



FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS THE
SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ULUL
ALBAB CURRICULUM AS PERCEIVED BY
TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

Integrated curriculum has begun to take a positive lead in the educational development in Malaysia, where memorization of the Quran is integrated into the basic academic and Islamic subjects and is beginning to be implemented in many schools all over Malaysia. This integrated curriculum or commonly known as the Ulul Albab Curriculum has successfully been implemented over the years. However, there are no recent research has tried to evaluate and find the success factors of the curriculum. This study therefore aims to find and assess these success factors through the perceptions of those involved. The study is qualitative in nature. Questionnaires were used as the instrumentation for data collection and were distributed to a total of 220 respondents; 50 teachers and 170 students from Sekolah Menengah Agama Kuala Lumpur. The findings of the study were derived from the obtained results of the questionnaire. The results show that the teachers as a whole perceived every item as a success factor whilst students were more critical in selecting the success factors.

خلاصة البحث

قد بدأ المنهج المتكامل يأخذ زمام المبادرة إيجابيا في التنمية التعليمية في ماليزيا بعد أن كان ينفذ في العديد من المدارس في جميع أنحاء ماليزيا، حيث إن مادة تحفيظ القرآن الكريم تم اندماجها في المواد الأكاديمية والإسلامية الأساسية. وعلى الرغم من أن هذا المنهج المتكامل أو ما يعرف بمنهج أولي الألباب قد تم تنفيذه على مر السنين، ومع ذلك لا توجد بحوث حديثة تحاول التقييم والعثور على عوامل نجاح هذه المنهج الدراسي. ولذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إيجاد وتقييم عوامل نجاح هذا المنهج من خلال تصورات المشاركين فيه. وكانت الدراسة ذات طبيعة نوعية، واستخدمت الاستبيانات كأدوات لجمع البيانات ووزعت على 220 مشاركا من 50 معلما و 170 طالبا من المدرسة الثانوية الدينية بكوالالمبور. وقد استمدت نتائج الدراسة من نتائج الاستبيان التي تم الحصول عليها. وتظهر هذه النتائج أن معظم المعلمين ينظرون إلى كل عنصر من العناصر الموجودة في الاستبيانات كعامل نجاح هذه المنهج بينما الطلاب يركزون أكثر على اختيار نجاح هذا المنهج.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Education (The Teaching of Islamic Education).

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DECLARATION

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I dedicate this work to my beloved parents, YB Dr Hj Md Yusnan bin Hj Yusof and Hjh Romaini binti Mat Daud and to my beloved wife, Nur Syahirah binti Abdul Aris. My love for all of you is unmeasurable. May Allah s.w.t. preserve our relationship and shower us with abundant blessings!

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Islam is developed on the basis of knowledge and information through the Quran, a divine scripture revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Quran serves as a guidance to mankind in every aspect of life including faith, law and morality. Guidance in the Quran acts as foundation fundamental principles in a human's life. Allah s.w.t. s.w.t. has sent the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the last of the prophets, to convey the message of Islam to mankind as a whole. This can be seen in one of the verses in the Quran:

[We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought. (Quran 16: 44)

Aside from those roles, Al-Quran also served as a basis for the establishment of thinking skills and the development of problem solving techniques. As evidence, many verses of the Quran promote and encourage mankind to put on their thinking caps and explore the secrets behind the creation and pleasures of Allah s.w.t., Allah s.w.t. mentions:

Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created? And at the sky - how it is raised? And at the mountains - how they are erected? And at the earth - how it is spread out? (Quran 88: 17-20)

Because the Quran itself promotes thinking and problem solving, it becomes a responsibility of the Muslim *Ummah* to nurture these values among them. Thus, the need to establish a society or a generation of Muslims who fully understands the Quran and its contents becomes a critical need. A generation formed and moulded by the Quran is a generation that can succeed and excel in spiritual elements such as

having the fear of God and building brave and independent souls. This generation matures in providing ideas and making decisions, always producing brilliant ideas for the betterment of the Muslim community.

Islam has placed knowledge in a significant position. This is evidenced by the many verses in the Quran acknowledging this fact. Allah s.w.t. has mentioned in the Quran:

Allah s.w.t. will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah s.w.t. is Acquainted with what you do.(Quran 58: 11)

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1996), knowledge is the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association or the fact or condition of having information. It is also described as the act of being learned. Because knowledge has to be learned, to attain it means to educate oneself and the very definition of education is acquiring knowledge and development resulting from an educational process (Merriam-Webster, 1996) and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. Education has many streams and Islamic education is one of the forms of education. Islamic education is uniquely different from other forms of education as it encompasses its base solely on the influence of the Quran and the words of the Prophet (PBUH).

Education is a continuing process to develop the skills and potentials of students towards academic excellence and the acquisition of various sets of skills in a holistic and integrated manner. Daud (1995) mentioned that in the 21st century, to produce individuals that are both knowledgeable and diverse is not enough. Education should cater more than that. This includes producing individuals who possess high manners and good etiquettes. Because of this, the education scenario in Malaysia has begun to lean towards an integrated curriculum, especially in 2017.

Islamic education, through integrated curriculums in Malaysia, is now becoming a major factor in shaping the new generation. The development of integrated curriculum based educational institutions in Malaysia has been proposed to allow them to become a catalyst for the development of Islam and the Muslim community in Malaysia. Islam has a strong sense of integration which is emphasized by past histories of the Muslim *Ummah*. Thus, the role and contributions of Islamic educational institutions in producing scholars are synonymous. Scholars and intellectuals were not born by itself but born from the educational institutions that were designed specifically to play the role in developing an integrated society of Muslims, born to be both professionals in modern studies and Islamic studies.

Education plays a significant role in the development of students and will provide them with good directions in becoming better servants of Allah s.w.t. in terms of mental, physical, cultural, moral or practical terms. This is because the development of a good generation needs to be systematically planned according to the teachings of Islam (Afzalur Rahman, 1990).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Malaysian National Philosophy of Education states that:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large. (Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM), 2012).

One of the important things that should be taken into consideration in order to achieve the prescribed philosophy that was set by the Ministry of Education, is a need to have educational institutions that provide a holistic or integrated curriculum in developing holistic Muslim individuals who are competent in both academic, spiritual and professional achievements and also in Islamic attitudes and attributes. Integrating academic and Islamic subjects with the memorization of the Quran, for example, is one of the efforts towards the realization of the National Philosophy of Education.

In Malaysia, the government through People's Trust Council (MARA) and Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) for example, has established a programme or curriculum that integrates the existing educational programme set by the Ministry of Education with the combined syllabus of religious-based education which includes *Tahfiz* and memorization syllabus purposely named as "Ulul Albab". Mohamed (2012) mentions that the name "Ulul Albab" was first introduced and contemplated by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dato' Sri Haji Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi in his speech at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) on 15 November 2006. He said:

THIRD CONCEPT: Developing human capital; through a holistic and quality educational program to equip Malaysians to face the global world; followed by the creation of a creative and innovative society that become components of the first-class minded and first-class cultured citizens. We need a line of people who master knowledge, skills and information.

Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for those who understand. (Ali Imran: 190).

This verse reminds people of the importance of reason. Therefore, human reasoning needs to be developed. The human resource development program is the quest to develop an "Ulul Albab" community, a line of people capable of analyzing, mastering science, understanding philosophy and mastering technology. This verse requires the ummah to equip the mind, so that humans have the ability to deal

with the modern world. Developing an Ulul Albab society comprising of scientists and technologists, entrepreneurs and technocrats is an obligation that allows the ummah to climb the ladder of progress until it reaches the path of success. It is the responsibility of the government to provide infrastructure and provide facilities to produce the Ulul Albab community.

“Ulul Albab” has been defined in many ways. Idris (2006), as cited in Wan Mariana & Mohd Shafiee (2012) defines Ulul Albab as individuals who possess a strong foundation knowledge of Al-Quran, extensive and diverse knowledge as well as able to think and observe events of God's creations through the eyes and sharp mind and eventually learn from it. Meanwhile, Shahran (2006) asserts Ulul Albab as a group of people who are given privilege by Allah s.w.t., and those that are given wisdom and knowledge. Osman (2006) highlights that Ulul Albab are encyclopedic scholars who are the most important individuals who spread the spirit of Islam and mould Islamic civilization based on their ability to master various fields of knowledge (Wan Mariana & Mohd Shafiee, 2012). From these definitions, we can conclude that the Ulul Albab are those who hold the key to knowledge and they are those of understanding. They are also holistic individuals who master various fields of knowledge, resulting in them being knowledgeable and wise.

The Ulul Albab Curriculum (UAC) aims to present a high standard of education which emphasizes on the development of students to be *Quranic*, *Encyclopedic* and *Ijtihadik* after the completion of the course. The vision of being *Quranic* is to be able to produce *huffaz* who can finish the memorization of the Quran in 3 years' time and at the same time, understand the demands of the Quran through the concept of reading, remembering, understanding, thinking, applying and spreading. To be *Ijtihadik* is to be capable of giving people insights to solutions, maximizing the ability of the brain and mind, thinking creatively and innovatively

while to be *encyclopedic* is to be knowledgeable and highly skilled, becoming a reference and master of various fields of science and foreign languages.

The UAC was first introduced in Terengganu by the Terengganu State Government and was implemented in Sekolah Menengah Imtiaz. In 2009, MRSM Kota Putra was selected as the first ever school to apply this curriculum, followed by MRSM Gemencheh in 2010 and MRSM Seberang Jaya in 2011. The curriculum was then taken by the Ministry of Education, reinforced, improved and implemented in government and semi-government schools under the ministry. This new curriculum was named “Kurikulum Tahfiz Model Ulul Albab (TMUA)” or the Ulul Albab Tahfiz Curriculum and was the new benchmark for integrated *tahfiz* curriculum in Malaysia. Formally, TMUA or the new UAC has been on-going for the past three years and counting.

Although the programme has been applied and implemented in many different schools all over Malaysia, only a few studies have been conducted to test out its implementation, for example, the research by Muhamad Isa (2016) but no recent study has been conducted to explore the success factors contributing to the implementation of this curriculum.

In response to this, this study proposes to investigate these factors that contribute to the successful implementation of the UAC as perceived by teachers and students.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the factors contributing to the successful implementation of the UAC.

2. To assess the perceptions of teachers and students towards this curriculum.
3. To investigate the extent of the implementation of the UAC in fulfilling and achieving the objectives and goals that it was set upon.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Specifically, this study answers the following research questions:

1. What are the factors behind the successful implementation of the UAC?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers and students towards this curriculum?
3. To what extent has the curriculum achieved its objectives and goals?

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is done to find and explore the factors that contribute to the successful implementation of the Ulul Albab Curriculum from the perceptions of teachers and students. For this, the researcher has chosen Stufflebeam's (1967) Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) evaluation model as a conceptual framework to guide the research. The CIPP evaluation model is a model that was first introduced by Daniel L. Stufflebeam and his colleagues in 1967. CIPP is an acronym for its four major concepts: context, input, process and product. The CIPP is an evaluation model that attempts to make an evaluation that guides the conception, design, implementation and assessment of educational programmes and curriculums, thus providing feedback and judgement of its effectiveness.

This model was selected by the researcher because it can be used to evaluate existing programmes through its process and implementation and it focuses on the improvement of existing programmes. Thus, it becomes a good framework to work upon and built up in this research. Finally, because the CIPP evaluation model is more

on gathering information and finding solutions to problems, it becomes the arbitration to decision making. From the research data, a conclusion can be made as to whether this curriculum is successful and whether it has reached its prescribed objectives. Consequently, a decision can be made, whether to continue with the existing programme, or to improve it in some ways.

Based on the CIPP evaluation model, the present study focuses on only two major concepts which are process and product. The significance of selecting these two concepts are because the process evaluation stage represents the implementation of a specific programme and the product evaluation stage represents the overall conception of the programme. In other words, investigating and assessing an existing programme requires the researcher to explore these two major concepts of the CIPP evaluation model and conclude the findings based on these concepts.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has been done before on factors contributing to the implementation of this curriculum. Thus, the proposed study is not only useful to the educational scenario in Malaysia - because it can ensure that the implementation of this curriculum is maximized - but it is also timely. Apart from that, this study investigates the extent of the implementation of the Ulul Albab Curriculum in fulfilling and achieving the objectives and goals that is was set upon. With that, this study hopes to suggest improvements for any weaknesses or deficiencies found in the implementation of this curriculum.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of this study, the researcher conducted the survey in Sekolah Menengah Agama Kuala Lumpur (SMKAKL) which is a school under KPM. This research involved 210 respondents. The respondents consisted of 165 students randomly selected from a total of 450 students and 45 teachers thus resulting in the total of 210 respondents.

1.8 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions of terms are used. They convey these meanings.

Ulul Albab Curriculum (UAC) refers to the integrated curriculum established by the Ministry of Education Malaysia which is known as “Tahfiz Model Ulul Albab” or TMUA. This curriculum was once introduced by the State Government of Terengganu to be implemented in their state religious school, Sekolah Menengah Intiaz and was later introduced in other schools under the MARA establishment. The Ulul Albab Curriculum was then taken by the Ministry of Education, reinforced, improved, refined, rebranded and subsequently implemented in government and semi-government schools all over Malaysia under the name TMUA.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of related literature in the field of integrated curriculum such as the Ulul Albab Curriculum (UAC). It is divided into five major sections, beginning with a discussion on the origin of the “Ulul Albab” term from Al-Quran followed by the development of the UAC in general. The third section explains the evaluation on education. The next section looks at memorization and the *tahfiz* curriculum whereas the final section concentrates on curriculum comprehensiveness.

2.2 THE ORIGIN OF THE “ULUL ALBAB” TERM FROM THE QURAN

Islam has placed the human mind in a high place, distinguishing mankind from other creatures such as animals and plants. The thinking process in the mind can be considered one of the most important human characteristics. It is a tool specially graced by Allah s.w.t. to mankind, “We have certainly created man in the best of stature” (Quran 95: 4). The term “Ulul Albab” is an Arabic term which has a close relation to the state of mind and thinking processes of mankind. “Ulul Albab” means ‘those of understanding’ and according to *Al-Marbawi* Dictionary, it consists of two prime words, “Ulu” and “Albab”. “Ulu” in Arabic means to have or to possess and the latter word “Albab” is derived from the Arabic word “lubb” which means a clear state of mind and heart. Those with a clear state of mind are those who can bring benefit to others. The word “Albab” in the Quran usually refers to the fundamentals of the mind or the ability to think, in fact it is a place where human nurture their thoughts and knowledge, and through it they choose and act accordingly. Because of this, Allah

s.w.t. has always associated the fundamentals of religion and being able to fully understand the religion with the term “Ulul Albab”. Allah s.w.t. mentions in the Quran which applies the high priority and a high level of understanding in religion to those who think:

He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good. And none will remember except those of understanding. (Quran 2: 269)

“Ulul Albab” also refers to those who use their mind in the right way. When the Quran refers to someone as Ulul Albab, it basically means those who are knowledgeable, encyclopaedic, master of Fardh ‘Ain and Fardh Kifayah (Abdullah, 2016). Al-‘Uwayyid (2010) mentioned in his book that Imam As-Syafie, when asked about the wisest among Ulul Albab, answered that they are those who are pious and renounce worldly pleasures. He added that they are those whose mind can differentiate between worldly affairs and affairs of the hereafter, and this fact can only be achieved through reflecting upon the verses of the Quran. Abdullah Basmeh (2000), a famous tafsir scholar describes Ulul Albab as those who have intelligence and intellect, who can think and understand. Hamka (2007) on the other hand, a known scholar from Indonesia applied Ulul Albab to those who think deeply and those who possess deep understanding.

Through these definitions, we can conclude that Ulul Albab are not common and ordinary human beings but rather ideal humans as pictured and described in different verses of the Quran.

Efendi (2014) mentions that the word “Ulul Albab” is cited in the Quran 16 times, scattered inside ten Surah, namely: Al-Baqarah [2]: 179, 197, 269; Ali 'Imran [3]: 7, 90; Al-Maidah [5]: 100; Yusuf [12]: 111; Al-Ra'd [13]: 19; Ibrahim [14]: 52;

Hud [38]: 29, 43; Al-Zumar [39]: 9, 18, 21; Al-Mukminun [40]: 54 and Al-Talaq [65]: 10.

Many Muslim scholars have agreed that anything that is repeated in the Quran and Hadith indicates its importance. Hasanah (1981) stated that the word “Ulul Albab” is mentioned in the Quran 16 times. Thus, the citation of the word “Ulul Albab” 16 times in the Quran is a true sign of its significance and prior importance.

2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ULUL ALBAB CURRICULUM (UAC)

The UAC is a curriculum specially designed to cater to the needs of the society for balanced, progressive and professional individuals who at the same time are knowledgeable in Islamic sciences and memorizers of the Quran. The UAC was first implemented in Sekolah Menengah Imtiaz Yayasan Terengganu (Norhazriah, 2012). It was implemented in Sekolah Menengah Imtiaz Yayasan Terengganu for 16 years, then implemented in a few MRSM schools for six years. Now, once again, it has been introduced in schools under Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia as Tahfiz Model Ulul Albab (TMUA). TMUA has been on-going for three years since early 2014.

Before the UAC was renamed and introduced in government and semi-government schools, it had gone through many steps. In the beginning, a similar curriculum was implemented in State Government Schools (Sekolah Agama Negeri) and State Islamic Schools (Sekolah Agama Rakyat). When these schools were taken by the government and named Semi-Government Islamic Schools (Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan), these curriculums were incorporated together and named Islamic Integrated Curriculum (Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini or KBD) and Tahfiz Integrated Curriculum (Kurikulum Bersepadu Tahfiz or KBT). Through the last meeting of the Education Planning Committee no.204, 1/2014 that was held on 24th February 2014,