when Ab. Halim Tamuri et al. (2004) interviewed students pertaining to the teaching of Islamic education teachers, they identified that students did

not understand the content of lessons because the explanation provided by the teachers was imprecise, they were unable to correlate the lessons with their daily experience, the subject matter was tedious and made them sleepy and bored, and the teachers failed to show exemplary character while teaching. Moreover, according to Syed Najmuddin Syed Hassan et al. (2009), students' perception of teachers' professionalism as far as Islamic education was concerned was that the teachers were unable to use appropriate words when they taught, and they failed to draw both attention and emotion from the students. Therefore, Sarimah Mokhtar et al. (2011), in her research about students' perception of the internalisation of good *akhlaq*, suggested that teachers should improve their teaching techniques, become more aware about students' drawbacks and portray an ideal character for the students to role model.

On top of that, previous researchers on this topic believed that there was a need to conduct more study into the elements of delivering Islamic education with the aim of improving the existing teacher training courses especially since the teaching and learning process has been considered a yardstick for the progress and the achievement of the nation as a whole (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2002). They felt that there was a dire need for short- and long-term courses to be included in teacher training to develop professionalism among teachers, particularly the teachers of Islamic education. Hence, this qualitative research explored the elements of delivering

Islamic education through Islamic morality among teachers of Islamic education through the internalisation of noble character traits throughout the teaching and learning process. The sample was drawn from Form Four students.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research was carried out based on the writings of al-Ghazali (n. d.) in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* about the elements of delivering Islamic education through Islamic morality among teachers during the teaching and learning process. According to al-Ghazali, the soul of children can be moulded either to yield either good or bad; this depends on the way they are educated (al-Ghazali, n. d.). Parents and teachers have the opportunity to educate young souls to yield good through the finest education and upbringing. Teachers are suitable role models for children, and can help them survive in an ever challenging world.

According to al-Ghazali (n. d.) in the *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, a teacher must:

- a.) love and understand the feeling of her students, caring for them like her own children
- b.) be sincere to teach and bear in mind that teachers will be blessed by Allah SWT and that teaching is an act of submission to Allah SWT
- c.) always advise students using relevant and appropriate words
- d.) guide students to correct their mistakes wisely so that they will be able to understand and comprehend what they are learning
- e.) observe students' ability to perceive knowledge and teach them step by step because students possess different ability and come from different backgrounds
- f.) display her knowledge and understanding about Islamic values through speech, such as greeting students in the Islamic manner and with a smile upon entering the class, and through appropriate action, such as observing the Islamic code of dressing.

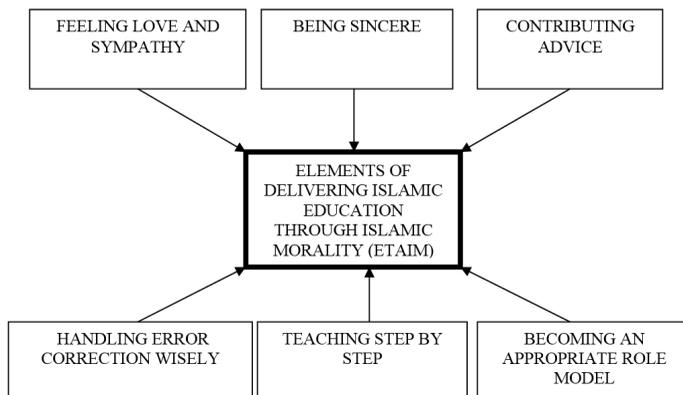


Figure 1. The theoretical framework showing the elements of delivering Islamic education through Islamic morality, drawn by al-Ghazali (n. d.) and adapted for this research.

The theoretical framework given as Figure 1 is based on al-Ghazali's writings.

### THE CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC MORALITY ACCORDING TO AL-GHAZALI

The element of being a teacher as outlined by al-Ghazali (n. d.) encompasses the character traits of showing love and sympathy. Al-Ghazali believed that the right of a teacher is greater than the right of parents because children gain more knowledge from teachers about eternal happiness than from their parents. Therefore, teachers need to cultivate love and sympathy towards students and treat them like their own children; this is mentioned by the Prophet *pbuh* himself when he said, "I am to you like a father to his son." al-Ghazali (n. d.) explained further that when the teacher has the intention to bring students closer to Allah SWT through teaching and learning, the teacher will be able to unite their hearts with compassion and love as a father towards his children.

The next element is sincerity; teachers should carry out the task of educating children for the purpose of serving Allah SWT and of getting closer to Him, and not merely for the sake of appraisal and reward. This is because the task of teaching is noble and respected. Teachers educate people to bind their hearts to Allah SWT; according to al-Ghazali (n. d.), while teachers are given remuneration, a salary or an income, these are not the main goals of teaching. Abdul Salam Yussof (2003) also added that teachers should emulate the achievement of Prophet Mohammad *pbuh* in the discharge of his duties and responsibilities as he was

the best role model for Muslims.

Humans are prone to making mistakes, especially when they are in the process of learning. Hence, al-Ghazali provided guidance for teachers to handle error correction with compassion, love and wisdom and not through violence or admonishing (al-Ghazali, n. D.). As Allah says in Surah al-Nahl (16:125):

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ  
وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن  
ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (١٢٥)

*Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from his way, and He is most knowing of who is (rightly) guided.* (al-Nahl 16:125)

According to Mohd Yusof Ahmad (2002), this verse calls on people to enjoin good and avoid evil. The act of preaching must be conducted with wisdom and prudence and the preacher must observe manners and conduct appropriate to a preacher.

Next, al-Ghazali (n. d.) also suggested that teachers must always remind their students to stay focussed while on the journey of learning and they should not stray from the actual intention to learn. Learning should bring people closer to Allah SWT, and this intention should be always nurtured and developed so that the knowledge gained will blossom and be blessed by Allah SWT. al-Ghazali believed that the triumph of learning is not to be boasted about, nor

is it for the purpose of pursuing a higher position; it is merely to seek His pleasure (al-Ghazali, n. d.).

Teachers should teach their students in step by step, beginning with the student's level and proceeding to the next lesson only after the first has been completely understood (al-Ghazali, n. d.). This element is in line with guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education (MOE), which requires that teaching be conducted by level. Every student has a different level of reasoning ability, and teachers need to tailor each lesson according to students' reasoning ability. According to Atan Long (1980), teachers need to repeat lessons when teaching average students. Teachers should avoid showing feelings of anger and disappointment, either in action or speech.

The next element for teachers in Islamic education is becoming a great role model to the students (*qudwah hasanah*). al-Ghazali (n. d.) pointed out that a teacher should not be called *mursyid*, one who shows the right path, if she is unable to practise the knowledge they possess. Atan Long (1980) stated that civilised ways can be shown through good action and language. An attractive appearance coupled with a good voice is an added value for a teacher. Mohamad Shatar Shabran et.al. (2006) suggested that teachers should instil good behaviour throughout the teaching and learning process by employing correct behavior themselves such as greeting the class in the accepted Islamic manner upon entering the classroom and recapping what they have already taught.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This research employed the qualitative case study research design. Data were collected through observation, interview and document analysis (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The case study allows an investigation to retain holistic and meaningful characteristic of real-life teaching and learning (Yin, 1994). These methods were used to capture the elements of delivering Islamic education through Islamic morality for the purpose of teaching and learning the Islamic education curriculum among Form Four students. Furthermore, according to Merriam (1998) and Yin (1994), the qualitative case study research design is suitable for use when a study involves an individual or a unit, a programme event, group, community or a culture. This study involved the teachers and the teaching and learning in the classroom. Creswell (2008) has also stated that "for qualitative research, the problems need to be explored to obtain a deep understanding."

### Sample and Sampling

In this study, the selection of participants was based on purposeful sampling in order to gather 'rich' data (Creswell, 2008). Creswell (2008) clarified that "maximal variation sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy, in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristics or traits. This procedure requires the researcher to identify the characteristics, and then, find sites or

individuals that display different dimensions of those characteristics.” These participants were also selected based on the suggestion that in-depth qualitative research can be achieved through suitable and easily attained participants and research location (Creswell, 2008).

Therefore, the researcher selected three teachers from three different secondary schools, with the purpose of accumulating rich and in-depth information (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 2008). To ensure the **validity and reliability of the data**, the participants were limited to three Islamic education teachers (IET) who fulfilled the following criteria:

1. Experienced in teaching KBSM Islamic education for more than five years
2. Had the minimum qualification of a Bachelor’s degree in Islamic education or Islamic studies and a Diploma in Teaching
3. Participated voluntarily and agreed to be observed, interviewed and recorded
4. Was teaching Islamic education to Form Four students

### **Research Location**

The schools involved in this study consisted of a regular secondary school (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*), a technical secondary school (*Sekolah Menengah Teknik*) and a boarding school (*Sekolah Menengah Berasrama Penuh*). All three types of secondary school were located on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. Each of the Islamic education teachers taught in one

type of secondary school. The study was conducted in three classrooms that consisted of Form Four male and female students. There was no particular criteria in choosing the students except for the level of study, Form Four. The students were involved in this study as their teacher had preferred to be observed in their class.

According to Jorgensen (1989) and Creswell (2008), qualitative studies take a long time to conduct; therefore, the study provides more freedom to the researcher to make decisions on research location based on the research questions. The phenomenon also needs to be studied because there is no perfect or ideal location. They also argued that the study area depended on the problem statement. In this study, the researchers wanted to explore Islamic education being as it was being delivered through Islamic morality, so different schools were selected for wider information and variety.

### **Data Collection**

This study focussed only on the approach of Islamic morality practised by Islamic education teachers during Islamic education teaching and learning. Therefore, all methods of data collection were related to teaching and learning sessions inside the classroom. The data were collected through observation, interview and document analysis. These methods were used to document the practice of Islamic education teachers in applying ETAIM for the purpose of teaching and learning Islamic education curriculum among Form Four students.

The non-participant observations were

conducted five times for every teacher who was teaching two periods of 40-minute classroom sessions, which worked up to 80 minutes of classroom observation for every teacher. All the teachers were observed for a total of 6 hours and 30 minutes. The teachers were also interviewed. Formal interviews were completed before and after the observation, while informal interviews were carried out when the teachers were on their way to the classroom or during recess time. Semi-structured interviews took place with the purpose of answering the following questions:

1. What are the features of *akhlaq* applied by the teachers in the Form Four classroom based on ETAIM?
2. What are the sources of reference that the teacher chose to help her/him in implementing ETAIM in the Form Four class?

Finally, document analysis was done for data triangulation. The researcher reviewed documents from the Chairman of the Islamic Education Committee, Assistant Principal of Academic Affairs, teachers of Islamic education and the Form Four students involved in the study by perusing the Description of Curriculum, textbooks, teachers' lesson plans, notebooks, students' exercise books and circulars.

### Data Analysis

All sound recordings in this study were manually transcribed. Creswell (2008) asserted that "the organization of data is critical in qualitative research because of the

large amount of information gathered during a study." Therefore, all transcribed data were systematically arranged and categorised.

In qualitative research, coding is a systematic way to expand and refine the interpretation of data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). According to Othman Lebar (2005), "through the repeated readings and monitored of the transcription, researcher can identify as many data units that give meaning and then marked it with a specific code."

Although data filtering is done during data collection, a final review should be done. In the early stages screening involves selecting important points, while encoding takes place in the final process (Faredah Mahadi, 1998). Creswell (2008) stated that "the further process of analysing text (or image) in qualitative research begins when you code the data". Encoding is a process that seeks to divide and mark text in the form of elaboration and specifying themes. In this study data were coded based on the purposes of the study. Data that were encoded are presented below.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study answered two research questions.

*Research Question 1: What are the features of akhlaq applied by the teachers in the Form Four classroom based on ETAIM?*

The findings from the observations, interviews and document analysis revealed that all six elements of ETAIM, as outlined

by al- Ghazali, were practised by all the participants in this study. They showed love towards students by employing emotive words such as ‘*sayang*’ (dear) to illustrate affection. They always smiled and did not show negative emotions such as anger or frustration. All three teachers always said ‘Thank you’ whenever students obeyed their instructions, as when they read from their textbook in front of the class or when writing answers on the whiteboard. They praised students with positive comments such as ‘*Bagus!*’ (Excellent!) when students answered questions correctly. In addition, they kept the class cheerful by using humour throughout the teaching and learning process.

According to Sulaiman Md. Yassin et al. (2002) the Islamic education teachers need to resort to humour to keep the class engaged. Shaffe Mohd Daud et al. (2011) found that humor entertains students during teaching and learning and develops close interaction between the teacher and students. Moreover, Abdul Rasid Jamian and Hasmah Ismail (2013) found that some entertainment during study encourages the development of creative and innovative ideas.

Furthermore, sincerity was observed before teaching and learning took place when all the participants were seen to quicken their steps to get to class as soon as the bell rang or when they noticed that the next class was about to begin. In the classroom, they were seen to be committed to ensuring that the students understood the lesson. They were also fair in their treatment

of the students. Sincerity among teachers, according to Abdullah Ishak (1995), can be developed through religious practice, and gradually produces outstanding teachers.

As for advising students, the researchers found that all the participants always advised their students. They infused the element of giving advice in the teaching and learning process, as well as motivated the students to progress in their studies. Maimun Aqsa Lubis and Roslan Aspar (2005) found that the method of giving advice is an effective method in teaching and learning.

The teachers were also observed to wisely guide their students in correcting mistakes. In addition, the teachers also taught their students step by step, based on their level, proceeding to the next lesson only after the first was completely understood. For example, Islamic education teacher 1 (IET 1) would ask his students, “Okay, do you have questions? Do you understand?” On top of that, these teachers demonstrated knowledge of Islamic requirements in their dressing, behaviour and speech. All were smartly dressed in accordance with the Islamic dress code. The male teacher wore a shirt and slacks, while the female teachers wore *baju kurung*, long scarves that covered their chest and socks.

*Research Question 2: What are the sources of reference that the teacher chose to help him/her in implementing ETAIM Form Four class?*

Observation of the three Islamic education teachers during class showed that all three successfully conducted the

teaching and learning of Islamic education. They understood ETAIM based on the requirements of the national secondary school curriculum (KBSM) as outlined in the Islamic education curriculum. From the interviews, it was found that all the participants used the Description of Curriculum, textbooks and teacher's manual provided by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) as reference and guideline, as well as source of knowledge to conduct teaching and learning in the classroom.

However, the participants also used the *al-Quran*, *as-Sunnah*, *Ijma'*, the stories of Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* and other prophets and Islamic education books as references to implement ETAIM in the classroom. In fact, one participant had taken the extra step of enrolling in a course organised by the State Education Department (SED) entitled 'The Jibril Approach' to enhance personal professionalism. The course, which was on effective teaching, emphasised the Love approach in teaching as introduced by al-Ghazali in his *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. Unfortunately, this course has been discontinued.

## CONCLUSION

Observation, interview and document analysis found that all three Islamic education teachers had understood the implementation of ETAIM in the classroom as outlined in the KBSM Islamic Education curriculum, but they had limited understanding of the essence and values embedded in the Description of

the Curriculum (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2002). The teachers used the Description of Curriculum, textbooks and teacher's manual as their main source of reference to carry out the Islamic education as required by the Ministry of Education as well as other sources. They also used the *al-Quran*, the *as-Sunnah* of the Prophet, which outlines correct Islamic behaviour, and the principles of *ijma'* (agreeing upon or consensus) and *qias* (judgment of an act or belief by application of established principles governing some analogous act or belief) as important references to implement ETAIM. They also referred to the life stories of Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* and other prophets and books on educating children in their teaching. In short, all three participants practised ETAIM in the teaching and learning process and they consulted relevant sources for reference.

It is hoped that this study will encourage all Islamic education teachers to practise ETAIM in the classroom. The Islamic education national integrated curriculum (KBSM) does not only emphasise the cognitive aspect, but also instils affective values in order to produce an excellent generation for this world and the hereafter. When educators realise the importance of ETAIM, not only will they be able to produce students who respect authority, but also most importantly, students who adhere to the commands of Allah SWT, Prophet Muhammad *pbuh* and their parents.

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