

The Impact of the Arabic Language Curriculum of the International Islamic University Malaysia on Students' Behaviors

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Abstract- Curriculum in an academic setting plays a vital and triadic role based on the interrelationships of the content, students and instructors. There are fundamental components of curriculum which are objective, content, method and evaluation which constitute basis for the overall development of the students. Putting all the components of curriculum together, it should be tailored towards achieving all-important objectives of education. The Arabic language curriculum of the International Islamic University (IIUM) is designed for fostering various aspects of language skills. Undoubtedly, Arabic language is unique as it shapes the behaviours of the students in an academic setting. However, little investigation of the impact of the Arabic language on the students' behaviours is done recently. This paper primarily aims at exploring the impact of the Arabic Language Curriculum of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) on the students' behaviors. The methodology used in the study is quantitative research design. The data was obtained through the distribution of the questionnaire to the total number of seventy (75) respondents. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha for internal consistent. The data analysis was done by using SPSS. The findings show that the Arabic language curriculum of the International Islamic University Malaysia have positive impact on the moral and ethical teachings and its effects on the holistic character development of the students could not be underrated. It is thereby recommended that the Arabic language of IIUM should be reviewed constantly in order to integrate moral and ethical values in to the content of what the students are learning.

Index Terms- Arabic, Language, Culture, Behaviour, Curriculum, Students.

I. INTRODUCTION

This primary objective of this paper is to investigate the impact of the Arabic Language Curriculum of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) on the students' behaviors. Curriculum in an academic setting plays a vital and triadic role based on the interrelationships of the content, students and instructors. There are fundamental components of curriculum which are objective, content, method and evaluation which constitute basis for the overall development of the students. Putting all the components of curriculum together, it should be tailored towards achieving all-important

objectives of education. The International Islamic University Malaysia is one of many universities worldwide which promote the study of Arabic language among Muslim youths. The Department of Arabic Language and Literature established in 1990. It offers several language programmes and campus activities organized. The department attracted many local and international students to the university who chose to specialize in the discipline which integrates modern educational approaches and technologies into the teaching and learning. Also, students are allowed to attend cross faculty programmes by opting for elective courses in Human Sciences and Islamic Revealed Knowledge. Its programme consists of core courses in Arabic Language and Literature, electives, and required courses in Human Science ssuch as Communication, History and Civilization, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology in order to expose the students to a variety of academic studies and approaches.

The Arabic Language curriculum aims at producing a new generation of scholars who understand Arabic Language and Literature in all its ramifications and who are capable of reading, writing, comprehending, and formulating their own critical thoughts in modern standard Arabic.

Based on the above explanations, this paper examines the impact the Arabic Language curriculum on the specific behaviour of the students in order to assess to which extent the programme's objectives were achieved. Thus, the research is arranged as follows: the next section discusses IIUM's Arabic curriculum follow by definition of curriculum, cultural of IIUM Arabic students, the objective of the Arabic language curriculum, data analysis and conclusion and recommendations.

1.2 Literature Review

This part explains the literature review of the present research paper. It covers different aspects such as: meaning of curriculum, Arabic Curriculum of the International Islamic University Malaysia, Cultural behavior of Students and objectives of IIUM Arabic Language and Literature Bachelor Degree Programme. Finally, the conclusion is drawn from the literature review.

1.2.1 Meaning of Curriculum:

The term 'curriculum' is derived from the Latin verb 'currere' which connotes rapid movement and competition (Abdur-Rahman, 2002). However, no consensus has been reached on what is exactly meant by curriculum. Several

definitions have been suggested by various scholars over time depending on their own perspectives and orientations. According to the *Al-Mu'jam al- Wasit of Majma' al-Lughah, mihaj* (curriculum) literally means “a clear path” (Cairo,2008).Technically, it means the path to be followed in order to achieve a goal or objective (Abdur-Rahman, 2002). Al-Wakil (1991) gave its obsolete meaning as “comprehensive knowledge, sciences, understanding and thinking imparted on a student in form of a subject.” This is closely related to the view expressed by Husniy Abdul Bari in his treatise *The History of School Curriculum* in which he defined curriculum as “the sum total of the experience that a student acquires or ought to acquire under the instruction of a teacher” (Abdul Bari, 2006). Ibrahim Muhammad ‘Ata held a contrary view and opined that “curriculum is not a subject to be given to students for memorization or to be sung in order to achieve a set objective but a set of items given to students in order to arouse his [or her] feeling of reality and urge to remember them each time he [or she] needs them.”

Muhammad ‘Izat Abdul Mawjud and others as quoted by Abdus Salaam AbdurRahman Hamid in his work *Curriculum in the Past and Contemporary Time* define curriculum as a comprehensive experience and activities that a school impacts onto its students under its instruction with the aim that students internalize its contained teachings and influences their cultural behaviour. It should also positively affect their social cultural development which is the ultimate aim of education. Curriculum is similarly fashioned in a way that suits the cultural norms an institution intends for its students (Hamid, 2002). Munirah Hassan al-Sa’di added to this definition the aspect of integration coupled with teaching aids and capacity and methods by means of which all of these elements are combined into a single unit (al-Sa’di, 1981). Salahudeen ‘Arafat Muhammad quoted Gelathorn Allen A as follows:

The appropriate comprehensive modern meaning of curriculum is a programme or agenda prepared towards controlling teaching in schools. Sometimes, it is prepared in form of book which could be read or studied by students at different levels with reference to semester bases as was learnt by the teachers in their days and as noted by some scholars to be used in an environment or society which also impact to a large extent on the curriculum (Muhammad, 2006).

All these above cited definitions may aid in the subsequent examination of the Arabic language curriculum of IIUM in terms of examining its specific design, its aims and objectives, and the means employed towards achieving the set objectives. The academic programme dedicated to the study of the Arabic language at the International Islamic University Malaysia is Bachelor of Human Science in Arabic Language and Literature. The courses are designed based on semester base with a maximum of three contact credit hours per week. Every student is allowed to register for a maximum of 17 credit contact hours in the first and second semester and 12 in the short or third semester. The total cumulative credit hours of the Bachelor’s degree programme lie between 149 and 151 credit hours. 30 credit hours are allocated for basic courses such as Creative Thinking and Problem Solving, Sciences of the Qur’an, Sciences of Hadith, Introduction to *Fiqh*, etc. Another 51 credit hours consist of core courses like Advanced Arabic Language, Arabic

Syntax, Arabic Morphology, etc., and another 30 credit hours are electives to be taken at the Faculty of Human Sciences departments such as Sociology & Anthropology (SOSA), Communications (COMM), History & Civilization (HIST), Political Science (PSCI), and Psychology (PSYC), or from other departments such as Kulliyah of Information Science and Technology (KICT), Kulliyah of Economics (KENMS), Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Law (AIKOL), and Institute of Education (INSTED), by selecting subjects which are to be either introductory courses, elective or general language skills such as Introduction to Communication, Introduction to History and Civilization, Introduction to Political Science, Introduction to Psychology, Introduction to Economics, Information Technology, Parenting, Consumer Law, Environmental Law, Malay Language (Bahasa Melayu), Qur’an Recitation (*tilawah*), etc. It is mandatory for all students to fulfill these requirements in order to graduate. The main purpose is to expose the students to the different sciences and their theoretical and practical approaches in order to produce well rounded who can be easily integrated into the labour market (IIUM Undergraduate Prospectus, 2007) .

1.2.2 Arabic Curriculum of the International Islamic University Malaysia

Any curriculum is specifically designed to achieve well defined objectives in accordance with the philosophy of the institution running the programme, having in view of the targeted students in particular and society at large. This is why educationists consider the curriculum as a vital element in the process of imparting knowledge to the younger generation. According to Ahmad bin Ibrahim (2005), “Quality education is to produce scholars who possess certain knowledge, skills, and exposure to what is needed by them and required or needed by their society; having power or technical know-how to invent, think and innovate as well as having knowledge about happenings around them”. He also observed that products of such institutions had to have certain focus, praiseworthy character, well adjusted cultural behaviour, as well as humanitarian and patriotic ideals (Ibrahim, 2005). A correct and precise understanding of the term curriculum is important before examining any curriculum in more detail.

1.2.3 Cultural behavior of Students and objectives of IIUM Arabic Language and Literature Bachelor Degree Programme

Under cultural behaviour is understood the sum total of observable acts which are exclusively based on the students’ character as imparted through the curriculum designed by an institution of learning. Such cultural behaviour may manifest itself in the thought patterns of the students, their religious consciousness, their forms of interaction with fellow human beings, their conception of the world, and also their ability to successfully interact within a social environment other than their own, particularly in terms of communication skills. The University’s curriculum is designed to facilitate the spiritual, moral, and intellectual development of the students and to ensure that students are guided in their thought, character, and perception and able to secure a living that allows them to live a happy and fulfilled life. All these aspects must be integrated in

order to achieve a comprehensive or holistic education (Rashid, 1993).

It is pertinent at this junction to state the aims and objectives of the Arabic Language programme at IIUM in order to evaluate its impact on the students' cultural behaviour. The following are the objectives of Arabic language Programme in IIUM:

- 1- To produce graduates who are competent in reading and writing Arabic materials.
- 2- To produce graduates who are able to communicate effectively in standard Arabic.
- 3- To produce graduates who are able to outline and describe the major intellectual contributions of past and present scholars in the area of Arabic linguistic and literary studies.
- 4- To produce graduates who are able to apply the results of Arabic scholarship in enhancing their ability to deal with issues of life.
- 5- To produce graduates who are able to think critically and creatively.
- 6- To produce graduates who are able to outline the elements of the Islamic worldview and relate them to their daily undertaking.
- 7- To produce graduates who are able to serve Islam and the Muslim community at large, especially in the context of their chosen careers.
- 8- To produce graduates who are aware of the importance of the empirical method in developing knowledge and assigning practical solutions to academic problems.
- 9- To produce graduates who are quality-conscious in carrying out future undertakings.

10- To produce graduates who are familiar with IT applications useful to their context.

11- To produce graduates who are equipped with the necessary skills for continual self-improvement and lifelong learning.

In conclusion, from the literature review, the general meaning of curriculum, Arabic curriculum in IIUM, cultural behaviour of IIUM Arabic Language students and the objectives of IIUM's Arabic language Programme have been extensively elaborated.

1.3 Methodology

This part explains the methodology employed in this paper. The research design used in this paper is quantitative research design. Other aspects that are taken into account in this paper are: population and sample, instrument, validity and reliability of the instrument, procedure for data collection, procedure for data analysis and finally the conclusion is drawn. The target population of the paper comprised undergraduate students of the International Islamic University Malaysia. It has been indicated that the total accumulated numbers of Arabic Language students of International Islamic University Malaysia in 2009/2010, Semester 2, were 278. 186 of the students were female compared to 56 male students. Similarly, 36 of the students of Arabic language were international students and 242 locals (Malaysians). Table 1.1 shows the undergraduate Students in Arabic Language and Literature, Semester 2, 2009/2010:

Table 1.1
Details of Undergraduate Students in Arabic Language and Literature, Semester 2, 2009/2010.

| Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | |
|-----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|-------|-------------|
| Malaysian | | | International | | | Grand total |
| 56 | 186 | 242 | 9 | 27 | 36 | 278 |

Source: The Admissions and Record Division, IIUM Main Campus. 24/9/2010.

Based on the above population, the convenient sampling technique was employed where the total number of seventy five (75) was selected among the Arabic Language students of IIUM. Furthermore, the instrument used in this paper is questionnaire. The questionnaire is self-constructed. There are three divisions in the questionnaire namely: Demographic information of respondents, items of Arabic language and items on the impact of Arabic language curriculum. In the first part, there are six aspects in the demographic information of respondents. In the second part, there are seven (7) items of Arabic language. In the third part, there are twelve (12) items measuring the impact of Arabic language. There was a 5 likert scale namely: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (UD), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA).

Likewise, validity and reliability are taken into consideration in this paper. For the validity of the instrument, the opinion of the experts were sought to ensure that the items measured the two main constructs identified in the instruments. On the other hand, the reliability of the items was carried out.

The reliability test of the surveyed items was carried out through Cromach's Alpha. The Crombach's Alpha describing the curriculum items was .683 while the Cromach's Alpha measuring the items on the impact of the curriculum on the students was .898. The results from the Cromach's Alpha indicated that the instrument was reliable to be used in this paper.

Basically, for the procedure for data collection, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents at the IIUM whereby the distributed questionnaires were returned at the stipulated time. For the procedure for data analysis, statistical package for social science (SPSS version 16.0) was employed. At this stage, the data collected during the research were analyzed considering frequency, summary statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation (Landau, 2004, p. 28).

1.4 Statistical Analysis, Results and Discussions

In this part, the statistical analysis, findings and discussions of the Demographic background of respondents, curriculum and its impacts on students’ behaviour are presented.

1.4.1 Demographic background of respondents

According to Marrja (2008), a good sample is what is desired to be selected from the entire population of interest.

Thus, the sample of this research was selected among the undergraduate students of the IIUM Arabic Language Department. Due to certain restraints affecting the administration of the survey, the questionnaire was only given out to 75 students. The demographic data of the surveyed participants were as follows:

**Table 1.2
 Demographic Distribution of Respondents**

| Items | | Frequency | percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Sex | Male | 7 | 9.3% |
| | Female | 68 | 90.7% |
| | Total | 75 | 100% |
| Marital Status | Single | 66 | 88% |
| | Married | 7 | 9.3% |
| | Total | 73 | 97.3% |
| Years of Study | Year One | 12 | 16% |
| | Year Two | 18 | 24% |
| | Year Three | 26 | 34.7% |
| | Year Four | 19 | 25.3% |
| | Total | 75 | 100% |
| Purpose of Studying Arabic | Religion | 31 | 41.3% |
| | Education | 37 | 49.3% |
| | Arabic civilization | 4 | 5.3% |
| | Parents Obedience | 3 | 4.0% |
| Total | 75 | 100% | |
| Nationality | Local | 71 | 94.7% |
| | International | 4 | 5.3% |
| | Total | 75 | 100% |
| Mode of Study | Full Time | 74 | 98.7% |
| | Part Time | 1 | 1.3% |
| Total | | 75 | 100% |

Table 1.2 shows that the majority of the respondents were female (90.7%) and 9.3% were male. This shows that the population of female students in the Arabic Language Department was higher than that of male students. Also, 88% were single, 9.3% were married and 2.7% were engaged to be married. The majority of respondents (34.7%) were in their third year of study, 25.3% in their fourth year, 24% in their second year, and the remaining 16% in their first year. These percentages indicated that the respondents were not equally but relatively well spread across all levels of studies which thus promised a result which adequately reflected the entire student population.

The majority of the respondents (49.3%) were majoring in Arabic for educational purposes, 41.3% for religious purposes, 5.3% for cultural purposes, and the rest (4.0%) did so because their parents had asked them to.

Altogether 98.7% of the respondents were local students (Malaysian), while only 5.3% were internationals. Hence, it was clear that the result would reflect foremost the views of the local population and any conclusions drawn or policies implemented on the basis of such result would be more applicable to the local student population. The same percentage of students was also comprised of full time students, while only 1.3% studied part-time.

1.4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Curriculum

The descriptive statistics employed in this survey addressed the degree of performance, frequency and percentage, means and standard deviations of the respondents. Each question of any item was given five response options in the questionnaire which were “strongly disagree” (SD), “disagree” (D), “undecided” (UN), “agree” (A) and “strongly agree” (SA). Although five different

response options guaranteed a differentiated response result, it was decided to simplify the findings by merging “strongly disagree”, and “disagree”, as well as “strongly agree” and “agree”.

The Table 2.1 shows the cumulative total percentage, means and standard deviation of the responses to the items which measured the description of the IIUM undergraduate Arabic language curriculum. More than three quarter (78%) of respondents agreed that the Arabic curriculum appropriately catered for the overall needs of the students, while 9.3% were undecided, and only 12% disagreed with the statement. Thus, considering the total frequency shown in Table 2.1 above, it could be concluded that more than half of the respondents agreed that the Arabic curriculum was appropriate. The average mean score was calculated as 3.68 and the standard deviation as .869 which was considered moderately acceptable in the educational context.

Moreover, 86.7% of respondents agreed that the curriculum relevantly addressed the moral and spiritual needs of the students. Only 16.7% were undecided, and 2.7% disagreed with the statement. The majority of the respondents (97.4%) agreed that it helped realize the students’ potential, none of the

respondents disagreed, and only a couple of them (2.7%) remained undecided.

Similarly, a large number of respondents (81.4%) agreed that the Arabic curriculum content emphasized on Muslim unity and universal brotherhood. Only 16% of the respondents remained undecided and only a couple of them (2.7%) disagreed with the statement. Most of the respondents (77.3%) also asserted that the Arabic curriculum enriched its students socially and culturally and prepared them for the challenges ahead. Here, also only a couple of the respondents (2.7%) disagreed, while another 20% remained undecided.

61 or 81.3% of the respondents agreed that the Arabic curriculum incorporated elements of Islamic civilization and other civilizations and the constructive interplay between them. 6.7% of the students decided to remain neutral, and the remaining 2.7% disagreed with the statement. Lastly, an overwhelming majority of 90.7% of the respondents agreed that it also incorporated elements of leadership, socialization and integration. Again, only a few respondents (6.7%) remained undecided, and the rest (2.7%) disagreed with the statement. Table 2.1 shows Description of Arabic Curriculum (AC) of (IIUM):

Table 2.1
Description of Arabic Curriculum (AC) of (IIUM)

| Items | D | UN | A | Mean | SD |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. The Arabic curriculum in university appropriately caters for the overall needs of the students. | 9 12.0% | 7 9.3% | 59 78.7% | 3.69 | .869 |
| 2. The curriculum is relevantly addressing the moral and spiritual needs of the students. | 2 2.7% | 8 16.7% | 65 86.7% | 4.02 | .696 |
| 3. The curriculum is helpful in realizing the students’ potential. | - | 2 2.7% | 73 97.4% | 4.16 | .436 |
| 4. The Arabic curriculum is tailored towards realizing the unity and universal brother hood encapsulated in Islam. | 2 2.7% | 12 16.0% | 61 81.4% | 3.93 | .643 |
| 5. The curriculum enriches the students socially and culturally and prepares them for the challenges ahead. | 2 2.7% | 15 20.0% | 58 77.3% | 3.88 | .656 |
| 6. It incorporates elements of Islamic and other civilizations and the constructive interplay between them. | 4 5.4% | 10 13.3% | 61 81.3% | 3.82 | .742 |
| 7. It incorporates elements of leadership, socialization and integration. | 2 2.7% | 5 6.7% | 68 90.7% | 4.04 | .579 |
| Average | | | | 3.934 | .660 |

1.4. 3 Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Arabic Curriculum on Students

In regard to the set of items that measured the impact of the Arabic Language curriculum on the students' cultural behaviour, an over whelming majority of 92% of the respondent agreed that it positively affected their listening skills, while 6.7% remained undecided. and only 1.3% disagreed with the statement. Another 78.7% of the respondents agreed that their speaking skills had improved through the Arabic curriculum, another 13% remained undecided, and 8.0% disagreed with the statement.

In reference to the third item of is section of the questionnaire, a total of 89.4% agreed that the curriculum had contributed to their improved reading skills, another 9.3% were undecided, and only 1.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. 78.7% of the respondents agreed that their writing skills had improved through the curriculum, while 16% were uncertain, and only 5.3% disagreed with the statement.

Altogether 77.4% of the respondents agreed that the curriculum greatly influenced the relationship/interaction with their fellow classmates, while 20% remained undecided, and only 2.7% disagreed. A total of 76% of the respondents agreed that the

curriculum had exposed them to Arabic culture and tradition, 22.7% were uncertain, and 4.0% disagreed with the statement. Furthermore, 72% of the students agreed that they had learned a lot about Islamic civilization and its historical development, whereas 24% remained undecided, and the remaining 4.3% disagreed with the statement.

Similarly, 77.4% of the respondents agreed that the curriculum exposed them to other cultures and civilizations, another 17.3% remained undecided, and 5.3% stated their disagreement with the statement. 84% of the respondents agreed that the curriculum improved their moral behaviour and respect for others, while the remaining 16% were uncertain. Likewise, 84% agreed that the curriculum had made a great impact on their religious commitment, while 14% remained undecided, and another 1.3% disagreed with the statement.

Finally, an impressive 97.3% of the respondents agreed that they enjoyed studying Arabic Language in IIUM, while only 1.3% was uncertain, and another 1.3% disagreed. Table 2.2 illustrates the Impacts of Arabic Curriculum (AC) of (IIUM) on Students Cultural Behaviour:

Table 2.2
Impacts of Arabic Curriculum (AC) of (IIUM) on Students Cultural Behavior

| Items | D | UN | A | Mean | SD |
|--|-----------|-------------|--------------|------|------|
| The Arabic curriculum improves my listening skills. | 1 1.3% | 5 6.7% | 69 92% | 4.16 | .658 |
| My speaking skills improve through the curriculum. | 6 8.0% | 10 13.0% | 59 78.7% | 3.94 | .836 |
| My reading skills improved through the curriculum | 1 1.3% | 7 9.3% | 67 89.4 % | 4.14 | .630 |
| The curriculum improves my writing skills. | 4 5.3% | 12 16% | 59 78.7% | 3.98 | .846 |
| The curriculum has greatly Influenced the relationship/ interaction with my fellow classmates. | 2 2.7% | 15 20% | 58 77.4% | 3.89 | .669 |
| The curriculum has exposed me to Arabic culture and tradition | 1 1.3% | 17 22.7% | 57 76% | 3.92 | .673 |
| I have learned a lot about Islamic civilization and its historical development. | 3 4.0% | 18 24.0% | 54 72% | 3.82 | .723 |
| The curriculum has exposed me to other cultures and civilizations. | 4 5.3% | 13 17.3% | 58 77.4% | 3.81 | .729 |
| It improves my moral behaviour - and the respect I have for others. | - | 12 16% | 63 84% | 4.02 | .592 |
| The curriculum has a great impact | 1 | 11 | 63 | 4.10 | .689 |

| | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|--------------|-------------|------|
| on my religious commitment. | 1.3% | 14.7% | 84% | | |
| I enjoy studying Arabic Language in IIUM. | 1 | 1 | 73 | 4.37 | .587 |
| | 1.3 % | 1.3% | 97.3% | | |
| Average | | | 4.013 | .693 | |

1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion can be said that the research finding shows that the Arabic Curriculum of IIUM did exercise a measurable positive impact on the students' cultural behaviour. This is reflected by the overwhelming majority of positive responses for all items ranging from 72% to 97%. This position is affirmed by the responses in relation to its specific impact on cultural behaviour.

Furthermore, the research finding also suggests that the IIUM Arabic curriculum has greatly impacted the students' cultural behaviour. The majority of the respondents affirmed that its contents were related to the students' cultural behaviour. Therefore, the degree of performance in the above Table 2.2 indicates the overall positive impact and enriching effect the Arabic Language curriculum exercises on its students' personal development. However, since the majority of respondents were local students, the result only reflects the opinion of this specific group and cannot be generalized to reflect the opinion of foreign students. If the majority of Arabic Language students consisted of foreign students, the result may have varied significantly.

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