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GROOMING FUTURE MUSLIM LEADERS AT PERMATA INSAN COLLEGE WITH THE INTEGRATION OF NAQLI AND AQLI KNOWLEDGE

Membangun Pemimpin Islam Masa Hadapan di Kolej PERMATA Insan dengan Integrasi Ilmu Naqli dan Aqli

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Abstract

Leadership is one of the core values integrated in all subjects and co-curricular activities in PERMATA Insan College. Every gifted and talented student in the college is being groomed to be future Islamic leaders and scholars through the academic subjects, Quran and Sunnah studies, as well as co-curricular activities. Islamic Leadership is the component highlighted for students to develop and practise from early stage of life. This concept paper examines the implementation of an Islamic leadership development programme that encompasses every aspect of teaching and learning in PERMATA Insan College. It highlights the main principles and concepts of Islamic Leadership that have been integrated into the subjects and co-curricular activities as the college strive to develop the necessary leadership skills in every student. It would also discuss how the curriculum has been planned in such a way that it has the integration of Naqli and Aqli knowledge embedded into the curriculum and co-curricular activities.

Keywords: Islamic Leadership, integration of Naqli and Aqli knowledge, gifted and talented education.

Abstrak

Kepemimpinan adalah satu teras utama pendidikan yang dibangunkan di dalam semua subjek dan aktiviti ko-kurikulum di Kolej PERMATA Insan. Setiap pelajar pintar berbakat dididik untuk menjadi cendekiawan Islam masa hadapan melalui subjek akademik, pendidikan Quran dan sunah, dan juga aktiviti ko-kurikulum. Kepemimpinan Islam dijadikan komponen pendidikan utama yang dipupuk dari usia muda lagi. Kertas konsep ini mengkaji pelaksanaan modul pembangunan kepimpinan Islam yang merangkumi setiap aspek dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran di kolej ini. Ia membincangkan prinsip dan konsep utama dalam

kepemimpinan Islam yang mampu mengenengahkan pembangunan individu pelajar dari aspek kemahiran dan pengalaman yang menggalakkan mereka mengintegrasikan ilmu Naqli dan Aqli dalam pembelajaran dan aktiviti ko-kurikulum yang dilaksanakan.

Kata kunci: kepimpinan Islam, integrasi ilmu Naqli dan Aqli, pendidikan pintar berbakat.

INTRODUCTION

PERMATA Insan College is a gifted and talented educational institution created to help the government groom future Islamic scholars among the selected students who had been chosen through standardised intelligence test. It has the objectives of promoting the values of Islam through the integration of Naqli and Aqli knowledge in its curriculum. The Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) is the public university entrusted to fulfil this noble objective. The college has set its target in nurturing the talents that have been carefully selected from students all over the country through a specially-designed talent search process. The college's vision and mission are also reflected in the University's grand vision of becoming the global research and development centre of Naqli and Aqli knowledge.

The effort in integrating the Naqli and Aqli knowledge is not something new as similar initiative has taken place in many other educational institutions as history has witnessed the Western approach to knowledge was to segregate the knowledge and paradigms (USIM, 2015). Science, or STEM subjects tend to be measured as human-generated knowledge and therefore cannot be linked to any religion or the element of god the supreme creator. PERMATA Insan College, in its development of educational philosophy and curriculum, has decided to implement the process from the early stage of education in its programme—the school holiday enrichment programme until the high school syllabus.

PERMATA Insan College sets its vision to generate Muslim scholars who uphold the values and principles of Islam in every aspect of knowledge especially science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The academic curriculum is developed to cater to the needs of gifted and talented students who possess the mental ability higher (normally two to three years) than their physical age. These students generally have the ability to learn and understand contents of higher level and perform well in their studies.

This college also focuses on the Quranic and Hadith studies as the core Islamic education programmes that will guide students in understanding the modern scientific discoveries through the global perspective of Islam. It is important that students are educated in the way former Muslim scholars were developed and nurtured during the 7th and 13th century.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN INTELLIGENCE AND ETHICAL VALUES

The modern approach to education separates religious teachings from the knowledge being acquired because science has always been considered as discovered contents by human intelligence. The concepts, theories and practices in education are heavily influenced by Western philosophy and values (Dimmock, 2000). It is vital for students to build a balanced personality that cares not only for knowledge but also the right attitude and behaviour that accompany their mental ability. There have been many arguments (Shah, 2004; Rafik, 1998; Frum, 2011) that an individual's brilliant mind should also be accompanied with his great personality and behaviour as the standard characteristics possessed by the individuals. It would not help the cause for someone who has great mental ability yet fail to show the behaviour intended of a person with great mind.

Society has realised the key roles played by the gifted and talented students who have strong leadership qualities (Bisland, 2004). A nation relies on a good pool of leaders who could help in planning and achieving the goals set and be strong in facing the challenges of the future. These students promise a lot of potentials in developing into the leaders of tomorrow. Equipped with high intelligence ability, the selected gifted and talented students would find the leadership character required in making strong and positive decisions in their field of work in the future. The activities planned and implemented in the College have enabled them to enrich themselves with the experience and skills expected of them.

The gifted and talented students were known to have the ability to influence and motivate those around them (Karne & Stephens, 1999). Thus, Robert (2013) suggested that leadership qualities are vital for this group of students. He further explained that just like students who possess talents in visual arts and sports, the gifted and talented students require similar kind of development to enable them to grow as good leaders.

It is common to accept the fact that some great minds did not portray the positive image as a person and always lacking in the attitude and personality when dealing with public. Famous scientists or intellects seem to have negative perception by the public as they tend to behave in peculiar ways. They are always considered as anti-social, lacking in communication skills and behaving awkwardly in a group. Movies and drama always have this stereotype against the intellectuals even though some great minds do behave in curious ways in their real life. Thus, education presents the hope to change the perception and negative views towards the gifted and talented people in real life. The Islamic leadership

programme being implemented in PERMATA Insan College could help in realising the true leadership potentials among the students.

The bigger picture
The goal of this paper is to assess the implementation of PERMATA Insan Leadership programme in the current curriculum and co-curricular activities. Eventhough leadership qualities have been integrated into the curriculum, the implementation is still at the early stage and many modifications could be made to enhance the existing ideas and plans. Many models of leadership were being studied and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. The college is hoping to come up with a holistic approach in integrating the Islamic leadership qualities through what the administration proposed as Leadership 360 programme that encompasses the integration of Naqli and Aqli knowledge.

> Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it toward goals. Management activities such as planning, organizing, decision making are dormant cocoons until the leader triggers the power of motivation in people and guides them toward their goals. (Davis, 1967)

THE ACADEMIC VISION OF PERMATA INSAN COLLEGE
Nurturing future Muslim scholars is the motto that PERMATA Insan College aspires to achieve among all the individuals that enter the institution. Every student would be moulded into a well-rounded individual who practices the principles of leadership and ethics as prescribed in the Al-Quran and Hadith. It is supposed to be a long process and in PERMATA Insan programme, the process began since the age of eight, when the students first entered the programme. Personality development modules have been designed to help instil the values and qualities that personifies Islamic personality as portrayed by the Prophet Muhammad (saw). This is the spirit that every student has in their quest to be a good Muslim leader who puts education and knowledge as the goals they are striving to achieve.

> Abd Allah Ibn Umar (God be pleased with them) reported that the Messenger of God (saw) said: "Behold! Each of you is a guardian, and each of you will be asked about his subjects. [Beekun & Badawi, 1998]"

The Islamic personality concept seems simple enough to be implemented in daily life but the challenges today are much tougher for the students to deal with. They have the Internet and everything that comes with it to conquer. They have to learn to choose the good from the bad online and offline. Information, good and bad, is easily available and it could be the

strength or weakness that would hold them back in their pursuit of knowledge in science and technology. At such a young age, the unnecessary exposure to negative contents could easily hamper the good effort put forward in many years.

The National Association for Gifted Children (2010) recommended that institutions dealing with the gifted and talented students create a healthy environment that would assist the students to embark in their leadership quality development. They need to be given the opportunity to identify and realise their own potential. If they are not developed properly, they would not be able to grow at an optimum level (Gagne, 2009).

LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP

In Islam, every individual is considered as a leader and has to perform to his best ability as a leader in every aspect of his life—from self to society. This is the basic principle that one has to adhere to as they learn how to function in different roles and positions in their life and society. There could be adjustment of being a leader and follower as one tries to find the balance of every function one has to play.

Leader in general has its own characteristics and qualities that would make them successful as leaders. Talib (1991) underlined some important characteristics of Islamic leadership:

• Allegiance: Leader is bound in allegiance to Allah.
• Global Islamic Goals: Goals are not only for organisation but also for wider Islamic objectives.
• Adherence to Shariah and Islamic Manners: Leaders are to observe the principles of Shariah and conform to Islamic manners.
• Delegated trust: Allah says, "Those, who, if we give them power in the land, establish Salat and pay Zakah and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, with Allah rests the ends of affairs." (Surah Al-Hajj)

Leadership Role-model

Muslims are strongly encouraged to follow the *Sunnah* of the prophet and they are to study all the teachings from the sayings and actions as reported by the Prophet's close friends and family members. Prophet Muhammad (saw) is the guiding figure in Muslim leadership model and he represents what a good Muslim leader should be. Muhammad does not only provide the characteristics and personality of a good Muslim, he also provides the educational, business, leadership qualities and vision required of a good leader.

Islam has leadership at its heart as it could lead a nation to greatness or disaster. The simple concept of leadership is portrayed when Muslims are

urged to appoint a leader and follow his leadership. For example, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, "When three are on a journey, they should appoint one of them as their commander."

In almost every activity carried out in life, leadership role is going to be the focus. According to the Prophet (saw), Muslims must appoint a leader during a trip. Even in *solat* (prayer), a leader or an imam will lead the *makmum* (follower), and the same goes to other group activities. Choosing a leader is so important for a community, organisation or company. The role of a husband is the leader of his family as he becomes the leader to his wife and children, and whether he likes it or not, he has to take the burden and carry out the responsibility put upon him. In the absence of her husband, the wife assumes the role of leader of the house.

Islamic Leadership Module in PERMATA Insan College
In the current development of organisations and society, Western and Islamic approaches have been known to be the influential force in leadership development programmes. Many companies and corporations believe that leaders can be developed and they are spending millions in getting their workforce prepared with the right mentality and spirit in dealing with modern challenges in business and the globalised world. Educational institutions are imitating the effort to prepare students with the right attitude and characteristics so that they would be exposed to the right skills and mentality even before they enter the workforce. In PERMATA Insan's case, the leadership model would be based on the Islamic and modern leadership principles and approaches as prescribed in the integration of Naqli and Aqli model.

Islam has always emphasized on the importance of knowledge and leadership as without the support of knowledge, it would create havoc to the group of people or organisation. Education emphasises the holistic development of the self and society and Islamic philosophy of education emphasises knowledge is for the 'development of body, mind and spirit' (Al-Attas, 1979). Knowledge is the basic requirement in dealing with life and the challenges that come. The more knowledge one acquires, he would be more than ready to deal with the complexities and difficulties in work and life. Education has set up the path and leadership qualities would enhance the individual's overall capabilities.

PERMATA Insan College has the task of developing a special group of students who have great ability and talent to perform to their best mental competence. Gifted and Talented Education—the curriculum has been specially devised to cater the needs of the gifted and talented group of students. The students of PERMATA Insan College have been carefully selected through IQ tests and developed using four main modules namely personal development, mental arithmetic, Arabic and English language. Since the age of eight, they attended summer camp programme twice a year, went through online lessons and were provided with a tutor who

conducted classes with them for eight hours per month covering the syllabus of the modules mentioned above.

The Implementation of the Islamic Leadership Module
The college started its operation in early 2015 and therefore was ready with its planning and implementation of the new curriculum and syllabus. Lecturers were assigned to teach the academic subjects in the college. All lecturers are Master degree holders who have teaching experience at tertiary level before joining the college. In every subject taught at the college, lecturers were encouraged to integrate the Naqli and Aqli knowledge in many ways and forms such as multimedia contents and online materials that would help students understand the concept of how Al-Quran describes scientific discoveries and inventions. Lecturers were also strongly urged to find the link of the two sets of knowledge through their understanding and discovery of meanings and descriptions discussed in the Quran. As for the leadership module, there are four main components included in the module and they are: Academic, Al-Quran Education, Hadith and Co-curricular (as shown in the diagram 1 below). The module can be further divided into practical aspect (students apply leadership skills) and theoretical aspects (students know and understand leadership from Islamic sources).

Diagram 1: The Proposed Islamic Leadership Module
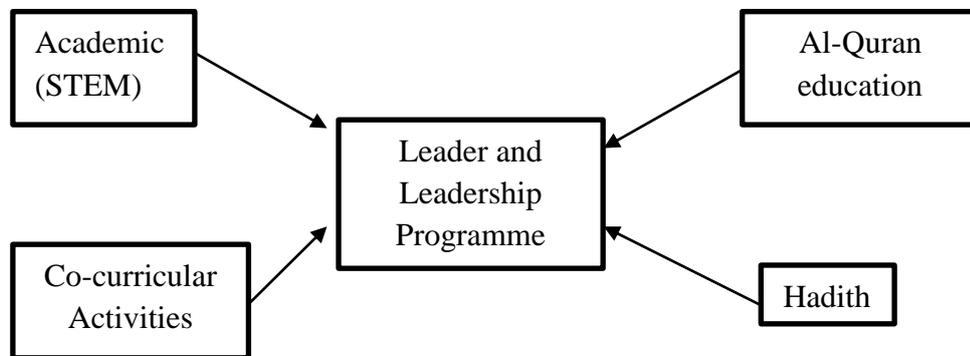
Basically, the four main components are in the heart of the PERMATA Insan curriculum and they are embedded in the lessons and activities. For teaching and learning purposes, the module is implemented across all subjects and activities. The leadership qualities are often discussed and highlighted with the students when they were given the tasks and activities to carry out.

The Academic setting
Activities for teaching and learning required the participation of students in carrying out the assignments and activities inside and outside the classroom. The lecturer involved would normally encourage the participation of new individual to be in charge of different activities and

assignments given. Even for the lab experiments in science subjects such as Chemistry and Biology, rotation of group leaders was the practice so that every student would be given the opportunity to become leaders. Encouragement and advice were the order of the day when students were engaged in their activities. Leaders would be reminded to practice what have been preached in their Al-Quran and Hadith classes as they strived to perform to their best ability.

Monitoring of students' performance in handling their groups would be done by the respective lecturers. Guidance would also be done in subtle way to avoid unnecessary pressure on the students to perform their leadership role. The environment was created in such a way that everyone was supposed to support decisions made by the leader. They were also encouraged to use their ability to discuss matters to come up to the conclusion. The *syura* spirit was their goal in achieving the support of the majority.

Al-Quran Education Classes
The Al-Quran memorisation classes were considered as the most important component of the whole concept of Islamic leadership development programme. The teachers would help students not only to memorise and improve their recitation but they would discuss in detail the meaning and interpretation of the *ayah* and verses they read. It was the most important input on the many revelations of the topics and subjects that they could relate to real life and things they learn from their STEM subjects. To develop their sense of integrity and discipline in understanding knowledge, students would do their own research in trying to unlock the meaning of Al-Quran and the scientific discoveries. The Quran teachers and lecturers would stress the importance to keep on improving their understanding on the topics they learn from all the subjects with the meaning they discovered from Al-Quran.

Hadith and Lessons from the Prophet
The study on the prophet's sayings (Hadith) and actions or way of life is another great source of information and knowledge for the students. The leadership qualities of our beloved prophet Muhammad (SAW) are discussed in detail to understand the different skills and approaches that had been used in dealing with various matters concerning individuals, community and nation. Studies of the prophet's leadership styles and qualities were taken from many sources in the form of books and religious texts (*kitabs)* that recorded and discussed in detail the sayings and actions of the prophet. The analysis and discussion based on these sources would open up their understanding and interpretation on the many issues still relevant today and help them to delve into the great skills and knowledge the Prophet had in solving many problems faced during his time in Mecca and Medina. These hadiths would let students discover the complexities in dealing with society and individuals. The perspective given from these sources were precious for the students as

they would understand from many perspectives how effective leadership was displayed by the prophet.

Co-Curricular Activities
The co-curricular activities in PERMATA Insan College are divided into sports, club/association and uniform bodies. Each lecturer is assigned to be advisor to either sports, clubs and associations, or uniformed bodies in the college. The advisors for clubs such as the Ulul Albab (Leadership and Communication) and Sports clubs use the mentoring system to address personal issues that students might encounter in the process of building their confidence and leadership qualities. The current model incorporates the skills and values in every club, sport and other co-curricular activities. Students were also involved in corporate social responsibilities (CSR) activities with other associations and clubs from outside the college. Using the mentoring system, students are expected to perform their duties and responsibilities using the Islamic principles learned. The main aim is the development of 'self' in individual students.

CONCLUSION: The Challenges and Improvements
Every student is considered as potential future leaders in the current academic setting as they are being prepared with the traits and attitude that could help them in the development of leaders. The challenge was to highlight the development of leaders and leadership qualities in the process of teaching and learning. Lecturers are to encourage participation and involvement of students in as many programmes and activities to allow them to participate and contribute in the projects organised. The students have to juggle with their studies and co-curricular activities. While it is a positive development for them to participate in the programmes, they are also facing challenges in managing their time and personal life as a student. There are conflicts among students and lecturers which need to be managed in this leadership development programme.

Many various improvements are in store as the emphasis on Al-Quran and Hadiths would be given priority in helping students fulfill their potential in leadership qualities. The current crop of leaders from the West and all over the world would also present many lessons to learn. In this globalised world, leaders come in many forms and functions as they portray qualities required in this modern world. The Islamic world still produces many good leaders and they have to be uncovered because many of them are buried behind the world's conglomerates and established organisations that have benefitted from the leadership qualities they possess and share among their very own community. The Islamic leadership development programme would take a long process and PERMATA Insan College is on the journey to improve the existing model.

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