The Use of ICT in Teaching Islamic Subjects in Brunei Darussalam

MAIMUN AQSHA LUBIS, MELOR MD.YUNUS, ABDULLAH AWANG LAMPOH, NORIAH MOHD ISHAK
Faculty of Education
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi Selangor
MALAYSIA
mal@ukm.my, melor14@yahoo.co.uk

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: - Information and Communication Technology, Islamic subjects, Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK), Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad 21 (SPN21)

1 Introduction
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” [1]. It shows that education including Islamic education is important in order to achieve the development of countries and peaceful.

Since 2002, every school in Brunei Darussalam is equipped with a networked multimedia computer laboratory under ‘Internet for Schools Project’ [2]. 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. 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.

Studies show that teachers do have positive perceptions and attitudes about using ICT in teaching ([3] and [4]). 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? [2]). 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’ Role and Education
Teachers should not only be trained to be confident in their way of thinking and attitude while showing good mannerism in accordance to the pure Islamic values as a notable example to the students but also how to use the latest technology in teaching. 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 [5].

To support this initiative, the Teaching Institution should produce future teachers that are capable of promoting growth and development in the children’s mental abilities besides good personality. The Teachers’ Education Curriculum should be thoroughly analysed, and courses such as Philosophy of Islamic Education, History of Islamic Education and others should be included.

A teacher should use Islamic methods, aspirations and spirit in their teachings for the students to understand and be more inclined to mould themselves the Islamic way.

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 [6].

The SPN21 will not be effective until there are enough teachers trained to teach subjects as outlined in Islam while incorporating “Malay Islamic Monarchy” (MIB) without changing the essence of the subjects. If teachers are not trained well, they would not be able to teach effectively in an integrated schooling system.

Since teachers are catalysts in the SPN21, they should first and foremost understand the concepts and objectives and being able to fit in well into the realm of the SPN21. Therefore the Education Curriculum for the teachers should prepare them for the required skills. Teachers should not only be exposed to the theories and background, but also being trained on how to be more innovative in the preparation of the Teaching materials.

As for the SPN21 Education curriculum, the Revealed knowledge (“Ilm ‘Aqliy’) and Acquired knowledge (“Ilm ‘Aqliy’) should be integrated well. Teachers themselves should receive or undergo their Teacher’s Education training should facilitate their understanding in applying the principles of the SPN21 at the schools where they are going to be assigned.

The 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 [4].

The job of teaching and educating students is the priority of a teacher. A teacher’s duty is instrumental yet dignified and honoured. 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 SPN21objects. To ensure that the SPN21is carried out, the teachers’ role is to translate the curriculum into teaching in the classroom. 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 teacher’s role is made more complex with the development and progress in the field of ICT. Nowadays, it is taken that it is the teacher’s role to help strengthen the society’s spiritual needs especially among the students and young generations. 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” [7]. This scenario reflects the importance of the SPN21 as a means in developing a better generation and mankind, in general.

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 Co-curriculum Activities

The Co-curriculum activities have its own value in helping expand the student’s physical and mental potential. It is a set of activities routinely performed at schools to promote development in knowledge, skills, experience, attitude and personality of the students.

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 lifelong 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 being emphasized in choosing the content and approach of learning. Teachers definitely play an important role in coming up with modern approach to SPN21.

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 [8]. 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) [9] and Sim (1970) [10] 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.

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 [11].

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. 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 [12]. 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.

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 Hasanal 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

Brunei has adopted SPN21 that considered as the best Education system since the implementation is referred back to Islam where the Qur’an and Hadith are used as the main reference. 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
In the implementation of SPN21, 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 [3] other challenges include:

a) Statistical evidence shows that the personal, social and control factors of the Theory of Planned behavior model 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 [14].

The decision made by Brunei Darussalam in realizing the concept of SPN21 is deemed wise, despite facing some great challenges that cannot be underestimated. It is duly hoped that SPN21 can be implemented successfully.

In Brunei, the government has set up certain agencies to boost the use of information technology [15]. 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 [16].

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 [17]. 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) [18]. Other studies need that attempt to look at language use Malay-English bilingual education in Brunei [19]. More prevalent use of ICT by Religious Education teachers may be achieved by educating the work force (mostly Islamic teachers) who incidentally does not have prior knowledge of ICT. The full use of modern technology in the course of teaching is vital since it can increase productivity, effectiveness and overall teaching efficiency. 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. 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)” [20].

Teachers who are expert in the field of technology should assimilate good spiritual values in its use for Education purposes. 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.

References: