



Islamic Education in Malaysia: A Critical Analysis of Its Evolution and Relevance

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ABSTRACT

The arrival of Islam in Malay world inspired the locals to acquire the knowledge of Islam and provide their children Islamic education. For that purpose, hut type institutes were built which have become the major source of Islamic education. This system was known as pondok, went through several phases of reformation and transformation. This paper aims to analyze the development and evolution of Islamic education and its relevance in terms of its implications, focusing on pondok system in Malaysia. To carry out this task, explorative study design was adopted and historical background of pondok and its development were analysed. In addition, a comparative method of analysis was followed to determine the nature of evolution and relevance of Islamic education in Malaysia. The study found that due to the dynamic role of Islamic educational system in the development of society equipped with Islamic values, it remained an essential part of Malay culture, until today. This study also analyzes that how far the Islamic philosophy of education was implemented in religious institutes which encourages the complete development of a person, be it physical, intellectual or spiritual. This paper concludes that graduates of Islamic institutes have significant contribution in the development of society, though, existing system requires further improvements. Hence, there is a need to implement a comprehensive and holistic Islamic educational system which should be based on Islamic philosophical foundation established on Islamic worldview.

Introduction

The presence of Islam in the Malay land can be traced back to 12th or 13th century when Muslim merchants, scholars and travellers arrived in Malacca. Their interaction with locals resulted in the introduction of Islam and its acceptance among the natives.¹ South East Asian region was then a popular trade centre for international traders. Arab traders travelled through south Arabian ports such as Aden and Oman and reached Kalah, apparently located at Kedah and in the north Pahang and Trengganu areas. As a matter of fact, starting from the eight until thirteenth century, the Sasanid and Abbasid Empire were strong, and Egypt rose under the Mamluks. The Arabs ports were busy with traders who opted for marine route to ship their goods to other countries ²

Running through the long trading lists of products like cotton, silks, gold from Kelantan, pottery in Johor and Brunei, and all sorts of spices and aromatics, confirms that ‘the Malay world’ was a main hub for trade and had a prominent, commercial appeal for Chinese and Arabs long before the arrival of European merchants and colonialists due to its geographical location.³Arrival of Islam to the Malay land instilled the thirst of knowledge into locals. In order to raise their children with Islamic values they felt the need of an educational system where youngsters can acquire knowledge of Islam. For this purpose, huts were built nearby mosques, Suraus and sometimes near the residence of Imams who were considered religious leaders. Those huts were known as ‘*Pondok*’ where pupils from surroundings or distance would come and stay there, leaving their homes to acquire knowledge. Until 1924, graduates from Makkah and Madinah were the teachers at *pondoks* who afterwards moved to Al-Azhar University Cairo to acquire Islamic learning.⁴The word ‘*Pondok*’ is derived from the Arabic term *funduk* which means temporary home, hotel or hostel. *Pondok* refers to the huts and small houses where students come and stay there to receive religious education from the teachers until completion of their study and getting Ijazah (official permission of completion). This educational system was based on traditional method where students would sit during learning session in front of their teacher

(*murshid*) who was known as *tuan guru*, *ustaz* or *kiyai*. Most of the teachers at *pondoks* were graduated from Makkah, Egypt and India or from well-known *pondoks* institutions in Patani, Kedah and Kelantan.⁵

The religious educational system which was formally called *pondok* system was developed as early as in 14th century whereas some find its establishment in 19th century. This educational system gained popularity within the society and more *pondoks* were established gradually with the support of locals, scholars and rulers. During colonization era *pondok* institution was not affected by the British interference, they just focused on Malay local school system. The Malay vernacular schools were introduced in 1872 when A.M Skinner, the first Inspector of Schools, separated the Qur'anic studies from the curriculum but in order to gain locals' attention and to increase the enrolment, separate afternoon session was announced for the Qur'anic studies. It was the moment when two school systems were emerged, Malay vernacular schools; the secular system and the religious system of education.⁶This paper aims to analyse, the role of religious education system in Malaysia, its development and the phases of reform it went through since its inception. The hypothesis is that the *pondok* system is implementing the Islamic philosophy of education. The Islamic philosophy of education is holistic and comprehensive which articulates balanced development for human being, be it, physical or spiritual. It aims towards developing a balanced personality in terms of his spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional. Such a holistic development is only possible if the objectives of Islamic education are acquired which are; comprehension of knowledge, acquisition of the truth and act in accordance with the development of the self, fellow human being and society at large. This study, therefore, intends to examine the evolution and relevance of Islamic education in terms of its usefulness and implications, focusing on *pondok* system in Malaysia. It also aims to analyse how the balanced and holistic personality of student is developed in line with the aspiration of the national philosophy of education.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature which opts for content analysis through

explorative study design. For the purpose of examination, historical background of *pondok* and its development were analysed. To achieve this goal, the relevant data from books, articles, websites lectures was collected. In addition to this, an extensive historical analysis of the appropriate data was made. In addition, a comparative method of analysis based on some Muslim scholars' views on philosophy of Islamic education was adopted to ascertain the nature of evolution and relevance of Islamic education in Malaysia.

Results and Discussion

Historical Background and Significance of *Pondok* System

The traditional style of religious education which was known as *pondok* system was initially introduced in the 14th century in the state of Kelantan then extended in other states of Malay Peninsula. By the 19th century, more *pondoks* were operational all over the country. They were built with all kinds of support, be it was material or moral, from native Muslim communities including their leaders and rulers.⁷ Initially *pondok* system was established in Pattani, Thailand which gradually extended to Malay land, specifically, Kelantan and Terengganu because geographically they were closer to Pattani. Thus, these two states were influenced by *pondok* system earlier as compared to the other Malay states.⁸ The main source for establishing the *pondoks* in this region was the scholars who were originally graduated from Pattani. However, after the independence this education system was considered informal vis-à-vis the Islamic education which was started at public schools. These schools were administered by the government, Arabic and Islamic education was the part of schools' curriculum. However, both systems have attracted many students from the society to acquire the knowledge of Islam.⁹ Inspired by the reformist thought upheld by Ahmad Khan of India, a group of young Malay intellectuals took it upon themselves to modernize the traditional educational system in Malaysia. One of the examples was the establishment of *Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah* in Singapore in 1907. Unfortunately, it was closed after a year in operation. It was the first modern religious school (*Madrasah*) built in the region. The main reason

of this closure was disinterest in modern educational system and lack of support from the locals causing its failure. The second attempt was the foundation of *Madrasah al-Hadi* in Malacca in 1915 which received the same fate as *Madrasah al-Iqbal* due to the criticism received by the people. The public was resistant to the idea of reform and modernization of education.¹⁰

In 1916, another attempt was made to establish a Madrasah known as *Madrasah al-Qur'Ēn* in Penang. It received a positive response from the locals due to its main concern of integration of religious knowledge with modern education. This Madrasah continued to develop by inaugurating new branches in several other places and later it was renamed as *Madrasah al-Mashoor al-Islamiyyah* or Al-Mashoor Arabic School.¹¹ *Pondok* has been an integral part of Malay culture. The magnitude of *pondok* institution can be witnessed from the influence of its scholars and graduates over politics, who played an instrumental role to develop the consciousness of anti-colonial struggle in Malaya.¹² Islamic spirit of Malay Muslims and their strong attachment with *pondok* system shows that education that time was mainly influenced by the Islamic principles and worldview. It was a great source to educate their children and youth the Islamic culture, Islamic morals and values and to prepare them for the future endeavour.

Educational Pedagogy at *Pondok*

Usually, the educational method at *pondok* was narrative but very rigorous and based on gradual and repetition method. Teacher would explain the text and he can repeat more than once to ensure that no one is left out. In the class or after, every student has opportunity to interact with the teacher to enquire his concerns. Completion of the syllabus may require the period of 10 years, after that the graduate can get the letter of completion which is enough evidence to apply for further education.¹³ The study duration was reduced to total 6 years after restructuring the syllabus and reforming the *pondok* system as a whole. One of the examples is Pondok Kandis in Kelantan where after completing the 6th year, student can pursue university level studies or can start practical field as Imam or DaŃĒ.¹⁴ At the beginning, *pondoks* were financially independent and did not charge fees

from the students, thus, young students would involve in vocational and agricultural training as co-curricular activities and means of sustenance.¹⁵ Initially, the focus of *pondok* was merely on religious education which gradually extended to contemporary education. Specifically, in Kelantan, *pondok* admins influenced by reformist thought tried to modernize Islamic education system. Their writings, representing the role of modern education in developed countries demonstrate that they were much interested to modernize the existing traditional *pondok* system.¹⁶ Pondok Kandis as one of the independent religious institutes, funded by *Yayasan Islam Kelantan* have tried to integrate religious sciences with contemporary social sciences. This approach of the *pondok* has garnered much popularity within the society which caused a surge in admissions. But the method of teaching at *pondok* is still traditional whereby the teacher would explain the text from the book and student can enquire if he needs further explanation.¹⁷

Decline and Transformation of Pondok

Since the establishment of Sekolah *Pondok* in 1450 in Malacca, it only gained momentum in other states in 19th century and remained very popular until 1918. Unfortunately lack of competency and the popularity of English and Anglo Malay School had caused the decline of *pondok* educational system, though, it remained operational until today and even regained its reputation for being a significant source of inculcating the values and morals in Malay society through religious education.¹⁸ *Pondok* system witnessed less enrolments in later days which eventually marked the decline of *pondok* in comparison to the state-run religious schools. The Reasons such as, more focus on modern sciences and less on religious sciences, lack of competency of *pondok* in terms of staff qualification and infrastructure facilities.¹⁹ The major transformation began after independence of Malaysia when education sector officially administered by the federal government and those Islamic affairs, according to the constitution, were handled by respective states. Thus, state governments have considerable autonomy over Islamic education whereby religious schools was the main area run by state governments.²⁰

However, federal government was still involved in supervision of Islamic education. There were five types of religious school one of them was run by federal government, whereas, two religious schools managed independently, somehow accepted the use of national curriculum. The main concern of those religious schools was helping the graduates to pursue higher education. Three state-run universities i.e., UM, UKM and IIUM offered degree programs for the graduates of religious schools.²¹In 1974, administration of primary Islamic education was almost transferred from state government to federal government which eventually led to the implementation of the curricula approved by education ministry under federal government.²² This curriculum was designed to prepare the students of Islamic education to play significant role in the society. For that the educational ministry decided to integrate religious schools with national educational system. The integration process led by the ministry was included Islamic educational policy and curriculum, the Arabic language policy and curriculum, the hiring and training of Islamic studies and Arabic language teachers, Da'wah and leadership training workshop for the staff and students of Islamic education and improving the standards of both national secondary religious schools (SMKA: Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama) and government-assisted religious schools (SABK: Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan). This integration resulted in the conversion of 13 state secondary religious schools into national secondary religious schools which used the same syllabus approved by the educational ministry known as Higher Islamic Knowledge Syllabus.²³ Based on the integration of religious and national school curriculum, three areas of specialization were introduced to SMKAs students; humanities/arts and religion, science and religion, and technical-vocational education and religion. According to Abdul Hamid this development was meant to modernize religious schools' curriculum.²⁴In 2002 a big change occurred to largely independent *pondok* system when they have been closed due to funds termination which was allocated previously by the federal government under the grants for private education sector.²⁵ It was due to the government campaign against private Islamic schools which

were unable to fulfil required parameters for quality education set by the government. They have been accused of low progress in examination results, lack of competency in teachers and administrative matters. Above all, the government noticed that these schools had become a breeding place for critics of the government and political radicalism.²⁶

Transition from *Pondok* System to Modern Islamic School

The gradual transition started when the federal government showed interest to take care of *pondok* institutions. The process began with the registration and affiliation of *pondoks* with the education ministry, hence, allocating fund for religious schools and *pondok*. Thus, education ministry got involved in several issues related to *pondok* system, such as staff training, selection of the syllabus its production and evaluation, supervision of *pondok* institutions and providing financial support. It resulted in the less registration at Islamic schools, time allocated for religious subjects was reduced in comparison for modern sciences, and medium of instruction was transferred from Arabic to Malay in Arabic language classes. Eventually, independently working *pondoks* and private madrasahs could not compete with the state-run religious schools in terms of staff qualification and infrastructural facilities.²⁷ Another *pondok* based on modern style of learning and infrastructure was established in Kelantan named *Pusat Pengajian Pondok Telong*, started functioning in 1984. According to the authors, administration of this *pondok* mainly focused on the modern structure and style of teaching and, tried to update its administrative and managerial section per se, but at academic level it remained concentrated on religious education purely. As stated by the authors;

Among the modern characteristics practiced by this *pondok* is an exam-oriented assessment system, co-curricular activities, a proper timetable, selection in the entry system, an administrative organisation structure and students have the chance to pursue their studies to Islamic universities in the Middle East. Besides that, the halaqah method that was practised in the learning

sessions of this *pondok* was replaced by classroom systems like modern schools.²⁸

Thus, modern parameters were applied at management and administrative levels mainly. This development shows that *pondoks* have become more systematic in terms of methods of learning and teaching and dealing with students' issues. This institute can be an ideal place for the students inspired by religious values and teachings, would get education to excel in classical religious sciences. The positive aspect of this kind of revived and modern *pondok* system could be observed as a bridge for the students of classical sciences to pursue their higher education at national or international institutes. The purpose of modern Islamic school was to produce scholars who can work in state administration. Still, the subject's selection or the option to choose the area of study for the *pondok* graduates will be limited as their study background is entirely based on religious sciences. The significance of *pondok* institute or religious school in Malaysia is to be learned from the demand of Malay Muslims, especially from the 1970s onwards, when they spoke out for proper and comprehensive system of education which provide religious education coupled with contemporary modern education. A number of religious institutes came into being in subsequent years, some of them were the improved and revived version of existing *pondok* and religious madrasahs, equipped with modern facilities and more comprehensive curriculum.²⁹ Acknowledging the historical significance of *pondok* and its importance for providing Islamic education, the government has founded an NGO the Yayasan Pembangunan *Pondok* Malaysia (YPPM) on 1 August 2012. The main purpose of founding this organization was to recognize the contribution of *pondok* to the development of religious education in Malaysia. Another organization Pertubuhan Hal Ehwal Sekolah Agama Kedah (HESA) was founded in 2008 with the aim of development of the religious and *pondok* schools in Kedah including fund raising, addressing the issues faced by the institutions and acting as intermediary with the state government.³⁰

Pondok institutions have received attention from the government. Acknowledging the significance of Islamic education in Malaysia, in 2014 the government allocated RM 50 million to assist *pondok* and religious schools. This is to appreciate the contribution of *pondok* graduates who played a significant role in the development of education in the country. *Pondok* graduates were able to continue higher education and after graduating from universities they contributed to the development of country through various professional fields such as, medical, law, education, technical and even politics.³¹ For instance, Pondok Kandis has implemented integrated curriculum unlike its traditional syllabus. Now students at Pondok Kandis are taught revealed and acquired, both sciences. These subjects include *Tafsîr*, *adâb*, *Fiqh*, Arabic, Malay and English languages, Logic, Science, Mathematics, Economic, History, etc. After completing the syllabus, students at *pondok* must sit an exam to qualify for the next year.³² Considering the requirements of contemporary challenges, *pondok* institutions are being updated in terms of their infrastructural amenities. Modern structure either with classes or dorms provides students to study in a more favourable and contented environment. This development shows the importance of *pondok* institutions within the Malay society to inculcate the Islamic knowledge. *Pondok* institutions received enormous support from the Malay Muslims to continue to play its vital role in development and sustainability of religious education in Malaysia.³³

Current Situation of Islamic Schools

In the process of integration, the main concern is about its practicability which is yet to be materialized. According to Rahima and Rosnani, several Islamic schools claim to have based on integrated educational system but their objectives, philosophies, curricular and methodologies do not support each other. The authors analysed some Islamic educational system based in Malaysia. They found that different institutions have different understanding of integration. They have operationalized the integration based on their needs and aspirations. Some of them have integrated their system by combining national and religious curriculum whereas others

simply added some religious subjects. It seems that the understanding of integration is rather superficial to afford a more profound changes to the existing system. Rahimah and Rosnani in this regard commented that there is a dire need to work deeply on the philosophical foundation of integration. It should be based on an Islamic worldview derived from the Qur'án, the *×adÊth* and the work of previous scholars.³⁴ Nevertheless, it should be recognized that there has been positive development in *pondok* system in the form of reformed integrated curriculum, improved administrative system, developed infrastructure and modern learning methodology. In collaboration with state and federal governments, *pondok* institutions have reformed and improved at large extent but still there is a room for further improvement in deeper and comprehensive manners.

Role of the Graduates of Islamic Education in the Society

There is a perception that many *pondok* graduates have played an important role in the development of the society as they were able to continue their higher education at national and international institutes. They have a say in various sectors, including education, law department, medical, technology sector and even country level administrative posts.³⁵ The authors of *Survival of Pondok Learning Institute in Malaysia* claimed that *pondok* graduates are able to function in the society only if they managed to complete higher studies at university level. It is mainly because they were able to learn to contextualize their knowledge and acquire more skills that were offered at the university level. Rosnani and Rahima suggest, if *pondok* system remains working according to the old trend where mostly traditional methods of learning like rote-memorization and teaching like dictation from the classical scriptures were followed, then it cannot compete contemporary educational institutes. *Pondok* graduates with paper-qualification lacking in practical knowledge do not qualify the market requirements. Hence, they are unable to secure suitable post in the market because people have less confidence in them. Thus, it implies that the traditional approach in Islamic education system needs constant review and courage to reform in order to keep up with contemporary challenges.³⁶

In this regards, colleges and university faculties have played a monumental role in providing tertiary Islamic education to the students to obtain qualification and eligibility to work in public sectors. Graduates from the institutes like Islamic Academy, University Malaya and IIUM have appeared as a new wave of professionals who were able to work in the various departments of the government. Since they had earned their degrees of specialization in Islamic studies, their approach towards profession was sharia-based, be it, lawyers, consultants, economists, judges, and religious functionaries. The sharia-based mindset was in compliance with growing Islamic administration and state-supported Islamic financial infrastructure.³⁷

Proposed Framework for Improvement and Pedagogy

In fact, the future of today's Islamic educational institutes relies upon the effective management and the role of *pondok* teachers who are responsible to maintain the quality of education at *pondoks*. Good management would be an essential element for the development of *pondok*. The focus on several important factors, such as "efficient organisational management, a healthy environment and relevant curriculum" will enable *pondok* system to play a pivotal role in the society. Along with the aforementioned factors, an inclusive and comprehensive approach towards academic pedagogy is very crucial whereby involvement in contemporary learning method such as interactive learning, resource sharing and the knowledge of modern skills like entrepreneurship, information technology will keep the students abreast of contemporary situation, and they would be able to contribute to the development of society in the best possible manner.³⁸ The development of *pondok* is actually depends on updating and renewal of basic infrastructure of education and methodology which includes the addition of general and skill-based subjects and broadening the scope of *pondok* beyond traditional centre for Islamic learning to an Islamic educational institute with comprehensive and integrated pedagogy.³⁹ A number of scholars like, Al-Attas (1979), Al-FÉrĒqĒ (1992), Fazlur Rahman (1982), Rosnani Hashim (1997), Sidek Baba (2009), and Kamal Hassan (2009) have called for the transformation of traditional Islamic educational

system. They have suggested the integrated system of education as a proposed paradigm to deal with the educational predicament. The proposition is that there is no dichotomy between religious and non-religious system of education, but they should be incorporate with each other. That unification between two systems can be articulated through integrated curriculum and the issue of dual systems in Muslim education can be addressed in the best manner. At the second stage, there is a need to revive the Islamic education system in relevance to the contemporary requirements.⁴⁰

This integration process is not limited to the revision of the curriculum alone but restructuring the entire system of Islamic education is also the part of this process. For Rosnani, lack of understanding and misconceptions about the nature of Islamic education system is a key factor which caused the failure of the Islamic education system. Islamic institutions are supposed to transmit Islamic education, not only education about Islam.⁴¹ Hence, there is a need to transform the philosophy of education at Islamic schools in a holistic manner so the knowledge acquired by students should not remain theoretical in their minds without knowing its implications rather they should be able to apply it in practical life. The integral part of knowledge in Islam as articulated by Ibn SÊnÉ, is the action which can be conceptualized by the one who tries to achieve the ultimate objective of education or knowledge that is *×ikmah* (wisdom). Islamic philosophy of education has three aims; firstly, to instil the love of knowledge into students secondly, to comprehend the reality of things and at the third level it requires from student to act in conformity with this knowledge.⁴² In other words, the real education or knowledge enables human to know the reality and act accordingly for the development of himself and whatever exist around him. Due to this scholarship and wisdom that person becomes perfect human being. In short, the balance between theory and action is the essence of Islamic philosophy of education. Islamic philosophy of education emphasizes the balanced human development. The applicability of theoretical framework to achieve its true objectives is based on sound philosophical foundation of education

as suggested by the Muslim philosophers like al-Fârîdî, Naquib al-Attas, Hossein Nasr and others. According to them the purpose of education is not only to prepare a person to work for material gain merely ignoring ethical and moral concerns but there is a higher and noble purpose of education and that is to prepare a man who is intellectually, morally and spiritually well-trained.⁴³ Similarly, al-Attas also identifies that ultimate purpose of education from Islamic worldview is to prepare a good man who is well aware of his responsibilities towards his Creator and other human fellows and sincere to fulfil them by constant struggle according to his knowledge and capabilities.⁴⁴

Abovementioned analysis elucidates that the existing *pondoks* and Islamic schools should have proper understanding of the Islamic philosophy of education which concern with both aspects of education, theoretical and practical. In case of *pondok* institutes in Malaysia a considerable development has been made at different levels whether it was academic area which deals with teaching quality, teaching methodology and curriculum reform or administrative level dealing with infrastructure, funds and staff training. But the current situation indicates that *pondok* institutes and Islamic schools need more comprehensive and holistic Islamic integrated curriculum to follow so that *pondok* graduates can have broader academic vision and choice to opt for any discipline whether it is related to Revealed sciences or acquired sciences.

Educational Pedagogy

Methods of teaching and learning play significant role in educational and learning process. Educationists and experts have made painstaking efforts to develop programs, module and methodologies to get maximum learning objectives. In Malaysian context which is comprised of multicultural and multiracial society there is a need to implement such educational methodology which should be embedded in the important elements of mutual respect, harmony and tolerance along with all essential characteristics of learning and educational process. Rosnani Hashim, proposed Hikmah Pedagogy as a learning development program. Elaborating her proposal, she states, it refers to open mindedness, tolerance

and respect for the students of other faith. Since colonization Malaysia has three kinds of primary school systems, one of them is national school that uses Malay as medium of instruction, second national school where mostly Chinese students go and Mandarin is the language of instruction and the third one is Tamil where Indian mostly get education. Based on multi-racial society, it is not easy to prevent tension among different ethnicities. According to Rosnani, it is possible through educating students about multi ethnics, multi cultures and multi religions by implementing a particular pedagogy.⁴⁵

Lack of understanding and integration between ethnics and religions shows a big gap to achieve peace and harmony. It could be due to focusing mainly on students' progress instead of their ethical and moral development. In order to bring harmony and alleviate the tension among the students of multiple ethnicities, she proposed the Islamized version of Philosophy for Children Programme 'P4C' introduced by Matthew Lipman in the early 1970s. The *Hikmah Programme* has been designed to address Muslims and Malaysian society equipped with religious and ethical values.⁴⁶ Hikmah pedagogy aims to establish 'Community of Inquiry' (CoI) as used by Hashim, thus, it is 'natural' method of improving students' thinking skills. A CoI actually enables student to communicate with each other and discuss different topics which could be sensitive and crucial as well. This engagement will be based on mutual respect, understanding and logical arguments. The teacher will act as a facilitator who will help students to conduct CoI programme which is implemented through 5 stages. Firstly, students will be given a text, poster or a video. At the second stage students will take turn to read out the text, then at the third stage students will be encouraged to raise questions and inquiry about the stimulus they were involved earlier. Fourth stage is called categorization of questions which means which question will be addressed first then at the fifth stage discussion will take place which could be based on question and answer, cross questioning, critique and counter critique.⁴⁷ The teacher supposed to help and train students to listen to each other and to accept the valid

criticism and consider this whole interaction in a positive manner that it is all about construction and development, be it personal, mental or social. One of the main characteristics of Hikmah pedagogy is tolerance and respect for each other even there is disagreement between them. This eventually leads to the view that there is no right or wrong answer, but it is all about different perspective.⁴⁸ At this juncture, it must be clear that the elements of tolerance and mutual respect should not cover up the truth. If we take this stance then the validity of ethics and morality, and later, Islamic worldview and its principles will become the matter of different perspective and experience. The claim of Islam that it is universal, and the ultimate way of life will be relative. Thus, tolerance should be convincing not imposing with conviction in Truth. Therefore, it is teacher's responsibility to explain both the position and prevent this kind of relative thoughts and environment, especially in morals and ethical aspects and in fundamental principles. Hikmah Pedagogy is actually a part of reintegration of educational method, particularly for religious education. The major characteristic of Hikmah Pedagogy; teacher student centred, is the long history of Islamic heritage and it has been a strong foundation of learning process whereby students were encouraged to interact with teacher or scholar. We find ample examples of teacher student centred learning in Islamic history. On various occasions companions of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) enquired about the matters which were unclear to them. Same tradition was adopted by his companions, one of the idea examples is the caliph Umar when during a sermon an old enquired him about the dress he was wearing and he did not only respond her promptly in a very kind and positive manner but he also thanked her on her enquiry. In the light of these examples, we learn that interaction between teacher and student is an essential part of learning process and enquiry and it has been a fundamental practice of Muslim educators throughout the Islamic history.

Recommendations

1. First and foremost, there is a dire need to develop and implement a uniformed and Islamic integrated curriculum throughout all *pondoks*

and Islamic schools. It will ascertain the development of graduates with Islamic mind and spirit who can pursue higher education with broader vision and excellence.

2. Secondly, teachers at *pondoks* and Islamic school should be trained in terms of their understanding on Islamic worldview, Islamization of Knowledge and Islamic integrated curriculum, taking into consideration the notion of *ulul alÉb*.
3. *Pondoks* and Islamic schools need to strike the balance between theoretical and practical approach and need to include more vocational and extra curriculum activities as the learning objectives for the students equipping them with latest techniques and skills.
4. *Pondoks* and Islamic schools need to be assisted by the state and federal governments in all matters, whether, it is related to administration, finance or academic.
5. Educational institutes should be free from any external influence on academic and research activities as freedom is the foundation of all the development, creativity and innovations in science and education.
6. It is suggested that *pondok* institutions should have integrated and comprehensive curriculum according to the required qualification for admission into the universities so that *pondok* graduates should be able to choose the subjects of their interest and continue their higher education in multi-disciplinary mode.
7. Empowerment in terms of human resources, management, physical infrastructure, training which demands for more financial allocation from the government.
8. The existing organizations and NGOs to supervise *pondok* institutes can be made more effective and useful by implementing above-mentioned recommendations.

Conclusion

Previously the term *Pondok* was used for religious educational institutions. Now some of them they are called 'Islamic schools' as a modernized term, has been and still are the significant part of Malay Muslim society. *Pondok* as an essential source of disseminating Islamic knowledge and heritage

made a monumental contribution in the revival and sustainability of Islamic spirit in the Muslim Malay society. This spirit ascertained the balanced development of *pondok* graduate so that he can have a major sway in the society. Notwithstanding a long history of multifarious challenges; from financial constrains to competing modern education system, to imposing reforms strategies, these institutions continued performing and garnered much popularity in the society. It is well-established reality that the graduates of *pondok* have been a major source of administering not only religious sectors per se, but they contributed in other public departments as well like, law, education, politics etc. However, their strength and the contribution to the society will surge if they have holistic and comprehensive educational background as it was identified as single Islamic educational system. If they were trained in an institute where they learn the meaning of balance development from Islamic worldview then they would be able to play significant role in the development of society in the real sense. Thus, there is a dire need to implement a comprehensive and holistic single Islamic educational system which should be based on Islamic philosophical foundation erected on Islamic worldview.

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