Khatam Al-Quran in Islamic Education Curriculum in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study intends to explore the role played by J-QAF and Islam Education teachers in achieving the objective of complete recitation of the Quran (Khatam al-Quran) by primary school pupils. The study is focussed on teachers involved in the teaching of J-QAF first level pupils in 2005, now in their fourth year of primary school. The teachers involved have used the best possible strategy and technique in their lessons in order to ensure that Muslims pupils would be able to accomplish Khatam al-Quran while at primary school. Among fourth year pupils, there are some who have achieved complete recitation. However, this has been accomplished through a combination of the pupils’ recitation at home as well as in school. Although some pupils have completed, there are still (many) pupils at the level of Iqra' books 1, 2 and 3. So this study is intended to discover the reality of the teaching of J-QAF since it was introduced in 2005.

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Khatam Al-Quran; Islamic Curriculum; Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

The J-QAF programme was based on an idea proposed specifically by the Prime Minister of Malaysia during his visit to the Ministry of Education Malaysia on the 30th of December 2003. The proposal was considered in detail at a J-QAF seminar organized by the Ministry of Education from the 3rd to the 5th of March 2004. The J-QAF programme was implemented on an experimental basis in a pilot project for 3 months ending in July 2004. The Prime Minister subsequently agreed for this programme to be implemented from school year 2005.

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The J-QAF programme is an effort to strengthen Islamic Education through special emphasis in the teaching of the Jawi script, the Quran, Arabic Language and Fardu Ain at the primary school level. The implementation of this programme involves the use of its own distinctive curriculum, models and modules. Specialist teachers are used for remedial teaching, guidance, skill development, strengthening, enrichment and subject appreciation among pupils. The implementation of the programme uses the present timetable allocations.

Nevertheless, this study will only focus on matters related to the Khatam al-Quran (Complete Recitation) programme in primary schools and on the role of teachers in achieving this objective. Here introduce the paper, and put a nomenclature if necessary, in a box with the same font size as the rest of the paper. The paragraphs continue from here and are only separated by headings, subheadings, images and formulae. The section headings are arranged by numbers, bold and 10 pt. Here follows further instructions for authors.

1.1. J-QAF KHATAM AL-QURAN MODULE

According to the "Panduan Dasar dan Pelaksanaan J-QAF" (J-QAF Policy and Implementation Guide), JAPIM (2008), the recitation of the Quran is currently being taught as part of Islamic Education under the category Quran Recitation guidance. However it does not stress learning until completion of the Quran because that would require continuous guidance using an adequate number of teachers in proportion to the number of pupils, using the talaqqi and mushafahah approach (that is, by a method of learning where each student directly faces his teacher, who shall listen to the student's recitation, correct any mistakes, and demonstrate the correct and proper way of reciting). As such, the subject of Islamic Education in schools is only geared towards the ability to recite the Quran, while the aspect of complete recitation of the entire Quran (khatam) is not emphasized but left instead to society to deal with.

2.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to the "Panduan Dasar dan Pelaksanaan J-QAF" (J-QAF Policy and Implementation Guide), JAPIM (2008), the recitation of the Quran is currently being taught as part of Islamic Education under the category Quran Recitation guidance. However it does not stress learning until completion of the whole Quran because that would require continuous guidance using an adequate number of teachers in proportion to the number of pupils, using the talaqqi and mushafahah approach (that is, by a method of learning where each student directly faces his teacher, who shall listen to the student's recitation, correct any mistakes, and demonstrate the correct and proper way of reciting). As such, the subject of Islamic Education in schools is only geared towards ability to recite the Quran, while the aspect of complete recitation of the entire Quran (khatam) is not emphasized but left instead to society to deal with.

In order to achieve the objective of Khatam al-Quran at the primary school level, several Khatam al-Quran modules have been introduced into the J-QAF programme:

A. 6 Months Khatam al-Quran model during the Teaching and Learning (T & L) time-period for the first 6 months.
B. Recitation of Quran guidance during the T & L period for the second 6 months.
C. Tasmik Module outside the T & L period.
D. Regularly scheduled Quran Literacy camps outside of school hours

2.2. SURVEY OF BOOKS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE MOE J-QAF PROGRAMME

The J-QAF Khatam al-Quran programme consists of 4 models as follows:
A. **6 months Model** implemented according to the established guidelines using the currently allocated time period for Islamic Education (IE). This model will use the *talaqqi* and *mushafahah* approach. Pupils who have yet to acquire the ability to recite the Quran will be taught using the IQRA' method, while those who can already recite will be allowed to proceed using the 6 month Khatam al-Quran model. The 6 month Khatam al-Quran model will use the time allocated for IE, that is 4 periods (a week) for the first 6 months each year, from Year One to Year Six. At the same time, those pupils who have yet to acquire the ability to recite the Quran will continue using the IQRA’ method.

B. **Quran Recitation Guidance** is a continuation for the **6 month Khatam al-Quran model** described earlier. In the second 6 month period, Quran Recitation Guidance will use 3 periods (a week) for Year One and 2 periods for Year Two to Year Six. The following is a summary of the allocation of time for the two activities above throughout the year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>First 6 months (Khatam al-Quran)</th>
<th>Second 6 months (Recitation Guidance)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>4 periods a week</td>
<td>3 periods a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>4 periods a week</td>
<td>2 periods a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>4 periods a week</td>
<td>2 periods a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>4 periods a week</td>
<td>2 periods a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>4 periods a week</td>
<td>2 periods a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>4 periods a week</td>
<td>2 periods a week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. **The Tasmik Model** is carried out outside of normal school hours depending on the suitability (of the time), convenience of pupils and availability of Tasmik teachers comprising J-QAF and IE teachers, as well as teachers of other subjects who have the ability. The Tasmik teachers have to be officially appointed by the school. The Tasmik Model is a programme for guiding and recording the progress of pupils through the Iqra' method books and the pupils’ individual recitation based on a scheduled programme to enable each pupil to complete the recitation of the whole Quran.

Among the objectives of the Tasmik model is to guide the pupil to recite the Quran with tajweed and subsequently for the pupil to achieve recitation of all 30 parts of the Quran during his years in primary school. This is a programme to strengthen the 6 month Khatam al-Quran model and the Recitation Guidance programmes outside of the normal school time-table.

D. **The Quran Literacy Camp** has been likewise created as a strengthening activity for the Tasmik Model above. It has been created to overcome the problem of weak pupils who are still at the level of the Iqra' books 1, 2 and 3, while the other pupils in general are already able to progress to recite the Quran proper. The weak pupils will be identified by means of a screening test so that only the weak pupils are selected to participate in the camp and thus special attention can be given to them. The time for holding the camp will be determined by the school concerned. Usually the camp is held during the weekend or during school vacation.

### 2.3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF THE J-QAF KHATAM AL-QURAN MODULE

From interviews with MoE sources, the MoE is hopeful that by means of the the Khatam al-Quran subject pupils will have the ability:

A. To recite the verses of the Quran, articulating correctly every letter from its point of articulation.
B. To recite the verses of the Quran by applying correctly all the rules of Tajweed
C. To recite the verses of the Quran smoothly and fluently.
D. To complete the recitation of the whole Quran while at primary school.

All the four objectives mentioned above shall be attempted through the 4 teaching and learning strategies of the J-QAF Khatam al-Quran model as in the table below:

Table 2: J-QAF Teacher’s Teaching Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J-QAF Khatam al-Quran Model</th>
<th>Recitation of Quran Guidance Model</th>
<th>Tasmik outside of P&amp;P hours Model</th>
<th>Quran Literacy Camp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 month Khatam al-Quran Model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. PARTICIPANTS AND PLACE OF STUDY

This study has been carried out as a case study in order to enable the researcher to investigate and make detailed observations as suggested by Fraenkel (1996). As such, the teaching strategies and techniques can be looked at in depth although the study involves only a small number of respondents. In this study, the most important factor in determining the researcher’s choice of participants/respondents and locations is that the teacher comes from a school that was involved in J-QAF first layer in 2005, where the pupils should be in year 4 (in 2008). The following is a list of the schools served by the teachers who were interviewed:

- A teacher from Sekolah Kebangsaan Toh Indera Wangsa Ahmad, Batu Gajah, Perak who was involved in the J-QAF first layer, 2005. There are 1429 pupils in the school and the number of Muslim year 4 students is 182. This school has a total of 6 Islamic Religious Education teachers and the number of J-QAF teachers is 7. The respondent/participant is the writer’s own younger sibling who has served as an Islamic Education teacher at various national primary schools for 18 years.
- A teacher from Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Aman, Pokok Assam, Taiping, Perak involved in the J-QAF first layer, 2005. There are 680 pupils in the school and the number of Muslim year 4 students is 83. This school has a total of 7 Islamic Religious Education teachers and the number of J-QAF teachers is 6. The participant is also a younger sibling of the writer’s who has served as a J-QAF teacher since it was introduced in 2005.
- A teacher from Sekolah Kebangsaan Riam Batu Dua, Kem Sri Miri, Miri, Sarawak. There are 515 pupils in the school and the number of Muslim year 4 students is 49. The participant is the wife of an acquaintance of the writer’s who has served as a J-QAF teacher since it was introduced in 2005.
- A teacher from Sekolah Kebangsaan Bandar Samariang, Kuching Sarawak. There are 1403 pupils in the school and the number of Muslim year 4 students is 184. The participant is an acquaintance of the writer’s who has served as a J-QAF teacher since it was introduced in 2005.

The writer took the opportunity to interview all the above respondents during the 2008 Eid al-Fitr holidays, when all the respondents were back in their hometown.
4. STUDY FINDINGS

4.1. TEACHING STRATEGY FOR J-QAF KHATAM AL-QURAN MODULE

The writer finds that there are only 2 Khatam al-Quran modules employed as the main teaching and learning strategy by J-QAF teachers. Other activities mentioned in MoE sources are actually sub-modules to stabilize the 2 main modules as follows:

- The Khatam al-Quran model during the T & L time-period for the first 6 months followed by the Recitation of Quran Guidance during the T & L period for the second 6 months
- The Tasmik Module and the Quran Literacy Camp outside the T & L period. and scheduled outside of school hours.

4.2. TEACHING STRATEGY FOR KHATAM AL-QURAN MODEL DURING T & L PERIOD

From interviews with the 4 respondents from the 4 schools which have been directly involved in the J-QAF programme since 2005 the writer finds that:

- The Khatam al-Quran model was implemented during the Islamic Education T & L period 4 times a week for the first six months of the year, from January to June each year. The teaching strategy that was carried out was the BIG (bacaan ikut guru) or (Repeat After Me) technique. This means that what is intended by Khatam al-Quran is complete recitation of the Quran by repeating after the teacher. The teacher will recite a portion of the Quran, and the pupils will then repeat after him in unison. The division of the verses and surahs for the BIG activity has managed to follow closely the syllabus included in the J-QAF teaching guide book prepared by the MoE.
- For pupils in Year 1, the first 6 months will be allotted for teaching the lessons from the Iqra' books 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Generally the pupils will be able to complete the Iqra' books by repeating after the teacher. For the second 6 months, the period for Recitation Guidance will be filled with recitation of the Quran according to the BIG technique from Surah al-Fatihah, followed by Surah al-Baqarah, and so on until the whole Quran is eventually completed in Year 6. From the writer's observation, until September 2008, the BIG recitation of the pupils in Year 4 has reached Surah al-Hajj, which is in the 17th part of the Quran, as indicated by the syllabus.
- For schools which have less than 600 pupils, the number of IE and J-QAF teachers must be at least 12, in order to achieve an almost perfect implementation of the Khatam al-Quran teaching module. Every classroom of between 35 to 40 pupils will be handled by 2 or 3 IE and J-QAF teachers. The first 15 minutes will be allotted for BIG recitation according to the syllabus, while the second 15 minutes will be used for group recitation led by the 2 or 3 teachers as mentioned. Pupils will be divided into 3 groups: good, medium and weak. This technique is used to ensure that all pupils would be able to recite the Quran and be corrected by teachers. This is the normal method of teaching for every class using the J-QAF Khatam al-Quran module.
- A problem which might arise is if the school has more than 700 pupils while IE and J-QAF teachers number not more than 12. Every classroom will in fact be led by only one Khatam al-Quran teacher. How then can the BIG programme be implemented well throughout the year? For those pupils whose are already good, there will of course be no difficulty keeping up with their teacher's recitation; as well as some of those moderately good pupils. But what about the weak pupils? The BIG programme for the whole year would surely go to waste. Nevertheless, at least all the pupils would have have heard every verse of the Quran recited to them by the teachers, although they could not repeat after the teachers well.
The BIG (Repeat After Me) method has been used to overcome the problem of uneven pupil achievement within a single classroom or school. Not all pupils are able to follow the lessons of the Iqra' books 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 well during the first 6 months of Year 1. If the pupil fails to achieve the level of recitation upon entering the second 6 month period of Year 1, this failure will persist without end although the pupil has reached Year 4.

4.3. TEACHING STRATEGY FOR TASMIK MODEL OUTSIDE T & L PERIOD

The Tasmik model was introduced to help pupils achieve complete recitation of the Quran individually (not in groups, such as BIG). At the same time the Tasmik model also helped to overcome the problem faced by pupils who could not keep up with the rate of progress as planned in the syllabus.

From interviews with the 4 respondents from the 4 schools which have been directly involved in the J-QAF programme since 2005 the writer finds that:

- The Tasmik model is implemented outside the official school hours. This is proven when IE and J-QAF teachers will come early or leave late, 30 minutes to 1½ hours earlier or later than the official school hours.
- According to a survey that was carried out, pupils generally do not rely solely on recitation in school. Most of the pupils who recite the Quran at home will continue their recitation during the Tasmik session in school. The teacher will keep a record of the pupil's recitation in a record book meant for this purpose provided by the MoE. This record book will then be brought home for parents, family members or whoever is supervising the pupil's recitation outside school hours to keep track of the pupil's progress. According to the study respondents, many Year 4 pupils have already the ability to read the Quran (well) while some have already completed the recitation of the whole Quran through recitation in and out of school hours, going beyond the original target.
- The writer finds that in most districts in Peninsular Malaysia there are Quran and Fardhu Ain (KAFA) classes conducted outside schooling hours. This makes the school teacher's job easier and enables the pupil to accomplish Khatam al-Quran earlier. The situation is, however, different in Sabah and Sarawak. Both the respondents who served in Sarawak say that in Sabah and Sarawak the Quran and KAFA classes are not performing well. Most pupils recite the Quran only in school. Outside of school hours, it depends on the parents. Those parents who are concerned about their children's progress will themselves teach their own children to recite the Quran. Some of them send their children to a mosque or surau to recite the Quran after Sunset prayer. According to information received from respondents, the writer concludes that there are districts or states which do not have KAFA programmes, in Peninsular Malaysia as well as in Sabah and Sarawak.
- The success of the Khatam al-Quran model in primary school is very much dependent on the number of pupils, and the number of IE and J-QAF teachers in the school. Based on the interviews, we find that schools which have 600 or fewer pupils show a commendable level of success. Generally speaking, all the schools which have been following the J-QAF programme since 2005 were supplied with 12 or 13 IE and J-QAF teachers each Schools which have more than 700 pupils will show failure and there is a lot of dissatisfaction among the IE and J-QAF teachers in the implementation of the programme. In schools with a high pupil population, the respondents say that there are pupils who are still at the Iqra' books level 1, 2, or 3. According to IE and J-QAF teacher evaluation, a pupil must be at Iqra' books level 4, 5 and 6 to be categorised as one who already has the ability to recite the Quran.
- Among the reasons for the failure to achieve the target of the Khatam al-Quran module is the lack of cooperation from the pupil's own family in not allowing the pupil to stay back after official school hours. They prefer their children to be at home rather than participate in the Tasmik programme after official school hours. This situation becomes more acute if the pupil has no other Quran recitation activity at home. It is bad enough that the parents themselves do not know how to recite, they would not even bother to send the child to a neighbour or the local community centre to help the child recite the Quran.
The reality is that there exist in all schools some pupils who are very weak mentally. Not only are they not able to recite the Quran, they cannot even recognize letters and numbers. Pupils in this category are not just stuck at the level of the Iqra' books 1, 2, 3 but they should be placed far below that. However, the very dedicated IE and J-QAF teachers never give up on these children. They use various ways to teach these Islamic buds using various techniques such as flash cards, Alif Ba Ta videos and so on. These pupils will be placed together in a group and given more intensive guidance during the Tasmik period compared to other pupils.

Through the interviews we learn that the Quran Literacy Camp is the last resort for IE and J-QAF teachers to help weak pupils to be able to recite the Quran. After failing in all the planned modules above, selected pupils will be brought to join the Quran Literacy Camp. The camp is held periodically according to a schedule determined by the school authorities. Usually the camp is held during weekends or during the school term break. The location of the camp is the school itself and therefore the costs are minimal. There are schools which hold these camps annually as festive occasions with a large budget, courtesy of the school's Parent-Teacher Association. At the same time there are also schools which have no need to hold a camp because, thankfully, there is no pupil "qualified" to take part. Praise be to Allah.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. STRATEGY OF TEACHING BY J-QAF KHATAM AL-QURAN TEACHERS

From the research data obtained in the study, the writer notices that the success of the J-QAF programme in primary schools has been achieved as a result of the mutual cooperation of the IE and J-QAF teachers. They spend between 32 to 36 periods a week, plus many extra hours outside the official school hours to ensure the success of the J-QAF programme. The IE and J-QAF teachers, in implementing the Khatam al-Quran module, divided it into 2 principal activities, namely activity during the T & L periods and activity outside the official schooling hours. The modules that are used to achieve the target of enabling all pupils to complete recitation of whole Quran during their time in primary school, can be summarised as follows:

- The BIG (bacaan ikut guru) (Repeat After Me) teaching strategy that is implemented during the T & L time-period for 6 months and the Recitation of Quran Guidance throughout the year.

- The Tasmik teaching strategy based on talaggii and mushafahah technique (that is, the teacher deals with each pupil individually) implemented outside the official school hours. This strategy this strengthened by the Quran Literacy Camps held on a regular basis to overcome the pupils' weaknesses.

5.2. THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE OF J-QAF

The Ministry of Education (MoE), through the Islamic Education Division, has been cooperating very well in the effort to ensure success of the J-QAF programme in primary schools. From the interviews the writer is informed that every pupil is supplied with the Iqra' books and a "mushaf tajweed" - demonstrating praiseworthy commitment (on the ministry's part). The writer would like to commend the Malaysian Education Ministry in implementing the J-QAF programme which is centred on increasing the value of human capital to equip Muslims with adequate spiritual provisions. The MoE's efforts can be further strengthened by increasing the number of J-QAF teachers, to a ratio of 1 teacher for every 10 pupils in a school, as originally proposed.

5.3. THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE OF J-QAF
It is hoped that schools would continue to give strong commitment and take practical steps to ensure the smooth running of J-QAF programmes in schools. There is still a lot more room for improvement on the part of schools in ensuring the success of their J-QAF programmes. Any problems faced can be overcome by regular discussions and continuous monitoring of pupils and teachers. Teachers are the pillars of support for the success of the J-QAF programme, hence they should continue to raise their level of professionalism from time to time. They are advised to be fair, honest, trustworthy, disciplined and dedicated in carrying out their teaching duties. The successes achieved by pupils in the J-QAF programme are also the teachers' permanently abiding achievements.

5.4. THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE OF J-QAF

The family is the most important institution in educating children. Parents should be mindful of their children’s development. It is suggested that parents should be willing to sacrifice time and money to ensure their children's success since their children are their future assets. From this study, the writer finds that the Khatam al-Quran programme is very much related to the Quran and Fardhu Ain classes (KAFA) held at the local community centres. Not all districts or states in Malaysia have KAFA classes as a means to improve the pupil's self-development outside the official school hours. Therefore the writer would like to recommend those communities that have yet to organize any KAFA activity to do so urgently, even if only in a surau (prayer hall) or local community hall. To carry out about such programmes as KAFA is a religious obligation incumbent upon the community as a whole (fard kifayah) which should not be taken lightly by Muslims living in that community.

References


