



SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
THE TEACHING OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AT
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC SCHOOL MALAYSIA
(IISM)

BY

MUSAH ALHASSAN MUSAH

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ABSTRACT

Despite the importance and increasing need for quality teaching methods and their positive impact on Islamic studies students of today, there is a perception that Islamic studies teachers are still using traditional teaching approaches to teach Islamic studies, such as memorization, drilling and rote learning. The aim of Islamic studies should be to produce good Muslims who are intellectually, mentally, emotionally and physically capable and so the teaching methods used by Islamic studies teachers need to promote this. This study set out to investigate the views of students on the methods used by their Islamic studies teachers at the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM). The researcher used a quantitative research methodology to collect data at IISM Secondary by means of a survey. The sample comprised of 196 students from various levels and ethnic background. The findings of the study reveal that Islamic studies teachers in fact use a combination of both traditional and modern methods to teach Islamic subjects.

خلاصة البحث

على الرغم من الفوائد المهمة وزيادة الإقبال على جودة طرق التدريس وأثرها الإيجابي على طلاب الدراسات الإسلامية اليوم، هناك تصوراً بأن بعض معلمي الدراسات الإسلامية لا يزالون يستخدمون الطرق التقليدية لتدريس المواد الإسلامية، مثل أساليب التحفيظ والتدريب والتعلم عن ظهر القلب. مع أن التربية الإسلامية تهدف إلى تخرج الفرد المسلم الصالح فكرياً وعقلياً وعاطفياً وجسدياً. وطرق التدريس المستخدمة من قبل معلمي الدراسات الإسلامية تحتاج إلى تعزيز ذلك. هذه الدراسة تهدف للتحقق من وجهات نظر الطلاب حول الأساليب المستخدمة من قبل معلمهم للدراسات الإسلامية في المدرسة الإسلامية الدولية ماليزيا. واستخدم الباحث المنهج الكيفي لجمع البيانات من المدرسة الإسلامية الثانوية الدولية ماليزيا. شملت العينة 196 طالباً وطالبة من مختلف المستويات والخلفيات العرقية. والنتيجة التي توصلت إليها الدراسة تكشف في الواقع أن معلمي الدراسات الإسلامية يستخدمون مزيجاً من الطريقتين التقليدية والحديثة لتدريس المواد الإسلامية.

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.

.....
Abdul Shakour Duncan Preece
Supervisor

I certify that I have 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.

.....
Muhamad Zahiri Awang Mat
Internal Examiner

This thesis was submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education.

.....
Tahraoui Ramdane
Head, Department of Curriculum
and Instruction

This thesis was submitted to the Kulliyah of Education and is accepted as a fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education.

.....
Nik Ahmad Hisham Bin Ismail
Dean, Kulliyah of Education

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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This research work is dedicated to my dear and beloved parents and wife, Ayishah Ibrahim Pamataq, Alhassan Musah Yalcouye, Fauziatu Ali, parents in law, Hj. Ali Yalcouye, Hjh. Maryam Saeed Yalcouye, my kids Maryam and Alhassan Musah, my siblings Ahmad, Umou, Abdallah, Maryam, Ibrahim, Abdul Rahman, Abou Nantumbe, Hafsa and Bilqis. My Ant Hawa Yalcouye. My friends, Abd. Rawuf, Zemani, Dr. Borhan, Baba Salam and Poopola, Mr Idris Khan, Asim, Alim, Ismaeel Labze and Sh. Abdul Halim, who have loved, cared, provided and supported me with all I needed in my Master's journey. May Allah bless and reward them abundantly.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The importance of education in general and of Islamic education in particular, is stated in the Malaysian education philosophy:

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further development of 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 God. Such an effort is destined to produce Malaysian citizen who are capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the nation at large (MoE, 1993). As stated in the Malaysian National Philosophy of Education (<http://www.moe.gov.my>, 2016) (Sidiq Baba, 2009.p. 89).

The aim of Islamic Education is to produce Muslim who are knowledgeable, devoted, pious, well-mannered and who also have virtuous characteristics based on Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah to become the righteous servants and vicegerents of Allah and contribute to civilization of race and nation (Ab. Halim Tamuri, 2007, p.2).

The goals of Islamic Education as well as its curriculum, teachers and teaching methodologies need to be re-examined. The latter is needed because teaching methodology is one of the crucial factors in educating students, thus, some revitalizing is necessary to cultivate good behaviour in students. (Rosnani, 2005, p.5).

Endowed with a balanced development of the total behaviour of man through preparation of the human strength, intelligence, coherent identity, feeling and physical sanity. The teaching conveyed to a Muslim must be such that faith is instilled into the whole of his personality and generates in him an affecting connection to Islam. (Al-Attas, 1980, p. 87)

Mamat (2003), argues that there is a need for religious education in Malaysian schools. The idea was first realized by a committee set up in 1960 to review the 1956

Razak Report. One of the committee recommendations was on religious and moral instruction.

The Malaysian government has emphasized the inculcation of ethics and spiritual values into every single student in Malaysia as it has been stated in the Malaysian Educational Blue print.

The education system will inculcate strong ethics and spirituality in every child to prepare them to rise to the challenges they will inevitably face in adult life, to resolve conflicts peacefully, to employ sound judgment and principles during critical moments, and to have the courage to do what is right. The education system also seeks to nurture caring individuals who gainfully contribute to the betterment of the community and nation. (Blue print, 2013-2025).

As regards, private religious primary and the secondary school in Malaysia, they must all comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum prescribed under the Education Act (1996) together with the provision of private pre-school education therein. (Mida, 2012).

The study was conducted at the International Islamic Secondary School Malaysia (IISM). The International Islamic Secondary School in Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia, is a private Islamic school that was established in September 1998. It has a population of 400 students in 2016 enrolled in grade 7 to grade 11 with students coming from all parts of the world. The curriculum of IISM, for grade 7 to grade 9 consists of: Mathematics, English language, Islamic Studies, Al-Qur'an recitation & Tahfiz, Arabic Language, Geography, History, Science, Physical Education, Computer studies and Malay Language, whereas, students in grade 10 to 11 study Science, Humanities or Arts, Islamic studies, Mathematics, English, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Add Mathematics, Information Technology, Geography,

Accounting, History, Biology, Business, Malay, Arabic, French and Information Technology. The aims and objectives of IISM are:

1. To emphasize, integrate and balance human development, intellectual, physical, spiritual, moral, emotional and social.
2. To base education on the Islamic worldview anchored in Tawhid (the unity of God). Spiritual and character education is regarded as equally important as Intellectual education.
3. To arouse curiosity and wonder in students and inculcate important values such as sincerity, honesty, trustworthiness, self-reliance, excellence and responsibility.
4. To enhance students' spirituality through wonders of the natural world, congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation and memorization, Qur'an studies, *halaqah* (study circle), and observe Islamic *adab*. (www.iiium-schools.edu.m.) (2014).

IISM was ranked top 5 among Cambridge schools in Malaysia in 2004, and received ISO certification in 2003 as a balance holistic model Islamic school.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rise or decline of Islamic values among secondary school students in the modern world is a constant concern of society. It should also be noted that the best pedagogy for teaching Islamic subjects at different levels of ability of studies is still unclear. There may be a need for more cooperative learning, inquiry and discovery learning in order to internalize Islamic values. The aim of Islamic studies is to produce good Muslims, but are the teaching methods used by Islamic education teachers effective? The authorities and educators call upon policy makers and the government to find a

solution to this problem by reforming Islamic education and its curriculum as well as the methods of teaching.

Rosnani, (2012), argues about the method of teaching religious science, she highly stated that:

The teaching of religious sciences must not be too dependent on traditional methods such as memorization of classical texts only although certain fundamental knowledge need to be memorized. Students must be exposed to the process of learning including the scientific method and problem solving, and not just the product. (p.171).

There are a lot of studies and researches about Islamic education in schools, for example, Reasons for School Children's Poor Attitude towards Islamic Education, an Islamic concept of education and Factors Affecting Students' Interest in Learning Islamic Education, authors such as Mustafa, (2012), Halsted (2004) and Sahari (1999) have been great contributors. However, few studies or researches have been done on students' perception of teaching methods used in private secondary schools. This is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature and shed some light on Islamic education students' views of the teaching methods used by Islamic studies teachers.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study is an attempt to examine the views of students on the methods of teaching Islamic studies to the secondary school students of the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM). The objectives of the current study are:

- 1- To discover students' perceptions about the methods of teaching Islamic subjects at (IISM) Secondary, by referring to the behaviourism, constructivism and humanism approaches.

- 2- To investigate the most common methods used by Islamic studies teachers to teach Islamic subjects at (IISM) Secondary, by referring to the behaviourism, constructivism and humanism approaches.
- 3- To determine whether gender or nationality affect students' perceptions about the teaching of Islamic studies in IISM Secondary, by referring to the behaviourism, constructivism and humanism.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the light of the above research objectives, this research aims at answering the following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions about the methods used by Islamic studies teachers to teach Islamic subjects at (IISM) Secondary, by referring to the behaviourist, constructivist and humanist approaches?
2. What are the most common approaches used by Islamic studies teachers to teach Islamic subjects at (IISM) Secondary, by referring to the behaviourism, constructivism and humanism?
3. Does gender or nationality significantly affect students' perceptions about the methods used by Islamic studies teachers to teach Islamic subjects at (IISM) Secondary, by referring to the behaviourism, constructivism and humanism?

The following null hypotheses relate to research question three:

1. Ho3a: Gender does not affect students' perceptions about the methods used by Islamic studies teachers to teach Islamic subjects at (IISM) Secondary, by referring to the behaviourism, constructivism and humanism.

2. Ho3b: Nationality does not affect students' perceptions about the methods used by Islamic studies teachers to teach Islamic subjects at (IISM) Secondary, by referring to the behaviourism, constructivism and humanism.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Theoretically

It is hoped that this research to raise awareness about the teaching methods used by Islamic studies teachers in a private Islamic school to help school management and teachers to improve teaching methods used for Islamic studies.

1.5.2 Practically

The study may help teachers to improve the practice of teaching method of Islamic studies. Furthermore, it is also anticipated that the findings of this study would enable curriculum designers, educationists and stakeholders to revisit the methods used by Islamic studies teachers. It is important that learning is not only about getting grades, but rather it is more about internalization of knowledge by means of engaging students mentally, emotionally, spiritually, practically and morally.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is limited to only secondary school students of International Islamic School (IISM) and teaching methods of only Islamic studies teachers will be examined.

1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.7.1 Islamic Studies

The concept of Islamic studies does not involve knowledge only but also actions that are usually considered necessary for Iman (faith) and Amal Al-Salih (virtuous action), side by side with theoretical knowledge emphasizing the applied aspects of knowledge (Khan, 1987 as cited by Mohd et. al., 2011). Islamic studies at IISM Secondary includes Tafsir, Hadeeth, Fiqh, Seerah and Islamic history.

1.7.2 Traditional Approach

In the traditional approach to teaching Islamic Studies, students are expected to blindly accept the information they are given without questioning the instructor (Stofflett, 1998). In Islamic studies class, the traditional approach of teaching refers to lectures, memorization, repeating facts, writing short notes and straight forward reading the text books.

1.7.3 Modern Approaches to Teaching

In the modern approach to teaching Islamic Studies, teachers let students engage in the teaching learning process in classroom. This allows students to strengthen their relations amongst the students and help to inculcate Islamic values. For example, taking the student as your own child, friend or mate, dividing the student into small groups, giving them a task to accomplish and making teaching and learning as dialogue in the classroom.

1.7.4 Progressive Approach to Teaching

Progressive education is a pedagogical movement that emphasizes student-centred learning experiences which incorporates different aspects such as learning by doing, valuing diversity, integrated curriculum, problem solving, critical thinking, collaborative learning, social responsibility, democracy, and lifelong learning (Waks, 2013).

In Islamic studies class, the Progressive approach of teaching would give students more freedom to express their opinions and ideas, respect the differences between students and teachers point of views on an issue.

1.7.5 Essentialist Approach to Teaching

The essentialist approach to teaching emphasizes development of the mind and core curriculum where reality is based on the physical world (Erkilic, 2008). In Islamic studies class, the essentialist approach of teaching refers to teaching Islamic studies students the issues relating to the modern world and reality of the modern world challenges and shows students how to face them in real life.

1.7.6 Learner Centred Approach to Teaching

Student-centred learning is an approach that poses questions to students, who then work together in small groups to discover one or more solutions for the questions (Yager, 1991). In Islamic studies class, a student-centred approach would allow students to speak out, talk about their ideas and opinions, ask questions and solve problems while working in small groups.

1.7.7 Teacher Centred Approach to Teaching

Teacher-centred instruction refers to the approach where the teacher controls what is taught and under what conditions it is to be taught (Aun, n.d.). In Islamic studies classes, a teacher-centred approach is used with the whole teaching responsibility being on the teacher. Students do not have any opportunity to speak out and ask questions, they must listen to the teacher from the beginning of class up to the end.

1.7.8 The Behaviourist Approach to Teaching

“According to the behaviourism, teachers have many rewards or reinforces at their disposal, including praise, a smile, a touch, stars, or candies. In some schools, money or tokens are used as reinforcing mechanisms.” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p.215).

In Islamic studies class, behaviourism approach to teaching deals only with lectures where students only memorize, repeat facts, write short notes, read their text books reward and punishment.

1.7.9 A Constructivist Approach to Teaching

Students must construct knowledge in their own minds. The teacher can facilitate this process by teaching in ways that make information meaningful and relevant to students, by giving students opportunities to discover and apply ideas themselves, and by teaching students to be aware and consciously use their own strategies for learning. Teachers can give students ladders that lead to higher understanding, yet the students themselves must climb these ladders.” (Salvin, 2009, p.231).

In Islamic studies class, a constructivist approach to teaching refers more to student centred learning which is not just about memorizing but rather for students to really be able to apply the knowledge by themselves so that they are able to discover knowledge, discover things and work to resolve problems all by themselves. The aim

of education is not to just pour information into the student's brain, but to engage students' minds with powerful understanding and concepts.

1.7.10 A Humanistic Approach to Teaching

“Disciples of this school of thought mostly want to make children feel better about themselves. To accomplish these goals, followers say that first we need to accept each child as unique and as possessed of individual feelings and ideas, and that, second; we need to help him perceive himself and others as worthwhile and able. Teachers with such an orientation truly believe that “each child counts” and that “each child can do it in his own way.” (Donald et al., 2009, p.94).

In Islamic studies classes, the humanistic approach to teaching focuses more on human centred learning where everything in teaching and learning must respect human nature and encourage dignity of human beings such as social life, human needs, an individual's potential, self-actualization, healthy human personality as well as the idea that human beings are different from other species.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Students' perception of teaching Islamic studies is a crucial issue. Knowing students' point of view about the teaching of Islamic studies will help Islamic educators revisit their teaching styles. The effectiveness of teaching relies on its methods of teaching. Are Islamic studies teachers using effective teaching techniques to teach Islamic studies? What kind of teaching styles are they using to teach Islamic subjects? What are the most common methods used by Islamic studies teachers to teach Islamic subjects? Education from the Islamic viewpoint is a long life process. Teaching methods used to teach Islamic studies must therefore be effective.

If Islamic studies teachers rely more on lecture and memorization using a traditional way of teaching Islamic subjects, rather than the modern techniques subjects, which encourages discussion, thinking and problems solving individually and collectively. Then they are more likely to be successful in engaging their students and getting the point across.

The three research questions of this study attempt to analyse the teaching styles used by Islamic studies teachers at the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM) to see what sort of methods they are using and which of those are more prevalent in Islamic education classes.