

Standardization of Islamic Education Excellence in The World

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article is to discuss several important aspects regarding the standardization of Islamic education excellence. This paper will look at the implementation of Islam education in the Muslim world today. Basically Islamic education in the Muslim world is currently viewed as a subject matter or as an educational system. Generally, three interrelated aspects contribute to the excellence of Islamic education have been recognized, i.e. concept of Islamic education; teaching and learning model; and teacher responsibilities. It is important to note that there are five domains or standards of teacher teaching practices in Islam, i.e. Mudarris, Muaddib, Mu'allim, Mursyid and Murabbi. Research also plays very important role to develop the quality of education system. In improving the quality of education system, the concept of Tawhid and six main principles of methodology of research should be observed in carrying out research. Finally, there are at least five main challenges that have been identified in the implementation of Islamic education system today.

INTRODUCTION

The quest for excellence in teaching and learning of Islamic education is a world-wide concern particularly in the Muslim countries and also in the Muslim minority communities. Today all education institutions such schools, universities and colleges have to respond to the challenge for higher quality in instruction by looking closely at the current nature of the teaching and learning environment as well as current development. It is concurred that the quality of education largely depends on the quality of teaching provided teachers or educators of the institutions. Generally, both in the traditional and modern periods of the development of Islamic education, it is regarded as the utmost important part of Muslim community development. The process of education has a significant relation with Allah and rejects any kind of separation and the relationship with God must always be reflected in the Islamic education system. Based on the current condition, today the role formal education has gradually become more and more significant since it is not only for transmission of knowledge and skills, but is also concerned with social, religious and moral development, which in the traditional Muslim society it mainly was parent's responsibility. Today, most people usually perceive education as school or college as a place provides student with all kind of knowledge, culture and skills. Because of this, we need to discuss the standardization of Islamic education excellence and well to propose ways how developing and improving the quality of Islamic education system today.

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MUSLIM WORLD

Before further discussion, it is very useful to look at several important related terms. Islamic Education is commonly understood as an educational system which seeks to fuse the spiritual and the material aspects of man's growth and imparts a training which infuses faith into the whole personality, creating a spiritual or religious attachment to Islam. This enables an individual to follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah and be governed by the Islamic system of values.

In another definition, Sarwar (1996:9) viewed Islamic Education the process through which human beings are trained and prepared in a concerted way to do their Creator's bidding in this life to be rewarded in the life after death. The First World Conference on Muslim Education (1977) agreed to recommend the aim of education, which clearly emphasizes integrated human development and relation between God and man, as follows:

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of Man through the training of Man's spirit, intellect, the rational self, feelings and bodily sense. Education should therefore cater for the growth of man in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively and motivate all these aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the realisation of complete submission to Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large.

The concept of Islamic education has a close relationship with the Islamic world-view focuses on the discussion of the concept of God, concept of man, concept of universe and prophet hood. The Islamic world-view, which is based on the Islamic concept of *Tawhid*, will, therefore, determine the characteristic of Islamic education. In other words, the whole process of education, according to Islam, must be based on God's principles and the teaching of His Prophet SAW. There is no such division or separation between religious and worldly values and the forms of education must refer to the Qur'anic notion. In other words, Islamic education is a reflection of the Islamic world-view of the role of the human being as the *khalifatullah*, as well as the *'abdillah* (Mohd Sharif Khan, 1994).

Secondly, when we look at the terms "standardization of Islamic education", these terms give us the understanding that it is the process of developing and implementing a certain of standard which has been structured. In other words, it is to bring to or make of an established standard of educational quality. With this standardization, it can help to maximize compatibility or quality in education system. By comparing with an excellent standard, therefore, they must adhere to ensure that all processes associated with are performed within set guidelines and they may evaluate the quality by comparing with that particular standard. When we defining the term excellence as the condition of being superior, we believe the implementation of Islamic education has a state of possessing good qualities in an outstanding degree. It has the state or quality of exceeding or being exceptionally good based on several main criteria which have been successfully established.

Generally, Islamic education in the current educational system may be classified into two types; i.e.:

First, Islamic education as a subject in an education system. For example in Malaysia, Islamic Education is considered as one of the core subjects in the lower and upper secondary levels where all Muslim students are required to take the subject in the national examinations. They can take other subject of Islamic education such as *Tasawwur Islam*, *Al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah* Education and *Shari'ah Islamiyah* Education. At the post-secondary level, there are two subjects regarding Islamic Education offered i.e. *Shari'ah* and *Usul al-Din*. At tertiary level, there are faculties of Islamic studies or Islamic Revealed Knowledge which are offering Islamic studies programme at diploma, degree and post-graduate levels.

Second, Islamic education as an educational system where Islamic education is regarded as a system of the institutions. The curriculums used in these educational institutions are designed based on religious substances, supported by Islamic teaching and learning methods and religious

educational environment, For examples religious pre-schools; religious primary schools; religious secondary school; *tahfiz al-Quran* schools; and Islamic higher educational institutions such as the International Islamic University Malaysia, Islamic Science University of Malaysia, International Islamic University Islamabad Pakistan, International Islamic University, Chittagong, Ar-Raniri State Islamic University Banda Aceh Indonesia and International Islamic College University Selangor, Malaysia, Generally, the curriculums in these institutions emphasize on the integration of Islamic studies, Arabic language with other fields of knowledge.

From the above discussion, in general, we may understand that the position of Islamic education in the present education system is merely recognized as one of the core or elective subjects of an education system. Islamic education is as a part of the curriculum which has equal status with the other core subjects of a curriculum. It seems that the Islamic education is still not a comprehensive education system nor a complete educational process which covers the whole aspect of the development of human beings, i.e. physically, intellectually, spiritually and emotionally. In other words it does not meet the ideal concept of Islamic education as discussed earlier by many Muslim scholars, since it is solely identified or associated with the process of teaching and learning of Islamic studies and the Arabic language.

In fact, this situation has resulted in several difficulties in implementing the concept of integration of knowledge in many Muslim countries. In fact, there is no real form of integration of knowledge in which religious knowledge and the non-religious knowledge are still in different compartments. This directly continues the dichotomy and dualism of education system as well as the mind of Muslim *ummah*.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF EXCELLENCE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are three interrelated key aspects which are regarded as the fundamentals of excellence for any education system, i.e. concept of education; teaching and learning model; and teacher responsibilities:

First; the concept, aims and objective of education. Today, in the process of creating *khaira ummah* as khalifatullah, undoubtedly, Islamic education system has a very significant role as explained by many prominent Muslim scholars. Ab. Halim and Muhamad Faiz (2013a:111-116) has examined the views of Syed Ali Ashraf regarding the concept of education. For examples:, Ashraf explained education as follows:

Education is therefore defined as the process through which balanced growth of the total personality of human being is achieved. According to Islam the end to be aimed at is the attainment of the status of a true representative of God on the earth (*Khalifatullah*) (Ashraf, 1993: 3).

He also insisted several important points in the Islamic education system i.e.:

Faith and knowledge must go hand in hand. Faith is a spiritual gift and knowledge in an intellectual acquisition through the use of man's intellect 'aql. ... Islam does not allow the Muslims to dichotomize life and divide it into that which belongs to God (Divine) and that which belongs to Caesar (secular). Islam wants education to be a process in which curriculum and teaching methods help each individual to unfold its own unique potentiality as a representative of God on the earth. (Ashraf, 1988, 74)

Our interest in the successful execution of faith-based education policy. We want to produce individuals who will become faithful servants of God. ... We want them to believe that sovereignty ultimately belongs to Allah. (Ashraf, 1997,1)

There are also several scholars who have a similar idea with Ashraf such as;

Mozammel Haque (1992:58) who has described Islamic Education as:

... an educational system which seeks to fuse the spiritual and the material aspects of man's growth and imparts a training which infuses faith into the whole personality, creating a spiritual or religious attachment to Islam. This enables an individual to follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah and be governed by the Islamic system of values.

In fact, before that, Al-Attas has also provided (1980:23) a definition concerns questions of ethics, both in the process of education as well as in its contents, in order to attain prosperity in this world and the Hereafter as he argued that:

The end of education in Islam is to produce a good man ... By 'good' in the concept of good man is meant precisely the man of adab in the sense here explained as encompassing the spiritual and material life of man.

Second; Islamic education teaching and learning model. There is a need to produce a standard model of good educational practice of teaching and learning process. According to Sahadat (1997) school is the second level of environment after family in the educational process of children. A recent study has shown that the role of Islamic education teachers in school is more significant than the role of family in terms of the development of student *akhlaq* (moral character) (Mohd Yusof et al., 2011; Ab. Halim Tamuri et. al. 2013). Since school has a vital relationship with students' development, it is useful to examine the role of the teacher as the person who is directly responsible to implement the educational policy and programs at the school level. As Islam is rooted in the concept of *Tawhid* and faith in God, Prophet, and the Hereafter, the role of teachers in Islamic education system has an ethical and religious involvement and implication.

Thus, Muslim teachers should have several characteristics such as a correct understanding and deep knowledge of Islamic teaching; a strong belief and clear understanding of the Islamic concept of *Tawhid*; an observance of proper *akhlaq* with his Creator, other people, and universe; the acquisition and practise of professional knowledge and skills of teaching and learning; excellent and competent leadership skills; and motivation and positive attitude and thinking. That is why in Islam, teachers are highly regarded, since they are not only transferring knowledge and information to their students in the process of teaching and learning, but more importantly they are nurturing and developing the students' faith in Islam and the students' inner development towards the balanced growth of the total personality of human being. In other words, as mentioned earlier, Islamic education is a reflection of the Islamic world-view of the role of the human being as the *khalifatullah*, as well as the *'abdillah*, all having a significant relation to the Islamic concept of *Tawhid*. Thus, it is important to look at the way the concept of *Tawhid* significantly influences the process of teaching and learning (Ab. Halim et. al 2012b). The following Figure 1 puts forward how teaching and learning process of Islamic education should be carried out:

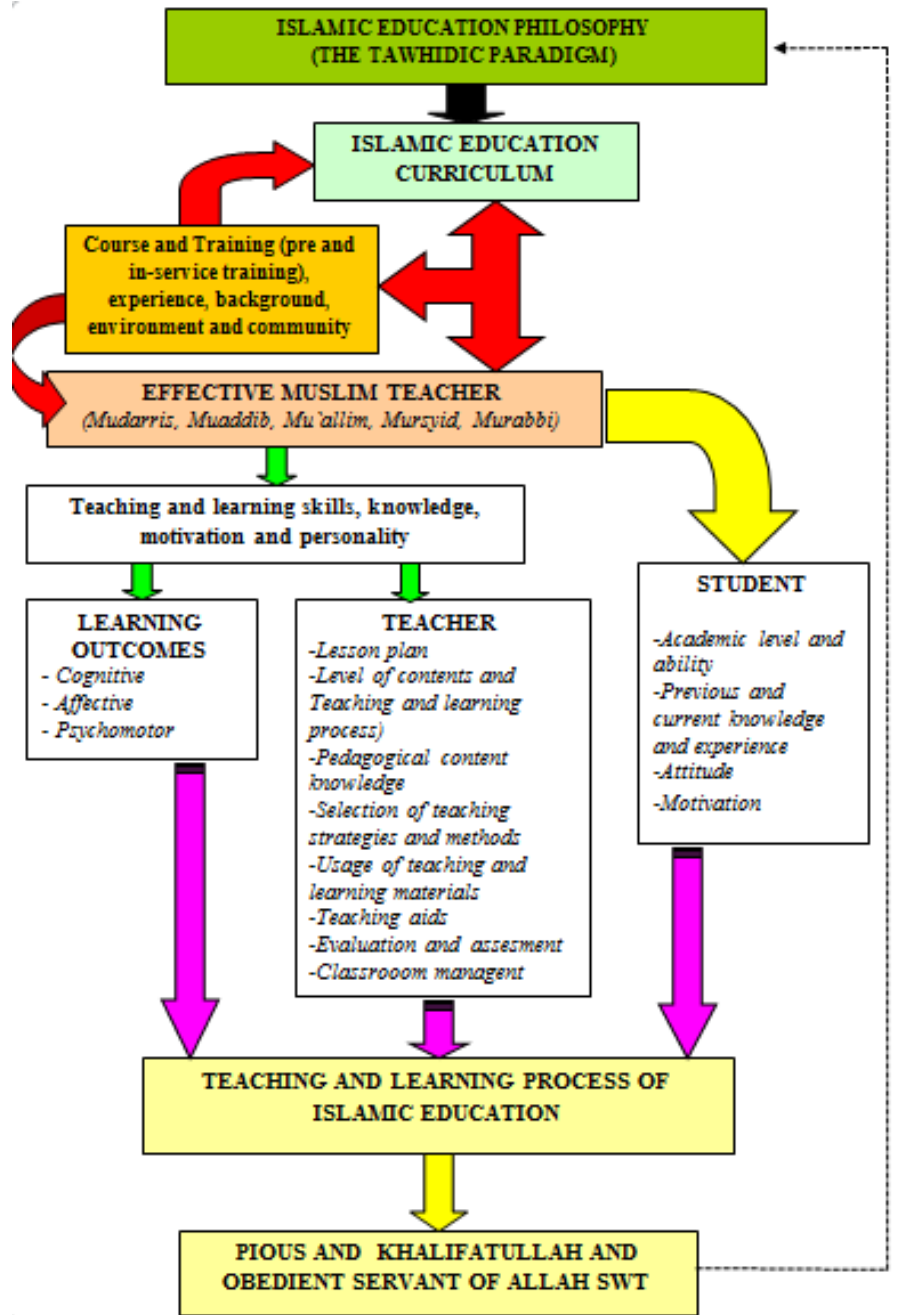


Figure 1: Teaching and learning model of Islamic Education

Third; teacher's responsibilities. From the Islamic point of view, the duty as a teacher is an *amanah* (trust), which must be rightly implemented in accordance with Islamic principles. In Islam the teacher is not merely invested with social responsibilities, but their actions also have more important religious implications. In carrying out their responsibilities, all Muslim teachers, should have a correct understanding regarding the standard concept and role of teachers in Islam. He or she will maximize all efforts in carrying out responsibilities, since he or she is evaluated and rewarded not only by the principal but more importantly by the Creator, i.e. Allah SWT.

A school today may be regarded as a student's second "house" and teachers as second "parents". During schooling term, the majority of our students, especially at the secondary level, usually spend their time at school. A teacher is not simply a transmitter of knowledge, but ideally he or

she is also a guide for his or her students. Every teacher is a role-model for his or her students, and continuously nurtures noble values in the process of teaching and learning. The role of teacher becomes more significant for those who are living in school hostels. Due to an increase of current school activities and extra-curricular programs, the relationship between students and teachers becomes more significant (Ab. Halim et. al. 2013).

As a central part of any education system, teachers should be professionally trained through consistent pre-service and in-service training. They should be exposed to more knowledge, wider experience, and better training, to ensure effectiveness in their implementation of teaching and learning processes. In producing effective Muslim teachers, the concept of tawhid should become its foundation. Since every aspect of a teacher's activities is based on the fundamental concept of the Oneness of Allah, this concept will ensure that the teacher believes that all actions will be evaluated by Allah. The rewards and punishments from Allah are the indispensable factors that should be considered by teachers in carrying out their duties. Furthermore, the teachers should also realize that their deeds, efforts, and actions will significantly contribute to the development and betterment of the ummah, since the ummah's ideological common ground is based on the concept of *tawhid*. The teachers also realize that all their virtuous activities and contributions are *'ibadah* and *al-'amal al-jariyah*. In short, the excellence of any education system primarily depend on the level of excellence of its teachers. A study conducted by Ab. Halim and his research team has identified several domains of excellent teacher in Islam that may be regarded as a standard of Islamic education teachers (Kamarul Azmi and Ab. Halim, 2013). His study has identified five domains of teacher teaching practices in Islam i.e.:

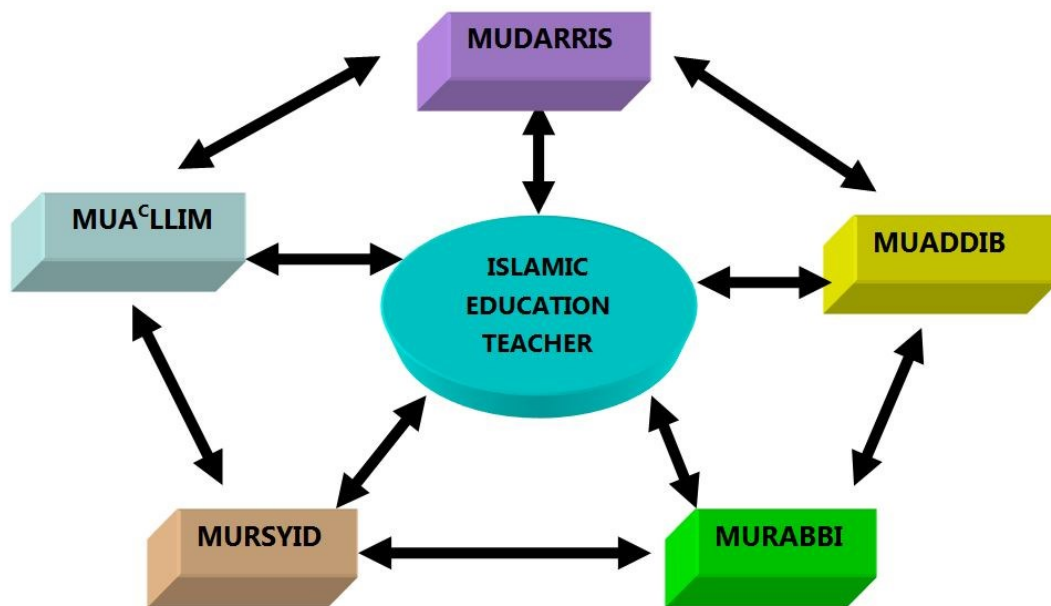


Figure 2: Domains of teacher teaching practices in Islamic education

The following table shows the criteria of five domains or standards of teacher teaching practices i.e. *Mudarris*, *Muaddib*, *Mu'allim*, *Mursyid* and *Murabbi*.

MU' ALLIM	Mastering the knowledge
	Presenting the facts without mistake
	Integrating the knowledge (intra-subject)
	Integrating the knowledge (inter-subjects)
	Mastering the Islamic Education syllabus
	Understanding the current issues
	Encouraging the students' knowledge development
	Stimulating the student's creative thinking
	Knowing the context of content knowledge
	Referring to various sources of knowledge
	Implementing the knowledge within the classroom context
	Explaining certain ideas/concepts clearly
	Mastering the skills of writing Arabic scripts

STANDARDIZATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

In the field of education, research is obviously important to ensure that the education system well planned and carried out by educators. We may understand that research in education should affirm the concept of *Tawhid*, primacy of Allah role of revelation, importance of religious values and benefits for humanity. In Islam, researchers are not excluded from the evaluation of Allah since every activity in this world is counted and they will receive appropriate reward or punishment from Him. Furthermore, they should also have a proper understanding regarding the Islamic concepts of God-consciousness or *taqwa* and worship or *ibadah* as well the noble notion of education in Islam. Therefore, it is very crucial that Muslims should not ignore the philosophy of Islamic research and its fundamental principles of education in carrying out educational research. There are six main principles of methodology that should be understood and observed by all Muslims as the framework of every aspect in their daily lives, including in their educational system (Ab. Halim and Muhamad Faiz, 2013b). They are:

- i. The unity of Allah SWT
- ii. Unity of creation
- iii. Unity of truth and unity of knowledge
- iv. Unity of life
- v. Unity of humanity
- vi. The complementary nature of revelation and reason.

It is suggested that these principles are the lighthouse that guides Islamic mentality, psychological build-up and personality in academic and everyday life especially in the Islamic education system. The six main principles above have been seen to be valid and appropriate for promoting good learning and personal development for students based on the Islamic perspective. Emphasising good educational practice helps focus educators and students on the task and activities that are associated with higher quality of student outcomes. Towards these ends, every educational institution

and educators will need to arrange the curriculum and other aspects of their institution experience in accord with these good practices, thereby initiating and encouraging students put more effort in their learning. This will result in greater gains in such areas as good ethical development, effective communication, responsible human being and pious and *khalifatullah* and obedient servant of Allah SWT.

Therefore, specifically, to achieve excellent level education system, there are several important elements that must be considered in the process to standardize Islamic education i.e.:

- i. Philosophy of Education, aim and objectives of Islamic education – Re-examining current Islamic philosophy of education; learning aims and outcomes
- ii. Teacher education and professional development
- iii. Contents of curriculum – Revising the content of lesson based on integrated approaches (inter and intra field of knowledge) and engaging teaching and learning activities that promote higher levels of student outcomes.
- iv. Pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge – introducing new training based on current needs
- v. Text book and teaching aids – Encouraging teachers' creativity and innovation
- vi. School environment – Developing Islamic religious (*dini*) school environment
- vii. School administration and management – Good governance
- viii. Assessment and evaluation – Integrated and non-exam orientation
- ix. School supervision – Consistent and effective supervision
- x. Student engagement with school, parent and community

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Discussing the standardization of Islamic education, based on recent development in Muslim world, there are least five major challenges faced by Muslim communities, i.e.;

a) Media

The media today can be classified into electronic media and printed media. As the fastest means to transmit knowledge and information, these two types of mass media are widely used all over the world. The misuse of mass media, however, will bring negative consequence to the human beings and the media has become a very powerful instrument in the hands of human beings to cultivate or destroy moral values, to affect and control the minds of people by those who have the power over these media. In the name of freedom and human rights, various big and small companies have started putting up programs with little censorship or restriction. Whether these programs will be good or bad depends on what is meant by good or bad and who determines what is good and what is evil. The main issue that will be mainly discussed here is the contents and programs of these mass media. Generally, the equipment of the mass media itself is not the main problem. Beside the positive elements in the present mass media, there are also many negative facets that have subsequently created challenges in the development of *akblaq* among the adolescents.

Furthermore, the challenge also comes from the radio broadcasting because most of the stations concentrate on entertainment and music instead of informative or human development programme. The development of music in the foreign countries, particularly in the USA, Europe, Korea, China and India (Bollywood), have influenced the music industry in Muslim countries. It might be a side effect of the recent process of globalization. For example, many local composers and artists try to imitate and adopt the recent western musical trends (lyrics and melodies),

showmanship, life style and clothing. Today, there are many heavy metal, rap, blues, pop, hip pop, K-pop and rock single and group artists. In other words, they only became the duplication or reproduction of western music.

Another challenge is the Internet. Undoubtedly, the advancement of information technology gives many benefits in knowledge and education especially through the Internet. This development, however, will bring negative consequences if there is no relevant education, regulation and supervision since anybody can easily get access to any pornographic, deviant and immoral web sites. Printed mass media, which is commonly identified with magazines and newspapers, has also created another challenge towards the development of youngsters' *akhlaq*. In Muslim countries today, there are various types of local and foreign magazines sold to the public consisting of entertainment, lifestyles, computing, business, religion and general information. Many of them such as the television, film, music and lifestyle magazines show or exemplify negative culture and image to the Muslim. It is because most of these magazines contain a lot of immoral and un-Islamic photographs, advertisements, articles and stories. These issues of media will create many obstacles in implementing Islamic education since they will form a conflict of values between school, parent, community and media

b) Authority and Government Policies

Undoubtedly, many Muslim governments have introduced several plans and programs to educate the young generation as well as to overcome the social problems among Muslim adolescents. However, there are many plans and policies in Muslim countries which are not consistent and compatible with Islam, even contradict the main objectives of the Islamic education system. For example, there are a large number of legal and illegal entertainment outlets such as night clubs; discotheques; snooker shops, video games centers; karaoke and laser show centers which are easily found today. Gambling is also another challenge faced by many Muslim communities. Basically, the inconsistency or incompatibility of the government policies have created dilemma among the Muslims since they are exposed to two opposite situations, i.e. i) the positive school environment that educate students to be good individuals, ii) the damaging and un-Islamic circumstances outside school that can attract the students towards negative attitudes. Since most of the students are attracted to the latter environment, the implementation and the effectiveness of the present education system is in doubt.

c) School and teacher

In general, teachers today have several other responsibilities besides their regular duty of teaching the students. In the process of teaching and learning, teachers are responsible to teach, evaluate and guide students; prepare the daily and weekly teaching summaries, attend courses and in service training; prepare and conduct examinations; and mark students' exercises and examination papers. They are also usually appointed as coaches and advisers for the school societies and clubs. In addition, they have to accompany students in any activities outside their school. In terms of school management, teachers generally have several other responsibilities, such as the members of subject committees, student's health and discipline, distribution of textbooks, student records, student attendance, examination results, enrolment, fees, and circulars for parents, and school environment. They also have to deal with the educational authority, parents and their local community. Teachers are commonly involved in several official campaigns. Thus, the job as a school teacher is very complicated since he/she has to implement various types of responsibilities including the clerical duties. Sometimes, these responsibilities and these burdens have overshadowed the ideal roles of teacher. In fact, the situation becomes more difficult in the schools that have a large number of students.

d) **Family and Society**

There are several problems in the present family institution as well as in the society at large that have created challenges particularly in the development of younger generation. For example, there are parents who do not show a good example; fail to recognize importance in the family life; give unrestrained freedom to their children and do not provide sufficient religious education. They also neglect the children's academic performance and school activities; overlook the problems of their children; emphasize merely on academic excellence and provide an excessive luxurious life style for their children. Basically, the negative and detrimental home environment such as the undemocratic family system, domestic violence, quarrels, separation and divorce have compounded the existing problems. There are also parents who ignore their parental duties since they are too busy with their jobs and duties to earn extra incomes for their family. As a result of lack of attention and less communication between parents and children, these negative and loose situations gradually build distance and tension in their relationship. The present family institution has hand over many of its basic responsibilities in educating their children to schools and other people. In fact, some parents feel happy if they can merely give or provide their children with money and the basic needs for school.

e) **Students' negative attitude**

The final main challenge is the students' negative attitudes. Generally, the internal problems among students have significant relationship with the students' negative attitudes as well as the students' misconduct. For example; the negative self-concept such as lack of confidence in themselves, low self-esteem, unclear ambition in life, lack of motivation, uninterested in education, bored with teaching and learning; more concern with work than their education; more interest in entertainment and pleasant life; and inability to manage their time and activities. They found that the above problems have significantly influenced the negative attitudes and misbehaviors among the students such as truancy and leaving school early. The negative attitudes particularly among the Muslim students are also caused by the problems of understanding of *aqidah* and their negligence towards Islamic teaching. For example, there are some Muslim students who fail to fulfil the basic Islamic responsibilities such as the five times daily prayers and fasting, and they are also unable to practice and experience the Islamic ethical values and behaviors. The problem of criminals in some schools have created critical unlawful problems since they have been involved in bullying, fighting, asking for protection money from other students and threatening teachers. The friendship with individuals or groups who have bad habits will often bring many negative consequences and they also contribute to the formation of negative attitudes among the adolescents.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the above discussion shows the current position of Islamic education in the present education system in the Muslim world. Although Islamic education subject is generally recognized as one of the core subjects in the current education system, the implementation as a "subject" seems to have a kind of "conflict" with the total idealism of Islamic education system. In achieving the notion of Islamic education reform and to achieve the standardization of Islamic Education excellence, there must be a real form of "cooperation" and "collaboration" between government, school, teacher, parent and the Muslim communities in order to standardize and transform the Islamic education system.

Several element should be seriously examined i.e.; philosophy of education, aim and objectives of Islamic Education, teachers education, contents of curriculum, pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge, text book and teaching aids, school environment, school administration and management, assessment and evaluation, supervision, and student engagement with school, parent and community. Teachers and the society at large must be able to support the implementation of Islamic education system. The five domain of teacher in Islam *Mudarris*, *Muaddib*, *Mu'allim*, *Mursyid* and *Murabbi* should be inculcated in Islamic education system. We must also try to resolve the five major challenges and find solutions to attain the ultimate the aim of Islamic education in creating the *Khaira Ummah*.

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