

The Use of ICT in Teaching Islamic Subjects in Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract: - This paper examined the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in teaching Islamic subjects in religious schools. Besides that, this paper also studies the IT usage in teaching Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) subjects in secular schools (non-religious or normal schools). Religious schools also known as Islamic School are managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs while secular schools are managed by the Ministry of Education and other private organizations. However, the curriculum of Islamic and IRK subjects are controlled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In 2008, the Ministry of Education introduced a new education system known as SPN21 or *Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad 21* (21st Century Brunei Education System). In the system, IRK become one of the 'core' subjects, means that every student must take IRK at all level. The primary objective of adopting SPN21 is to form the balanced individuals; the Muslims become better Muslims and non-Muslims become better citizens, so that they can live harmoniously towards developing the countries. SPN21 also emphasized the importance of making schools conducive for learning and one factor that contributes in learning process is the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT is used as a teaching aid possibly in the demonstration aids and discussion. More prevalent use of ICT by Religious Education teachers may be achieved by educating the work force (mostly Islamic teachers) who incidentally did not have prior knowledge of ICT. In Islam, the use of modern technology is encouraged as it helps towards the development of positive thinking, the ability to innovate and to trigger the drive for self-improvement.'

Key-Words:- ICT and Islamic subjects, Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK), Muslim citizens, Teachers' Training, Teachers' role.

1 Introduction

The ICT era in Brunei education starts in 1984, Brunei Shell donated BBC computers to some selected government secondary schools. These computers were used in computer appreciation clubs. Awang Semaun Secondary School became the first school to introduce computer studies as an optional subject at the upper secondary level in 1986. It takes 10 years for the Ministry of Education introduced the Educational Information System (EIS) as an initiative developed to replace a PC-based Educational Statistic System in 1997. The Ministry of Education through the government has spent a total of B\$20.7 million in the implementation of ICT initiatives [2][3]. It is estimated that with e-Government initiatives such as the e-Education flagship, an estimated total of B\$145 million would be spent under the Ministry of

Education's five pillars of strategic ICT programs by 2005- *Courtesy of Brunei Year Book.*

The rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and related technology during the last few decades has made significant impact in transforming many aspects of education in general and higher education in particular [1]. The government announced that religious school was made compulsory for Muslim children. It is consistent with one of the Ministry of Religious Affairs objectives, which are to inculcate Islamic teachings among children so that they become better Muslims. Besides that, the vision of Ministry of Education is "Quality education towards developed, peaceful and prosperous nation" while its mission is "To provide holistic education to achieve maximum potential for all" [2]. It shows that education including Islamic education is

important in order to achieve the development of countries and peaceful.

Islamic subjects taught in religious schools, among others include al-Quran, Fiqh (Islamic Teachings), Tauhid (Belief in God), Islamic History, Tasauf (Spiritual Knowledge), Amali (Religious Practices) and Jawi Reading and Writing (Using Arabic Scripts/alphabets). While IRK subjects are include Tafsir (Spiritual Knowledge) and Hadith (Prophet Muhammed's Sayings and Practices), Fiqh (Islamic Teachings), Islamic History, Tasauf (Spiritual Knowledge) and Amali (Islamic Practices).

Since 2002, every school in Brunei Darussalam is equipped with a networked multimedia computer laboratory under 'Internet for Schools Project' [3]. The ICT Project for Phase I covers 50 schools, in which they are provided with 13 computers and a laboratory. Under this project, students are able to use and access some basic functions of computers. In 2000, the computer project was widened with the addition of several more computers. In Phase II, each school receives at least five more computers. At the same time, 146 teachers are trained on the basic usage of computers.

The vision of the in Brunei Darussalam e-education strategic plan is "Transforming Brunei Darussalam to a more knowledgeable, thoughtful, multi-skilled, competitive and smart nation based upon the teachings of Islam according to *Ahli Sunnah Wal Jamaah*"[1].

The Strategic Plan stipulates the need to have a comprehensive policy on the development of an e-campus, managerial organization to manage the technologies, administration and management, to develop a work culture utilizing ICT in teaching, learning and research.

The basis strategic planning in Brunei education is to allow access to all e-education in building the excellence of human capacity. e-learning system that will provide a dimension of scientific applications concepts and added knowledge in the learning environment and effective teaching. Most of the schools have appointed two operating teachers for the computer class. There are no special full-time computer teachers to conduct this class. At that time, almost all schools are using the computer laboratories and start the learning and teaching syllabus with the basics of computer to the students.

In a study on "The Impact of In-Service Course in Primary Teachers in Brunei" observed that children are mostly required to listen to their teachers' explanations and copying notes from the board. [4][7]. Teacher in Brunei were unquestioned

authoritarian purveyors of accepted knowledge [4][7]. This will created passive students and lack of communications, thinking, creativity and innovative.

Studies show that teachers do have positive perceptions and attitudes about using ICT in teaching [5] and [6]. The questions are: (i) How do teachers implement ICT in teaching? And (ii) what are the factors that influence their use or non-use of ICT in teaching? [3]. The possible answers are to be discussed in the last part of this paper. For the purpose of this paper Islamic or religious education refers to both religious schools and IRK and vice versa

2 Steps to Encourage Teachers to Use ICT in Teaching

2.1 Teachers' Education

It is significantly importance for the teachers to understand the skills and knowledge required in the ICT era. Priorities for future development and to establish ICT is essential to encourage teachers to apply ICT where appropriate in their professional lives as educators, as education analysts, school managers and towards the educational fundamental and principles.

Teachers should be trained not only to believe in themselves in the way of thinking and behavior in line with the beliefs and norms of Islam, but as an example to students that teachers are also compatible with the latest ICT knowledge. Such criteria imply that the selection of future teachers does not rely purely on academic achievements and on self-reliance and good personality but also on their readiness to accept and understand the concept and use of ICT in teaching and learning [8].

To rationalize this initiative, the Teacher Training Institutions have to produce future teachers who will contribute to the growth and development in children's mental abilities in addition to a good personality. Teacher education curriculum should be reformed, and courses such as philosophy of Islamic education, history of Islamic education and others should be added. Teacher should be more likely to establish themselves with the Islamic way of teaching techniques; towards the enrichment of the Islamic spirit and aspirations. Key strategies in improving teachers training are to highlight a child centers with highly active pedagogy and putting learners at the heart of teaching and learning process.

Education in Brunei is a centralized, thus it's religious and socio cultural practice offers new insights in academic research.

On the other hand, nowadays the developments in global networking, IT and internet are great demand in order to support paradigm shift in learning and teaching. With the computer and information technology, it can facilitate to new learners especially Islamic teachers that may have not much knowledge in IT to accelerate the monitoring, assessment, and feedback processes in a very fast and efficient way [10].

There is a drastic need for skilled teachers in the technology-related area and it is envisaged that such a demand could be met by providing training programmed in the teachers training institution setting via e-learning.

SPN21 successfulness is measured by trained teachers in performing teaching and learning subjects that underpinned by "Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) without changing the content of the subject. If teachers are not trained properly, they will not be able to teach effectively in an integrated educational system.

The catalyst for the aspirations of SPN21 was the educators who have strongly adapt in their minds the concepts and objectives contained in the SPN21. The curriculum for teacher education must prepare teachers for the skills needed not only to become a teacher of creative and innovative, but the use of teaching materials and a dynamic lesson plan.

SPN21 integrative curriculum includes education on the Revealed knowledge ('*Ilm Naqliy*') and Acquired knowledge ('*Ilm Aqliy*') are intertwined in harmony. These core principles of the integrative curriculum should firmly hold to teachers wherever they are located.

Furthermore, the government of Brunei Darussalam in the Ministry's Strategic plan 2007 – 2011 has strategies several plans such as flexible curriculum at all levels, new kinds of teachers training and use of ICT to enhance the teaching and learning [2].

Teaching and learning excellent program in which teachers are encourage to employ new teaching styles that promote inquiry learning, cooperative learning and pedagogical tools to engage and motivate students in their learning [2].

2.2 Development and Distribution of Textbooks

The Department of Curriculum Development plays a vital role in the preparation and distribution of the textbooks required as reading material for the SPN21 curriculum. Currently the Department of

Curriculum Development has taken pro-active steps by getting feedback and working with the Scholars who could share their knowledge and skills in religious matters.

2.3 Teachers' Role

The information communication technology (ICT) in education is increasingly recognized as a priority for schools and it changing the teacher's role from information giver to facilitator, counselor, advisor, guide, coach, mentor, resource and technology managers, and mediator to the students. Then, they are expected to undertake formal training to ensure they are proficient in the use of ICT. The principals have a major responsibility to make changes using information and communication technology (ICT) in order to integrate it into learning, teaching and school administration [6].

The task for teachers is beyond teaching and educating students. A teacher's duty is instrumental yet dignified and honoured. In this way teachers' role is expected to change from transmitter of knowledge to facilitators' of learning. It is seen as continuing the Prophet Muhammad's job. In the light of SPN21, his duty is to contribute in the teaching area in achieving the aims and the SPN21 objectives. In teaching and learning process, curriculum and instruction must be reviewed in the light of demand of information and communication technology (ICT)-related technologies, as well as in the pedagogical shift from the teacher-dominated role to the student centered role in the delivery mechanism.

ICT will be the future learning trend, especially by the fast growing Muslim IT literate community. The Internet or Web-based application will be the main instructional and learning mode used in most educational institutions. It will be a challenging process due to their vital role; a teacher should equip themselves with knowledge, skills, good personality, behaviour and attitude to promote themselves as a good Teacher as well as a Muslim with good qualities and characteristics.

The complexity in the development and progress of ICT has a great impact in teacher's profession. It is the teacher's role to help strengthen the society's spiritual needs especially among the students and young generations. This implementation will depend on the level of readiness in terms of the infrastructure and human resources such as experience, skills, knowledge and attitude. Learning is no longer a traditional phenomenon. World has change learning as a process of (1) hands-on creativity process, (2) learning as remembrance

activities and (3) learning as acquire information [7].

Furthermore, the important phenomenon of globalization that is the global break of the natural and cultural borders in combination with the availability of knowledge and information for everybody, in every time, at every place changes dramatically the landscape of what we call “teaching” and “education” [10].

2.4 Co-curriculum Activities

In pursuing the 21st century ICT educated teachers; the co-curriculum activities have its own impact to help expand the student’s physical and mental potential settings in ICT environment. It is a set of activities routinely performed at schools to promote development in knowledge, skills, experience, attitude and personality of the students. Implications for practice of co-curriculum activities, teachers are considered among them that participation in activities provides opportunities for belonging as well as for developing maturity and independence between teachers and student

To fulfill the aspirations of the SPN21, we need to understand several primary principles underlying this education system, which are: (1) Knowledge is of utmost importance for men to cope with life's challenges and to acquire more knowledge for life-long learning and continuous life improvements. (2) Acquiring knowledge will increase one's thinking ability. As a result to this, the students should be able to express opinions and views objectively and to think critically. At schools, students must be trained in various aspects of thinking so that students know how to resolve problems effectively. (3) In relation to good values, SPN21 should necessarily contain some elements of spiritualism, humanitarianism and patriotism. As such the scope of instilling these genuine values is imbedded almost entirely into the SPN21 curriculum to ensure the developments of students with high morals. (4) Promoting the development of the Malay language as the main language for acquiring knowledge and to promote solidarity is viewed as an essential step because it is said that a person’s ability to acquire knowledge is related to a person’s ability in using a language and the language’s capacity to support the knowledge. (5) To instill the culture and habit of being enthusiastic about reading and seeking knowledge. And (6) all subjects must co-exist and integrate well for a rich and exciting learning environment.

All the above principles are possible mechanisms of participation in choosing the content and

approach of learning. Lack of clear definition of ICT in teaching constrains teachers’ perspective on what to be done to improve in the learning process. Teachers definitely play an important role in coming up with modern approach to SPN21.

The concept of ICT began to develop in the early 1970s. However, around those times only a small number of educators truly understood the implications and were aware of the importance and function of technology as a tool in education.

Brunei Information Technology Council assigned to lead and facilitate the strategic development and diffusion of the State-of-the-art technology for the entire nation. ICT is a profession made up of an organized effort to implement the theory, intellectual technique, and practical application of ICT. The government of Brunei is well aware of the importance ICT in the country. On February 13, 2006, the First National Conference on ICT in Education was launched by Pengiran Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Mohammad bin Pengiran Haji °Abdal Rahman, the Acting Minister of Education at the International Conference Centre. The first National Conference carried the theme ‘Enhancing Education through Evolving Technology’ that addresses the nation’s stride towards an e-Education system.

There are two bodies that are responsible to assimilate the technology into Brunei’s Education (i) The Science, Technology and Environment Partnership (STEP) centre – established within the Ministry of Education. This center is aimed at ensuring the opportunity on the development of Science, Technology and Environment education through various activities and programs and (ii) The Department of Information and Communication Technology, Ministry of Education, which is divided into 4 sections: Administration Section, Educational Technology Development Section, Professional and ICT Training Section and Infrastructure and Maintenance Section.

There are a number of reasons why educators are so passionate about using ICT in the classroom: (i) SPN21 provides a great benefit of flexibility in term of storage and use and (ii) Enable access to a variety of resources that are of high quality and relevant to curriculum, i.e. online resources.

Some of the benefits of ICT education experienced in co-curriculum activities at several higher institution be describe as follows; (1) Flexible learning at anytime and anywhere and is permitted, (2) Tools for managing instruction and learning have been created, (3) The issues of large classes has been minimized (4) Learning time can

be controlled, (5) Easy remediation and refection of assessments, (6) Student-centred programmes are emphasized, (7) Support services for video-conferencing instruction are available; and (8) Immediate assists to teaching will be given.

3 Integration of ICT in the Teaching of Islamic Religious Subjects in Religious Schools and IRK Subjects in Secular Schools in Brunei Darussalam

ICT can be surmised as the proper use of Skills and Techniques in Education and while it focuses on the effective transfer of Human Learning, it is not confined to teaching tools/aids only. The teaching and learning process is extremely complex since it involves people with different abilities, needs, and expectations [11]. Therefore appropriate method and skill is needed to make the teaching and learning process effective and interesting.

Teaching Technology or the Technology in Education is a subset of ICT which involves techniques used by teachers or educators to systematically improve the learning of the students. Based on teaching models suggested by Pierce and Lorber (1977) [12] and Sim (1970) [13] teaching has four processes: (i) Preparation of teaching (which includes, among others, aims and objectives of teaching, preparation of teaching aids, etc.) , (ii) Teaching processes (which among others include introduction, actual teaching, conducting classroom activities, questioning techniques, etc.), (iii) The management of the learning process (which includes time and space management, skills in motivating children, maintaining the children's discipline, etc.), and (iv) The rating and assessment of the students and recording and compilation of the source of learning.

ICT has more motives than purely teaching technology since the interrelations of the different domains are geared towards solving the problems faced in the process of teaching and learning. ICT, as applied in Islamic education is an attempt to organize the learning-teaching process systematically into a curriculum with proper learning phases for optimal quality of knowledge.

Islamic education in Brunei Darussalam aims to inculcate and foster good value and understanding of Islam and to encourage its practice by individuals. Therefore the use of ICT in the teachings of Islam is important to achieve the aims where factors of piousness in individual's attitude

and members of the society become the curriculum's central agenda.

Teachers act as agents to an effective learning and function to impart awareness to commit and abide by the laws of God the Almighty. Teachers not only teach the facts contained in the syllabus but also indirectly acting as leaders in propagating the values in Islam. They influence, involve and get people into their social life and to make decisions based on the new teaching.

Teachers have to practice using ICT that is appropriate with the needs of Islamic education. The aim is so that the teaching of Islam can be assimilated well into the students' life.

Media is a source that may be used to attract the student's interest and enhance their understanding while prodding them to be more confident in their studies. As an example, the use of the multimedia technology enhances the comprehension of the lecture because of its visual and sound impact on the student. There are many works where multimedia activities are used to support the subject and for class presentations [14]

The usage of media in the teaching of Islamic studies is very important so that the material taught becomes more understandable and presentable and for the students to gain more experience and to enable them to make use of the information easily. Several factors that discourage the usage of educational technology in the teaching-learning process: (i) Attitude Factor: Some teachers, especially those not exposed to the media in Educational Technology think that the requirement as additional workload as well as increase in the preparation time. (ii) Management Factor: Some managers do not give the necessary allocation for teachers to attend related courses. Most schools also face the problems of insufficient availability of the Technology media facilities. (iii) Factor of Space and Place: A Resource Center to station and keep the Equipments or teaching materials is not provided in certain schools.

To increase the potential use of ICT in teaching in Brunei Darussalam, the suggestions are for the Brunei government to allocate enough budgets on ICT materials for the schools and to encourage the Private Sectors to contribute to the educational institutions.

To conclude, in increasing the effectiveness of teaching and learning teachers cannot get away without using the ICT. By using the appropriate and systematic ICT we can gain high quality of education. Nowadays teachers therefore should be alert and adaptable to the development and use of ICT in teaching.

4 The Effect of Using ICT in Teaching Religious and IRK Subjects

Nowadays, schools or learning institute provide computer and IT as the learning material to gain knowledge and experience. Students also more understand during teaching process. Internet especially provides many kinds of information and also be learning tools in educations lines. The objective of the exercise is to prepare them in solving problems. One of the methods is by using multimedia activities. Besides learning, the teachers can attract the students' interest in learning process and they more understand if they learn by using something that will attract their interest [15]. Therefore, by implementing ICT technologies in religious teaching process, it can improve the students' interest and also creativity thinking.

ICT plays some important roles that are to assist teachers in the teaching, provide them with tools to illustrate some points or processes as well as to support long distance educational system. On the part of the students, the importance of the ICT is to enable them to associate between concrete/ tangible facts from the abstract ones, to help promote the students' retention and to facilitate the simulation and recovery phases.

To support the use of ICT, it is important to upgrade teacher's specialization and skill so that they may identify, troubleshoot and overcome various related problems.

The School Resources Center is one of the units within a school functioning in the collection, processing, managing and offering of various administration and educational resources tools. With the establishment of these centers, the goal to upgrade the teaching and learning process in reproducing knowledgeable community may be achieved.

It can be summarized that ICT: (i) May be used as a medium in the teaching and learning to develop a more creative thinking in the Integrated Education process. (ii) It is a form of teaching aids that assists the teachers' presentations and save their time. (iii) Current education system requires more innovative and creative teachers through implementation of ICT. (iv) The Education in ICT should be an important subject in the school curriculum as preparation to face challenges posed in the 21st century.

5 Transformation to ICT for School Management and Administration in Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is currently transforming its system of administration towards the use of ICT in school management and administration. According to the Director of the Examination Board, Ministry of Education, ICT must be integrated into the management and administration of schools and the methods of teaching. During the award ceremony of certificates of application of computer for teachers and workers of Tahfiz Al-Qur'an Sultan Haji Hasanah Bolkiah (ITQSHHB), it was quoted:

"What is important is that teachers need to be trained to become innovative and capable to be creative in the use of the available resources namely: IT and multimedia, language laboratory, method of presentation and information through internet, sharing resources for references and last but not least providing notes."

The Director of the Examination Board also touched on the ability of a person to make use of information for the purpose of the teaching. Nowadays, the related knowledge about how to make full use of the Digital Technology in teaching is a 'must' for any teachers to make them become effective teachers. She stresses:

"The importance of Computers and IT knowledge are important that computers are located in all of the educational institutions. In the other context, the usage of computers is more than just a mere mechanism in the process of learning any subjects."

6 Discussion

Since the launching of SPN2, it is considered as the best Education system since the implementation is referred back to Islam where the Qur'an and *Hadith* as a whole in Islamic education. With the inauguration of the new Education Order 2003, this aims towards an effective, efficient and equitable system of education that is both consonant with MIB; (1) the national philosophy (2) as well as the needs of a modern, technological and ICT age. Education development in Brunei Darussalam has come a very long way.

This education system promotes the idea that any education should contain both Islamic and worldly knowledge. The values should exist in the form of well-planned curriculum, keeping in view the Teachers and the students' education orientation, the teaching materials, the conception of conducive learning environment, and so on. On the other hand, this finding is supported by Tardy (2006) [17]

In the implementation of SPN21 has truly defining quality education for the young Bruneians' of challenge ahead where information technology is essential. Effort has and is still being made to give a good understanding of the Islamic philosophy regardless of ethnic, race, culture and religion. This will take some time for everybody to understand it. Besides the preparation of appropriate textbooks as part of the Teaching material, a continuous effort is also being made by holding courses, seminars or workshop to give the proper and correct understanding to the fellow Teachers.

Based on the studies conducted by Sallimah and Abdullah to find out how Bruneian and Japanese teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards ICT influence their use of ICT in teaching [4] other challenges include:

- (a) Statistical evidence shows that the personal, social and control factors of the TPB (Theory of Planned behavior) model (teachers attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control) can influence a significant part of teachers' use of ICT in teaching.
- (b) Bruneian teachers' use of ICT in teaching is influenced by personal, social and control factors. Firstly, the personal factors that validly and reliability indicate teachers' attitudes towards the use of ICT in teaching are their liking, enjoying and feeling comfortable during teaching when using ICT. Secondly, the social factors or subjective norms that influence teachers' use of ICT are principal and head of department (HOD). Finally, the control factors that influence teachers to use ICT are their capability and having the resources, the knowledge and skills to use ICT effectively and successfully.
- (c) Bruneian teachers mostly used ICT in teaching for supportive purposes such as they assigned students with computer-related tasks that involved them retrieving and analyzing information from the internet; used basic software application such as word processing tools to prepare lessons; and designed and used own student-centred learning materials on the topics they teach using application software such as Powerpoint.

Thus when encouraging teachers Bruneian teachers to use ICT in teaching, these factors need to be thought out carefully in order to make teaching more effective.

In order to make teacher education more Islamic, the former Religious Teachers' College of Seri Begawan was up-graded to college university status

in August 2007. The programmes and curriculum are designed to specifically prepare teachers to teach in Islamic subjects in religious schools and IRK subjects in other schools more effectively.

An important element to take note is that in ICT, the teaching and learning activities has always comprise the integrated knowledge of the mind and the heart. The final result is to eventually produce individuals who are not only academically excellent but also those who are honorable and responsible and to be able to contribute well to the society. Those can be counted as intellectual capital for the society [18].

There are several ICT facilities and services operated, newly operational and ongoing in Brunei such as CRPS, Portal, e-Learning, on-line survey, course evaluation, time tabling, TAFIS, Stock Control Systems and SMS examination result.

In Brunei, the government has set up certain agencies to boost the use of information technology [19]. Such agency may also take the role to train workers in the designated areas and introduce them to electronic communication not only in government offices but also for school administration [20].

7 Closing

For schools where computers are available, the headmaster should advise and encourage the teachers and students to be creative and innovative in using the technology provided [20] This is further emphasized by Nur Izzati a Bruneian school headmaster who wrote in her Master's dissertation that headmasters have a very important role in influencing teachers' use of ICT in teaching (2007) [21]. Other studies need that attempt to look at language use Malay-English bilingual education in Brunei [22].

The Qur'an states "Those people who race to search for good deed, those are the people who will be more advanced. (Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn 18 :61)" [23].

Teachers who are expert in the field of technology should assimilate good spiritual values in its use for Education purposes. They can increase ICT pervasiveness in the working and learning environment and the transformation of the teaching and learning environment where appropriate.

To produce a workforce who are ICT literate and who possess thinking, learning and communication skills to meet the challenges of the 21st century pertaining to issues on economic globalisation and trade liberalization. It is the responsibility of teachers to impart knowledge that does not conflict with the teachings of Islam. Some Islamic scholars

totally object to the idea of using modern technology in fear of its adverse effects to the entire Muslim populace. For this reason some Muslim scholars prefer to use old Media in teaching Islamic subjects in schools although new technologies have been accepted and successful in facilitating the process of teaching and learning Islam in Asian institutions.

Finally this study hope to conceptualize ICT in teaching Islamic subjects regards to new education philosophy in Brunei Darussalam.

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