Islamic integrated education system model in the Malay archipelago: Implications for educational leadership

Azam Othman,[*] **Suhailah Hussien,**[**] **Ismail Sheikh Ahmad,**[***] **Adnan Abd Rashid,**[****] **and Mastura Badzis**[*****]

Abstract: This paper discusses the practice of the Islamic Integrated Education System model in selected schools in the Malay Archipelago in the context of education in the 21st century. Islamic Integrated Schools provide an educational system that integrates academic knowledge and Islamic knowledge. Despite having a similar aim,these schools often have their own Islamic Integrated education system in place, which varies from school to school. An instrument derived from an earlier study conducted by this research team was utilised in the data collection process. The questionnaire focused on four constructs that describe a model of an Islamic Integrated school, that is, The School's Concept, The Integration of Islamic and Academic Knowledge, Teacher-Student Relationship, and The School's Islamic Climate. The sample consisted

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* Azam Othman is Associate Professor in the Department of Social Foundation and Educational Leadership, Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia.
** Suhailah Hussien is Associate Professor in the Department of Social Foundation and Educational Leadership, Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia.
*** Ismail Sheikh Ahmad is Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literacry, Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia.
****Adnan Abd Rashid is Assosciate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instrcution, Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia.
***** Mastura Badzis is Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia.

of 507 students from one Singaporean, two Indonesian, and three Malaysian Islamic Integrated Schools. Overall, the model suggests that the Integration of the Islamic and Academic Knowledge was the weakest contributing factor to the overall concept of the Islamic Integrated education system compared to Teacher-Student Relationship and the School's Islamic Climate. The findings indicate the need for the Islamic Integrated Schools to critically evaluate their existing implementation of knowledge integration to better prepare their students for the challenges of the 21st century.

Keywords: Islamic education, Integration of knowledge, Integrated Islamic schools, Islamic schools, Malay archipelago

Abstrak: Kertas ini membincangkan model mengenai amalan di kalangan sistem-sistem sekolah agama integrasi terpilih di sekitar kawasan Kepulauan Melayu dalam konteks pendidikan abad ke-21. Sekolah agama inetgrasi menyediakan sebuah sistem pendidikan yang mengintegrasikan antara ilmu akademik dan ilmu Islam. Walaupun mempunyai tujuan utama yang hampir sama, sekolah-sekolah ini lazimnya mempunyai sistem pendidikan Islam integrasi tersendiri, yang berbeza dari satu sekolah ke sekolah yang lain. Instrumen kajian ini dibangunkan oleh pasukan penyelidikan ini telah digunakan, dengan tumpuan kepada empat konstruk yang menghuraikan model sebuah sekolah agama integrasi iaitu Konsep Sekolah, Integrasi antara Ilmu Islam dan Akademik, Hubungan Guru dan Murid, dan Iklim Dini Sekolah. Sampel kajian ini terdiri daripada 507 orang pelajar dari satu buah sekolah agama integrasi di Singapura, dua di Indonesia, dan tiga di Malaysia. Model keseluruhan mencadangkan bahawa Integrasi antara Ilmu Islam dan Akademik merupakan faktor yang paling lemah sumbangannya terhadap Konsep Sekolah secara keseluruhan bagi sistem pendidikan agama integrasi, berbanding dengan Hubungan Guru dan Murid dan Iklim Dini Sekolah. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan keperluan bagi sekolah agama integrasi untuk menilai secara kritis perlaksaan integrasi ilmu mereka untuk lebih menyediakan para pelajar mereka untuk cabaran abad ke-21.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam, Integrasi Ilmu, Sekolah agama integrasi, Sekolah agama, Kepulauan melayu

Introduction

As Muslims continue to develop education systems that are in accordance with the Islamic worldview, it is also critically important for them to evaluate these systems in the context of education in the 21st century. The new century has prompted thinkers, educators, and

other concerned stakeholders to propose education frameworks that can help students, teachers, and administrators to cope with new, unprecedented challenges. The term "21ˢᵗ Century Education" is often used interchangeably with "21ˢᵗ Century Skills" and "21ˢᵗ Century Knowledge", referring to a specific framework or frameworks that describe the necessary skills needed for students to succeed in a fast-developing, technologically-driven global environment (Jerald, 2009). These terms refer to the educational change that transcends beyond the classroom setting, extending to virtually every other aspect of student life, focusing on academic knowledge as well as practical knowledge. For instance, students are encouraged to develop a broader perspective of what they are learning through problem solving and critical thinking.

Despite these ideals and aspirations, the concept of 21ˢᵗ Century Education has been largely secular-oriented.There is no emphasis on the students' role as *Insan* and servants of Allah. For leaders of Islamic schools, the key challenge is to meet major challenges of the 21ˢᵗ Century while upholding the ideals of the Islamic integrated education system and realising its noble objectives.

This paper examines the practices of Islamic Integrated Schools in the Malay Archipelago. More precisely, this paper attempts to present a model that describes the integrated education system in the region, and what its implication are for educational leadership in Islamic schools.

Islamic Integrated education proponents argue that it is possible to implement a system that teaches both spheres of knowledge- religious and academic. However, there are aspects of the Islamic Integration education system that require further discussion and inquiry, which this study hopes to address. It is also intended that the findings would contribute to the improvements in the integrated education system.

Islamic integrated education

Scholars from the earlier periods of Muslim history have discussed and debated the role, importance, and classification of knowledge. The taxonomies and hierarchies proposed for different types of knowledge, such as Al-Ghazali's view of *ulum shar'iyyah* and *ulum aqliyyah* (Al Zeera, 2001) and Ibnu Khaldun's categories of knowledge (Mohd Amin, 2014), demonstrated the interplay between the needs and aims of the present world and the Hereafter. In the perspective of the earlier

Muslims, integration is inherent in the nature of knowledge itself rather than an ideal that needs to be realised.

In later times, when the west colonised many Muslim majority countries,the education systems for Muslims in these countries experienced a major shift. Western colonial powers, including the British in the Malay States and the Dutch in Indonesia, separated the religious education system and academic education system into separate domains. This separation was a deliberate attempt on the part of the colonial administration policy makers. Their aim was to instil in the minds of colonised Muslims a secularised view of knowledge and the education systems (al-Otaibi and Rashid, 1997), devoid of any spiritual and divine connections to knowledge.

The post-colonial period saw a growing awareness amongst the colonised Muslims to begin a retrospective search for a more holistic and integrated alternative to the western education approach. Islam has always viewed education as an act of worship and a form of good deeds, leading the learner to a better understanding of the world and its Creator (Hashim, 1999). Instead of narrowing the value of knowledge and education to its economic and intellectual merits, Islam actually expands its significance to include Man's role in the world, his relationshipwith it, its inhabitants, and Allah. As Al-Attas (1980) exposited that knowledge enables Man to know the order of things as Allah has intended, which cannot be understood without His guidance.

Islam has never explicitly separated practical academic knowledge from religious knowledge. Muslim scientists from the ninth to the 13th centuries, for instance, often began their scientific papers or books with Quranic verses that emphasized the virtues of seeking knowledge and pondering the wisdom behind Allah's creations (Alkhateeb, 2013) which act as reminders to themselves and the readers about the link between the Quran's wisdoms and their scientific endeavours. Al-Attas's (1980) earlier exposition addresses the integrated nature of knowledge itself. Through knowledge, Man fulfils his role as Allah's *khalifah* (vicegerents) in maintaining order in the world. In this sense, order refers to the adherence to the *Haqq* (Truth) as outlined in the Quran and *Sunnah*. Any judgement and decision made by Man should be aligned with the proper order of things. All knowledge, both of Divine sources and of human intellect, enables Man to fulfil his purpose. Guided by

values and teachings from the Quran and *Sunnah*, Man learns to utilise scientific knowledge for the betterment of others and the world as a whole with a heightened sense of responsibility.

In various attempts to revive Islamic education and its integrated nature, Muslim intellectuals have encountered numerous challenges, and the biggest among them was reconciling the dualism between the religious and the academic education system. Hassan (2010) theorised that Muslims have actually attempted to reintegrate the two education systems and their efforts have resulted in one of the following types:

- the completely secular system where only academic subjects are taught;

- the predominantly religious educational system where few academic subjects are taught;

- the predominantly worldly educational system where few Islamic subjects are taught;

- the system that offers a balance of Islamic and academic subjects; and

- the system where the two streams, Islamic and academic, are brought into meaningful and dynamic interaction with one another.

The last-listed type, if implemented successfully, would be the ideal integrated Islamic education system, mirroring the ideals and practices of the early Muslims.

In a similar vein, Othman and Mohamad (2011) argued in favour of Al-Alwani's (1989) eclectic approach to an Islamic integrated education system. In the eclectic approach, the goal is to find the middle path between the traditionalist and contemporary Western approaches, one that draws out the best elements of the two approaches and fuses them together as a new, alternative approach. Examples of the eclectic approach in practice can be seen in the establishment of The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and the International Centre for Education and the Islamic Finance (INCIEF). This approach is seen as a viable and sustainable option to be forwarded, especially for Muslims in multicultural societies. The eclectic approach teaches students to become well-versed in the opinions and thoughts that

surface from different sides of an argument and to become more adept at addressing complex issues.

At present, there seems to be no standardised framework for the implementation of an integrated Islamic education system that is considered consensually acceptable to Muslims all over the world. The absence of such a framework makes it challenging for Muslim communities to measure the success of the various aspects related to Islamic education such as teaching standards (Memon, 2012). Nevertheless, it can be generally concluded that the framework for an integrated Islamic school should at least aim to teach Islamic knowledge by integrating Islamic values across all aspects of the school curriculum (Din & Salamon, 1988; Wan Daud, 2005).

Integrated education in the Malay archipelago

The Malay Archipelago is situated in the centre of South East Asia, encompassing Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, and the Philippines. The region has a long history of colonialism, dating back to the 15th century with the arrival of the Portuguese and the Spanish. They were followed by the British, the Dutch, and the French colonists who struggled for control of the region in the centuries that followed (Christie, 1998). During this period of colonization, the colonial administration provided very little support to Islamic educational institutions. Only a small group of Muslim youth was given access to Western-based education, and that too for the purpose of producing native staff who could serve in the colonial administration.

Where Malaysia was concerned, before it gained independence, the integration of academic and Islamic knowledge in the country was pioneered by a group of Middle-Eastern graduates labelled as *Kaum Muda* (The Young Reformists). They were opposed by a traditionally-inclined group of scholars known as *Kaum Tua* (The Old Conservatives) (Hashim, 2004). The *Kaum Tua* were defending the traditional way of learning Islamic subjects, such as through lectures and teacher-centered approaches, which they perceived as the proven way to produce scholars in the Islamic fields of knowledge. However, thistraditional system was inadequate in terms of producing graduates who can assume the much-needed professional roles in society. As a response to this inadequacy, the *Kaum Muda* established the modern *madrasah* that taught Islamic subjects as well as the previously ignored

academic subjects such as mathematics and science (Hashim, 2004). At present, there are several types of Islamic Integrated Schools established in the Muslim communities, ranging from government schools, state-government-funded schools, to wholly private schools. A more recent type of Islamic Integrated School being introduced is the Science *Tahfiz*, where Quranic memorisation is taught alongside science subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Previously, *tahfiz schools* merely concentrated on producing *Hafiz* (Quran memorizers) and those well-versed in the Islamic subjects.

Like other Muslim communities around the world, the Muslims of the Malay Archipelago taught their children about Islam through the process of education. For centuries, Islamic schools have been established in order to provide Muslim children with Islamic education, especially in learning the Qurʾān and the basic knowledge of Islamic practices (*fardʾʿain*).

Many *pondoks* and *madrasahs* established in the pre-1947 Malaysia and Singapore, and the *pesantren* in Indonesia offered religious subjects such as *fiqh*, *syariah*, and Arabic Language as part of their curriculum, with minimal time devoted to the teaching of academic subjects. After Singapore separated from Malaysia to become an independent country, the *pondok* and *madrasah* in former were affected by rigorous governmental reforms that were part of the plan to assimilate the Malay Muslims into the mainstream society. As a result, religious subjects were sidelined in favour of academic subjects (Wilson,1978). The decreased opportunity for Islamic education has compelled Muslim parents to enrol their children into the few remaining religious schools in the country which are also required to offer subjects from the mainstream Singaporean education system.

In a recent development, the Singapore Ministry of Education has worked closely with *Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura* (MUIS) or Islamic Religious Council of Singapore on the Curriculum Development Project. The project is aimed at improving the pedagogical practices at all six existing full-time *madrasahs* in Singapore. One of the key features introduced by the project is student-centered learning. Student-centered learning has already been integrated into the government school system, allowing students to explore and develop their own understanding of what is being taught instead of simply memorising it. The Ministry's

efforts are an indication that it favoured Singaporean madrasah students to also benefit from this form of learning (Tan & Abbas, 2009).

The Islamic school system in Indonesia has gone through various changes through the decades. Before 1975, *pesantrens* were a training ground for religious leaders or *imams*. In 1975, a decree was proclaimed by the government to modernise the pesantrens. The *pesantrens* were accused of being backward and not keeping up with the rapidly changing modern world. Their graduates often faced difficulty in getting jobs because of their unrecognised qualification. In order to address this issue, the Indonesian government decreed in 2002 that the Indonesia Islamic education system will be decentralised through the implementation of a school-based management in governing *madrasahs*. As a result, these *madrasahs* became more similar to the public government schools. Islamic knowledge subjects used to be a large segment of the schools' curriculum, but by 2003 the number of these subjects being taught at the madrasahs were reduced to merely five (Parker & Raihani, 2011).

The modern Islamic Integrated School later emerged as an alternative to other existing traditional school systems, with the intention of developing students who are balanced and have a holistic perspective on knowledge, as well as developing a person of good character or *insan* (Baba, 2003). There are numerous approaches to the modern Islamic integrated education system. Some are schools that emphasise the importance of Islamic subjects. Others consider themselves first and foremost as *tahfiz* or a school for educating *huffazs* (Quran memorisers), from which the students will only graduate if they have successfully completed their memorisation. A more recent trend is the integrated *tahfizs*, where students memorise the Quran and learn Islamic and academic subjects. Unlike the traditional Islamic schools, which focus almost exclusively on *dinniyah* (Islamic) subjects, the Islamic Integrated Schools emphasise the importance of teaching both *dinniyah* subjects and *aqliyyah* (academic) subjects.

Models of Islamic integrated education

Islamic education is crucial to every individual Muslim.An important principle and feature of Islamic education is its concern with both life in this world and the hereafter. Through this approach, Muslims are enabled to progress materially and spiritually, in accordance with the values stated in the Quran.

The Islamic educational system is concerned with the development of Man as a whole being where he or she must first attain knowledge of Allah before acquiring the other fields of knowledge. In fact, having knowledge of Allah and the belief in Allah, and realising Allah's nature through the acquisition of knowledge may lead Man to follow the commandments of Allah and seek Allah's pleasure. Noordin (1993) postulated a model of integrated education, where Man is posited at the central point, while God, Universe, and Mankind play an integral role as sources of knowledge, leading to Man's understanding of his role as a vicegerent (Figure 1).
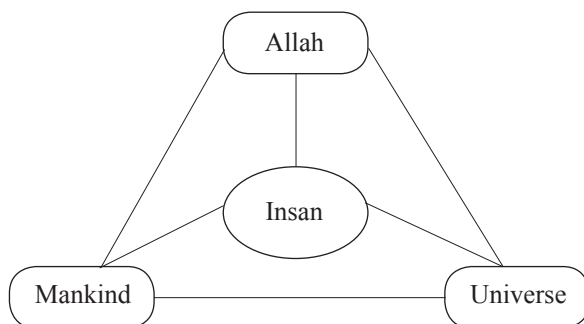

Figure 1 Integrated education model (Noordin, 1993)

Islam has never restricted knowledge to only religious studies. In the Quran, Allah always encourages Man to discover scientific knowledge through the utilisation of reasoning and intellect. By using reasoning and intellect to understand the universe, Man is able to know the existence of the Creator. The Islamic education system requires Man to make full use of the different range of human faculties, physical and non-physical, in order to know Allah as God and realise his duty as Allah's servant to contribute to the development of society.

Noordin's (1993) model can be considered mainly conceptual in its depiction. While Man's connection to the universe and its Creator is adequately explained, it does not explain how an integrated education system can be implemented. In this respect, Hassan (1988) offered a model called the Holistic Approach to Integration, shown in Figure 2. It further clarifies the approach to the process of knowledge integration. In this model, the integration of knowledge is demonstrated as a process that offers both benefits of this temporary world (*dunya*) and the next

(*akhirah*). It begins with the common process of transforming resources such as energy and human capital into outcomes that fulfil human and material needs using science and technology. This model then proposes that the resources should be viewed as God-given responsibilities entrusted to Man who is His *Khalifah* on earth. The use of science and technology would then become acts of *ibadah* (worship), that is, the utilization of knowledge in accordance to Allah's commandments. The outcomes in terms of human and material achievements are not merely enjoyed as part of the worldly life, but also as a way of gaining rewards in the Hereafter. In this respect, Basri's (2002) Holistic Approach to Integration is an appropriate approach for the integration of knowledge in the fields related to science and technology.
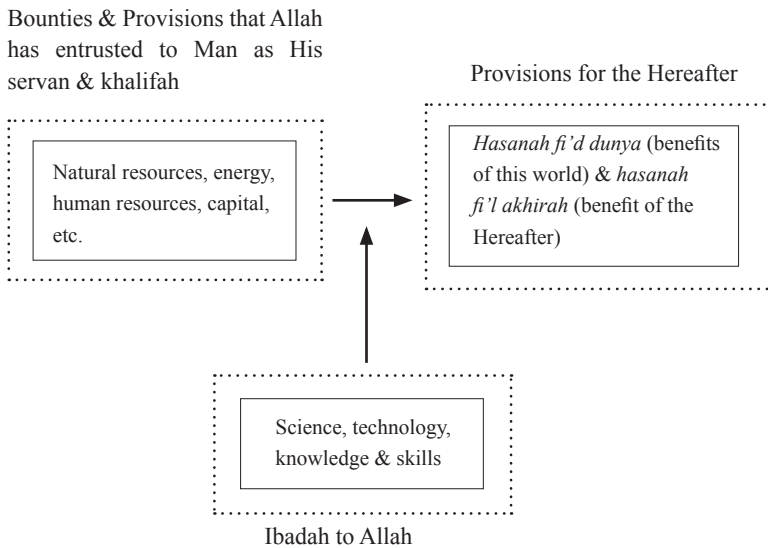
Bounties & Provisions that Allah has entrusted to Man as His servan & khalifah

Provisions for the Hereafter

> Natural resources, energy, human resources, capital, etc.

> *Hasanah fi'd dunya* (benefits of this world) & *hasanah fi'l akhirah* (benefit of the Hereafter)

> Science, technology, knowledge & skills

Ibadah to Allah

Figure 2 Holistic Approach to Integration (Hassan, 1998)

The Holistic Approach to Integration model offers a practical understanding of the unity of knowledge via the process of integration of knowledge by connecting to both the present world and the Hereafter. While it describes the process of integration of knowledge itself, it does not describe the attributes of an integrated education system. Specifically, in the context of schools, a more detailed and relevant framework is needed. Sultan (1992), in discussing the concept and

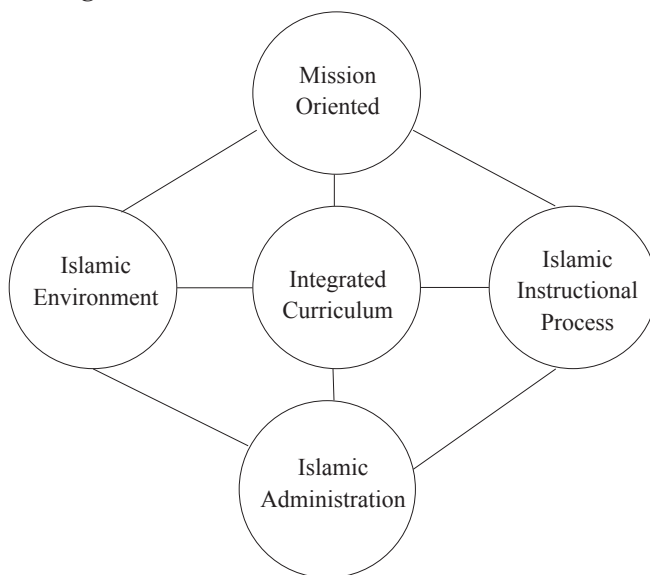characteristics of an Islamic school, put forth the following framework as shown in *Figure 3*.

Figure 3. Characteristics of an Islamic school (Sultan, 1992). At the heart of this framework is the Integrated Curriculum. The Integrated Curriculum is central to the Islamic school which is supported by the Islamic Instructional Process and an Islamic Environment, and led by a Mission-Oriented Islamic Administration.These factors suggest the various aspects of the school system needed to implement an integrated Islamic school system.

Islam has always viewed education as holistic, encompassing both the needs of life in the present world as well as the need for life in the Hereafter. The models discussed here allude to the importance of an education system that prioritises *Iman* together with the pursuit of knowledge, while being mindful of the practical needs of a well-managed education system, such resources and administration. These models suggest an ideal view of how Islam Integrated education system should function. However, Islamic Integrated Schools are inundated with various challenges, such as inadequate funding and lack of qualified teaching staffs. The idealised view of how Islamic Integrated Schools should operate, as described in the models, may not be fully implementable in real situations.

Methodology of study

This study utilises a questionnaire which was designed by the authors for an earlier study involving a set of themes that emerged from the interviews done with 35 participants (18 teachers and school leaders and 17 students) on their perspectives of the Islamic Integrated education system. After a few revisions, the final questionnaire contained four constructs:The School's Concept (Concept), The Integration of Islamic and Academic Knowledge (Integration), Teacher-Student Relationship (Relationship), and The School's Islamic Climate (Climate).

The School's Concept or *Concept* refers to the philosophy or values that a particular construct espouses. For example, some schools place more emphasis on developing students with leadership skills, focusing more on personal development. Islamic education remains the cornerstone of their school's objective but each school has a distinct concept that makes it unique in comparison to its peers.

The Integration of Islamic and Academic Knowledge or *Integration* points to the process of integrating both Islamic and academic knowledge. This process occurs at many levels, from the use of textbooks to how the school designs its curriculum.

At the Islamic Integrated Schools, relationship between the teachers and students are considered especially important. A good relationship means that the process of teaching and learning can become more effective as the students are more receptive and the teachers are more aware of their students' needs. Hence Teacher-Student Relationship or *Relationship* is found to be an important aspect of these schools.

The construct of The School's Islamic Climate or *Climate* gauges the level of Islamic practices and commitment within the school's community. It looks at aspects such as how students interact with one another, and whether practices such as congregational solat are considered part of the school's practices.

A pilot study was conducted at an Islamic Integrated School in the eastern part of Selangor, Malaysia, to determine the face validity and reliability of the items. The Cronbach Alpha for the instrument is .93. A breakdown of the items and constructs included in the questionnaire is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Constructs and Items of the questionnaire

Constructs		Number of items
Concept	School Concept	14
Integration	Integration of Islamic and Academic Knowledge	18
Relationship	Teacher-Student Relationship	14
Climate	School's Islamic Climate	15
Total number of items		**61**

N=507

Six Islamic Integrated Schools were purposively selected for the distribution of the questionnaire; two in Indonesia, one in Singapore, and three in Malaysia. The schools chosen were public and private Islamic Integrated Schools with excellent academic track record in national-level public examinations, and considered among the top-performing schools in their respective countries.

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to each school. Due to the limited access to the schools and the small number of schools that agreed to participate, the total number of questionnaire sets returned was 507.

Findings

As indicated in Table 2, 300 male (58.6%) and 207 female (40.4%) students were selected as the sample, with the assistance of the schools. 344 or 67% of the respondents were from Malay ethnic background. Only two students identified themselves as Chinese while 14 students indicated Indian as their ethnicity. The rest of the students checked 'Others' as their ethnic background (N=147 or 28.7%), which could mean that they were from other ethnic groups besides Malay, Chinese or Indian. In terms of nationality, the majority of the respondents came from Malaysia (N= 254 or 49.6%), followed by Indonesia (160 or 31.3%), and Singapore (93 or 18.2%).

Table 2 Demography of Sample

Demography	Type	Frequency	Percentage
Ethnicity	Malay	344	67.2%
	Chinese	2	0.4%
	Indian	14	2.7%
	Others	147	28.7%
Religion	Islam	506	98.8%
	Others	1	0.2%
Gender	Male	300	58.6%
	Female	207	40.4%
Country	Indonesia	160	31.3%
	Singapore	93	18.2%
	Malaysia	254	49.6%

N=507

Confirmatory factor analysis

Based on the findings of the study, the constructs identified in the model are *Integration*, *Relations*, and *Climate* as constructs that contributed significantly to *Concept* (the endogenous construct of this model) (see Figure 6). It shares some of the characteristics of the closed integration model proposed by Sultan (1992) but suggests that some constructs are supportive of another, in this case the other constructs supporting the concept of the *School*. The items of the constructs were presented using a 6-point Likert scale.

Figure 6. Model of the Practices of I Education System in Selected Malay Archipelago Schools
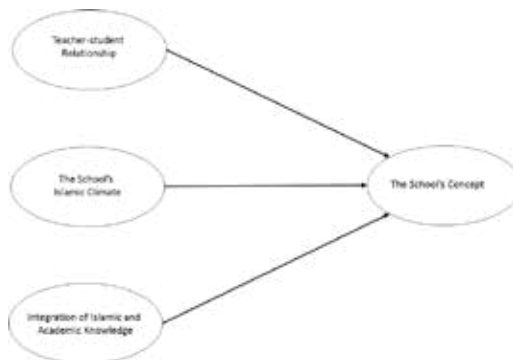
Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) were applied to simultaneously analyse the impact of all exogenous constructs extracted from factor analysis on the endogenous construct.To identify the individual construct's contributions towards the Islamic Integrated school educational model, the model was tested against the following hypotheses:

H$_0$: there is no model of the existing practices of the Islamic Integrated School that significantly relates the Islamic Integrated Schools' objectives

H$_1$: there is a model of the existing practices of the Islamic Integrated School that significantly relates the Islamic Integrated Schools' objectives

H$_1$ is tested to see if the practices of the Islamic Integrated School construct significantly fulfils the Islamic Integrated Schools' objectives, i.e. the degree to whichthe exogenous constructs (*Integration*, *Relations*, and *Climate*) support the endogenous construct (*Concept*) as a model.

According to the final revision of the model (shown in Figure 7), the construct *Integration* does not significantly fulfil the Islamic educational objectives. Its relationship to the construct *Concept* is very low,with a loading value of 0.15.The other constructs, *Climate* and *Relations*,are found to be substantially significant in fulfilling the Islamic integrated educational system's objectives,with both having a factor loading of 0.33. The fit indices for the initial full-fledged model are the CMIN/DF=2.652, CFI= .961, RMSEA= .052, TLI=.955,falling within the recommended ranges as suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010).

Figure 7. The Full-fledged Model of the Practices of the Integrated Education System
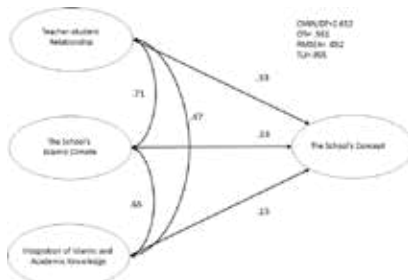
Results and discussion

The analysis indicates that *Relations*, *Climate*, and *Integration* showed significant correlation with the *Concept* of the Islamic Integrated school. However, *Integration* appeared to be the weakest construct supporting the *Concept* of the Islamic Integrated School.

The items that described the construct of *Integration* are the use of the Arabic language and textbooks.This is what the general Muslim public tends to associate with Islamic schools in general. In some parts of Malaysia, Islamic schools are referred to as *Sekolah Arab* or Arabic Schools. In this respect, the use of the Arabic Language appears to be the most defining aspect of the Islamic Integrated school. Other items that are more closely related to the process of knowledge integration are found to be insignificant. This finding supports the finding of the qualitative study on knowledge integration done earlier by the authors. The findings of this study suggest that the current implementation of knowledge integration among the Islamic Integrated Schools in the Malay Archipelago is ineffective and not up to the standards to which schools are aspiring. One possible reason for the ineffectiveness is the lack of training for the teachers in terms of integrating the different spheres of knowledge.Teachers have their own individual biases towards the integration of Islamic knowledge and secularly-derived scientific knowledge (Mansour, 2010) and this impacts the overall implementation of knowledge integration in the schools.

The construct *Concept* described the schools' major objectives and philosophy in general. Each item representing the construct corresponds to the objectives at the macro level or objectives that are most commonly pursued by the Islamic Integrated Schools, such as producing students with leadership qualities, piety, and knowledge. The items that describe objectives at the micro level or the internal aspects of the students, such as their spiritual development and their commitment to Islam and its commandments appear to be less significant. A possible explanation for this observation is the expectation placed on the schools themselves. Islamic schools, especially those in societies where Muslims are the minority, are faced with the challenges of providing an alternative education system that is at par with the mainstream public education system. These schools strive to produce students who are imbued with Islamic values (Rashid and Muhammad, 1992) but are still able to

identify with the secular ideals and reality of their society (Halstead, 2004; Merry, 2010). Being placed under such expectation has made the schools more focused on the objectives that are observable and that which conform to the common norms of their society. On the other hand, objectives that are more closely related to the Islamic goals of education and individual development, such as critical thinking and spiritual development, end up being less emphasised. There is clearly a need for the schools to balance between the expectations of society and the major objectives as well as the philosophy of the school.

The findings related to the Islamic Climate of the school show the construct being moderately-supported. This suggests that the basics of Islamic *adab* or etiquette are adequately observed among the students. The observed *adab* includes mutual respect between the young and the elderly, cleanliness, and greeting one another with *salam*. Islamic-inspired motifs on the school buildings are also found to be part of what the students perceive as the feature of an Islamic school environment. The students also mention the school's *musolla* (an area that functions as the school's mosque, but smaller in physical space size) as a place that is fully utilised by the school community. A study by Mohd Shafie, Tamuri, Abdul Ghani and Talib (2014),which looked at the usage of the school *musolla* in greater detail, concluded that a school *musolla* should also be utilised as a place for teaching and learning, in addition to its main role as a place of worship. However, the fact that this construct shows moderate support for *Concept* raises the question about the level at which students practice Islamic teachings in their school or at least how they perceive Islam is being practiced within their school community.

The other moderately-supported construct in the model is *Teacher-Student Relationship*. This construct describes the dimensions of teacher-student relationship in schools. In general, the items in the model indicate that the teachers at the schools are friendly, participative, cooperative, trustworthy, able to resolve differences amicably and harmoniously, and give attention to students. These attributes adhere to the Al-Ghazali's model of teacher-student relationship (Alkanderi, 2001). Other more detailed items such as being able to remember students by name, are found to be not significant. Being able to know students down to their level of achievement, capability, personal background, and writing styles can help teachers to tailor their teaching approaches (Hussin, Che Noh,&

Tamuri, 2013). This finding suggests that improvements should be made with regards to the teacher-student relationship. Improving teacher-student relationship enables the two sides to resolve their differences amicably and foster greater understanding between one another. These would, by and large, enhance the level of teacher-student relationship, help fulfil the concepts of Islamic Integrated School educational objectives, and result in another best practice for the Islamic Integrated Schools in the Malay Archipelago. It is also important that Islam views the teacher as not only a transmitter of knowledge but also as someone who nurtures his students intellectually and spiritually (Alavi, 2008). Teachers in the Islamic education system incorporate 'mind-to-mind' and 'heart-to-heart' methods in their pedagogical practices (Salleh, 2013). By fostering good relationship with students, teachers are in a better position to develop the students' intellectual, spiritual, and moral capacities.

From the context of 21st Century education, there is little evidence from the study to suggest that the students of the Islamic Integrated Schools are taught the necessary skills described in the proposed framework. Items in the questionnaire that are related to the 21st Century Education concept such as critical thinking are found to be not significant. However, it is important to remember that the majority of these schools have their own Islamic Integrated education system that varies from one another. For instance, one school may have the financial and infrastructural capabilities to provide their students with Information Technology subjects while another would focus on involving their students in community-based projects. These variations are based on the individual school's preponderance, which could inadvertently lead to teaching and learning quality issues. Memon (2012) argues that among the biggest challenges faced by Islamic schools everywhere is standardisation. The absence of Islamic school standards makes it difficult for anyone to assess whether a school or a teacher is adhering to the principles of education as outlined in the Quran and the *Sunnah*. Perhaps the most important lesson that the proponents of the Islamic Integrated Schools should take from the concept of 21st Century Education is to come up with a clearly-defined framework that describes the standard criteria of the content, pedagogical standards, assessments, and outcomes of an Islamic integrated education system.

Implications for school leaders

The success of the school depends on strong leadership and good management practices that can deal effectively with challenges. With this aim in mind, this paper proposes three crucial implications for school leaders of the Islamic Integrated Schools.

Firstly, leaders of the Islamic Integrated school need to be well-versed in the objectives of their school's integrated education system, as defined by the school's concept. Each school may differ in its philosophy, objectives and approaches to an Islamic integrated system but ultimately its goal is to produce students who are equipped with both Islamic and academic knowledge. However, when stakeholders such as the teachers and parents are not able to understand the objectives and advantages of the Islamic integrated system, the system can suffer from setbacks and even risk being discontinued. Muhammad and Bakar (2013) proposed that the Islamic Integrated Schools should be allowed adequate time and resources to overcome their challenges, especially those that are unique to this type of schools.

The Islamic Integrated Schools often internally-recruit their principals and heads of department by promoting the more senior teachers. On one hand, senior teachers have the necessary experience and understanding of the school's concept that are needed for the role. Yet, at the same time, they may not be able to bring about necessary changes or interventions as they are resistant to changing the status quo. School leaders of the Islamic Integrated Schools should, therefore, be prepared to implement necessary changes when needed while having a clear understanding of the school's intended objectives.

Secondly, it is vital for school leaders at the Islamic Integrated Schools to play their roles as effective instructional leaders. Effective instructional leaders are school leaders who are successful in promoting self-reflection and professional development among their teachers (Blase & Blase, 2000). Among the approaches that school leaders can take to become effective instructional leaders are providing opportunities for teacher training and skills development, engaging the teachers as partners in reflective dialogues, and employing different types of strategies in engaging the teachers and staff. They should also consider these measures with respect to the context of their own schools (Hallinger, 2005), as each school has its specific challenges and

needs. In terms of improving the pedagogy of the Islamic integrated curriculum, school leaders can support and encourage their teachers by providing adequate resources, and mentoring by experienced teachers. Development programmes, for the teachers as well as the school community, can be organised appropriately throughout the schooling year as a way to enhance the Islamic climate of the school (Tamuri, 2007).

The Islamic Integrated education system faces constant pressure to provide a curriculum that is anchored in the Islamic worldview and values while simultaneously meeting the demands of contemporary society (Memon, 2011). Some contents in the Islamic Integrated School syllabus surveyed in this study such as Mathematics and Geography are taken from the national curriculum and are supplemented with Islamic elements such as relevant verses from the Quran. This responsibility is often given to the teachers.However, not all teachers know how to link Islamic knowledge to the subjects they are teaching. Some teachers do not have any background in Islamic education. In this respect, school leaders need to provide teachers with adequate support and guidance to enable them to successfully integrate academic and Islamic knowledge in the classrooms. Moreover, merely adding Quranic verses and *Hadiths* to certain topics in the school curriculum is not sufficient.

Thirdly, nearly all Islamic Integrated Schools have an entrance assessment process through which a potential student's eligibility is assessed. All accepted students are expected to adhere to the school's Islamic climate and learning requirements of the integrated curriculum. The entrance assessment process allows the schools to mitigate potential problems regarding the students including disciplinary problems. However,what is also needed is continuous development programmes for students and the school community, similar to the continuous professional development offered to teachers.The Islamic Integrated Schools should not be contented with only admitting good students but instead continue to develop their students according to their level and needs. For instance, in one Malaysian Islamic Integrated School, all final year students are required to involve in group projects that benefit the surrounding community, as part of the individual students' school-based assessment. The students are tasked with finding their own fundings for their projects while the school monitors the progress of the projects and advises the students when necessary. Extra-curricular projects are a

great practical way to teach students important soft skills such as project management and communication skills, as well as to develop within the students an aspiration to contribute towards the betterment of the society, nation, and the Muslim *ummah*.

Conclusion

This paper examined the concept, practices, and model of the integrated education system in the context of the Malay Archipelago, an area largely populated by Muslims living in multicultural societies. The Islamic Integrated Schools offer an education system that aims to fulfil the needs of the Muslim *ummah* as well as the needs of the nation by developing new generations of Muslims who are knowledgeable and capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century. The findings from the survey indicatethe need to further examine the effectiveness of the Islamic Integrated Schools, particularly on the aspect of pedagogical practices of an integrated curriculum. Many of these schools have shown good academic performances and some are considered to be among the top-performing schools in their respective countries. Integration of Islamic and academic subjects is the main reason why Muslims, especially the parents, continue to support the Islamic Integrated Schools. With an effective implementation of knowledge integration, these schools may be able to provide an alternative education system to the national education system that can sufficiently prepare students for the new century. The Islamic Integrated Schools would certainly benefit from adapting aspects of the 21st Century Education concept and framework which would mirror the fifth principle of an integrated knowledge described by Hassan (2010), where the Islamic and *aqliyyah* knowledge are taught and learned seamlessly with one another. Future studies on the Islamic Integrated Schools should consider using a large sample size, and if possible, perform a comparative examination of the different Islamic integrated education systems currently being implemented.

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