

EDITORIAL

21st Century Curriculum and Instruction Challenges in Muslim Educational Institutions

Many educators and education systems today are concerned to equip their students with knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that have come to be known as 21st century skills. These include, critical thinking and problems solving; creativity and innovation; research and data analysis and synthesis; leadership and teamwork; ability to deal with diversity; effective oral, written, and visual communication; and self-management and emotional intelligence (see, for example, Rotherham & Willingham, 2010; Voogt & Roblin, 2010; McComas, 2014; and Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Considering the current status of social and economic development in Muslim societies, there is even more need for Muslim educators to be concerned about 21st century skills.

While apparently dealing with various themes, the papers in this volume are related by their attention to the development of aspects of the 21st century skills at different levels of education. The first paper, by Madihah Khalid, Nor Azura Hj Abdullah and Abdulhameed Kamoludeen, is about lesson study, a collaborative continuous professional development approach that has been implement with astounding results in many countries. Their research found that the lesson study technique was effective in fostering collaboration and enhancing the skills of Malaysian mathematics teachers. This approach needs to be adopted in other Muslim educational systems.

The second paper by Ahmad Faizuddin, Tumin An-Nuaimy, and Ahmad Suhail Al-Anshory dealt with the teaching and learning of Arabic language. Arabic is not only a very important language for a Muslims to understand and practice their religion but is also of growing significance as a means of communication that can connect an individual with diverse people and

cultures across the world. The authors tried to discover how teachers at an Islamic private school in Malaysia are using creative strategies to help their students master the Arabic language.

Considering the central role played by instructional materials in the education process, the third paper by Adan Saman Sheikh explored the challenges faced by Muslim schools in Kenya to get suitable textbooks. Most of the textbooks for teaching Islamic religious studies are imported from various Arab and Muslim countries. Considering that each country has its own unique and peculiar approach to Islamic issues, emphasizing some aspects of the religion and not others, this may cause confusion among Kenyan students. The author proposes that it is the role of the Islamic universities in Kenya and neighbouring countries to produce textbooks and other instructional resources for Islamic studies that take into account the social, cultural, and political context of Kenyan Muslims.

Still on the subject of curriculum and instruction, the fourth paper by Aliyu Dahiru Muhammad and Muhammad Ibrahim Abdullahi discusses the important subject of Islamization of knowledge. Taking the case of Bayero University, Kano, situated at the heart of the Muslim north of Nigeria, the authors argue for the necessity of updating the contents of the undergraduate economics curriculum. Taking cue from what is happening in countries like Malaysia, they believe it is high time that graduates of economics from that university are equipped with the requisite knowledge to become leaders in the fast growing discipline of Islamic economics and the related areas of Islamic finance and banking.

The fifth paper by Abdullah Al Mamun Bhuiyan bridges between curriculum and instruction and educational psychology. The author considers the factors that motivate Saudi students to learn English as a foreign language. While it may look obvious to many of us that learning foreign languages is one of the keys to success in the global knowledge economy, many people in traditional societies still do not see the point. The paper gives useful suggestions on how to motivate students at Saudi tertiary institutions to master the English language.

The sixth paper delves deep into the psychological realm by exploring the phenomenon of depression among undergraduate students in Nigeria and

what counsellors can do. It found, among other things, that the main manifestations of depression among students in the selected Nigerian universities included poor academic performance, avoidance of responsibility, difficulty in conducting day to day tasks, health problems, and loss of self-confidence. This is a very important study that needs to be followed up.

The seventh paper by Fahad Mohammed Alabdulmenem, considers challenges faced by community colleges in Saudi Arabia. Taking a group of community colleges in Saudi Arabia, under Shaqra University as a case study, the author identifies several problems. These range from declining enrolments, sub-optimal faculty to student ratios, and having too many administrative staff. He argues that while community colleges serve the important task of producing mid-level professionals for the country, these institutions are seriously underutilized in the case of Saudi Arabia.

References

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