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Studies on Islamic Faith/Believe Among Malaysian Polytechnic Students

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Abstract

The learning experience is an important factor that helps students to develop thinking skills as well as build good personal attitude and social behavior. This research paper attempted to look at Islamic faith behavior among Malaysian polytechnic students. The research design is a combination of both the quantitative and qualitative method. A set of questionnaire was distributed to current and former students of polytechnic to gain information for this study. In addition to the questionnaire, an interview session was conducted in order to strengthen the quantitative data collected. For the purpose of testing the reliability of the research construct, Alpha Cronbach coefficient was obtained. The value of Alpha Cronbach obtained was (α 0.87) for the construct on Islamic faith behavior. Research findings showed that Islamic faith behavior among polytechnic students and polytechnic graduates is at a high level. This points to the conclusion that the learning experience at the polytechnic institution emphasizes not only the cognitive domain, but also the affective domain where both domains serve to develop students' personality. As for curriculum developers, the findings from this study will help them to design a curriculum specifically related to developing students' personality.

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Key-word: - Islamic Faith, Malaysian Polytechnic and religious curriculum

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1. Introduction

The implementation of Islamic education in the National Education system is based on the declarations contained in the Razak Report 1956, Rahman Talib Report 1960 and the Education Act 1961. The declarations made in these Reports and Act have specified that the subject of Islamic education should be taught in any registered school when there are at least 15 Muslim students. As a result of these declarations, Islamic Education was initially taught in the evening, outside of school hours. It was not until 1962 that Islamic Education was included in the official school timetable with the provision of teaching and learning time of 120 minutes a week. (Abdul Halim 1989; Abdullah, 1995; Abdullah, 2005; Rosnani, 2004; Zainal Abidin, 1991). Meanwhile, tertiary-level Islamic education in Malaysia formally began in 1955 with the establishment of the Kolej Islam Malaya (KIM) located in Klang, Selangor. In 1959, the Department of Islamic Studies was established under the Faculty of Arts, University of Malaya. The tight-knit collaboration between Kolej Islam Malaya and the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya ended in December 1970 as the former was merged into Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia as the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. (Abdul Halim, 1989).

2. Research Methods

The aim of this study was to answer the research question which is, to what extent are the religious practices (faith behaviour) of students and graduates of Polytechnic, Ministry of Higher Education? The study uses a descriptive design to answer this question. The study was conducted using a questionnaire to collect quantitative data on the behaviour of faith among Polytechnic KPTM students. Eleven polytechnics took part in this study; three northern zone polytechnics, four central zone polytechnics, two southern zone polytechnics and two eastern zone polytechnics. The selection of sample in each polytechnic was done by systematic random selection. Numbers are picked based on the attendance list verified by the polytechnic. The total sample of students is 406, drawn from a total population of 12328. This number exceeds the number of samples specified by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) which is 375. The researcher also measured the internal consistency in order to determine the reliability of the instrument. Internal consistency can be measured through indicators that measure reliability such as Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Cronbach Alpha coefficients that were determined in each study were different. According to Mohd. Majid (1990) reliability exceeding .60 is often used as the basis for determining the validity of the survey and is accepted. Alpha coefficients that measure the reliability of the questionnaire used in this research is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The reliability coefficient of variables

| Variable | Reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) |
|--------------------|---|
| Behaviour of faith | .87 |

The research data were analyzed using "Statistical Package for Social Science" (SPSS version 11.5). The descriptive analysis of the study was to describe the mean and percentage. This study divides the mean scores of the Likert scale into three categories in order to provide interpretation to the mean values. This is shown in Table 2 below

Table 2 Mean value category

| Mean score | Interpretation |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Mean=1.00- 2.33 | Low |
| Mean=2.34-3.67 | Medium |
| Mean=3.68-5.00 | High |

3. Research Findings

The findings show that the behaviour of faith among students in Polytechnic, Ministry of Higher Education is at the high level. The discussion about the behaviour of faith in this study focuses on the research findings such as faith in God, the angels, the prophets, Al-Quran, Qada 'and Qadar and supernatural things including sin, death and the afterlife. The findings show that the respondents think about God's creation and chanting (zikr) as a way to remember Allah SWT. Belief in God is one of the main scope in Islamic faith. Belief in God is a must. The concept of faith in God is to acknowledge His existence, knowing Him, learn what comes from Him and believe as well as execute His commands (Abdullah Akhili, 2006). Based on this, a person's understanding of the pillars of faith which forms the basis of faith or creed, will encourage him to act or behave in line with the requirement of the Islamic faith. Based on the findings, the majority of respondents, or 93.7 percent agrees with the existence of angels such as Raqib and Atid, angels that record human beings' deeds. Belief in angels is to believe firmly that the angel is the intermediary between Allah SWT and His Messenger. In terms of adhering to Al-Quran, the study found that the students are at a moderate level as indicated by the following mean scores: (mean = 3.57, mean = 3.18, mean = 3.74, mean = 3.28). The results showed that the respondents are still trying to memorize verses of Al-Quran, attending interpretation lectures to understand the knowledge of the Quran, reciting verses from the Quran to increase faith and reciting the Qur'an every Ramadan. Belief in Al-Quran is not merely believe that the Quran is from Allah, but more than that, it includes learning, understanding and putting Al-Quran teachings into practice since the content of Al-Quran is complete and protected from alteration or modification by humans. Hence, mastering Al-Quran is a noteworthy aspect in the life of a Muslim. According to Mohd Arip (2000), to get the maximum benefit from Al-Quran, it is not sufficient for a person only to read the Quran and understand its meaning. It must be accompanied by studying and practicing its teachings. When they feel confident with the truth of the Quran, they are also confident with the contents of the Quran including all matters of faith. The respondents' desire to read, memorize and attend interpretation lectures to explore the knowledge of the Quran shows that they have faith behaviour as required by Islam. Another characteristic of the respondents who would become Polytechnic, Ministry of Higher Education's product is possessing the behaviour of believing in the prophets. The mean scores for this item are shown to be at a high level (mean = 4.36, mean = 4.03), where the respondents make it a practice to utter the "salawat" for the Prophet whenever his name is called and look up to the prophet's character as a guide when interacting with others. According to Abdul Rashid (2007), people will not be able to live as righteous human beings if prophets are not sent as messengers to guide them to the right path in this world and in the hereafter. There is no source that can save mankind apart from the revelation from Allah SWT and Islam because only He knows the nature of human beings and only He is worthy and capable of determining the guidelines and rules of the solution to the problem that arises in people's lives. Thus, the willingness of the respondents in terms of looking up to the character of the prophet as a guide to interact with others as well as uttering "salawat" showed true faith behaviour. Discussions about the behaviour of faith will also touch on matters related to the supernatural. Believers are those who believe in supernatural things. The supernatural are things to be believed, although they cannot be seen such as sin, death and hellfire. The findings show that respondents have a high understanding with regards to faith in supernatural things such as knowing that the act of lying is a sin, reflecting on death before going to sleep and praying to be kept away from the hellfire. The respondents' high level of understanding about supernatural things

like remembering death, sin and hellfire is in line with what has been described by Abdullah Akhili (2006) that the importance of remembering these things will create some awareness in man. Next, respondents also showed a high understanding of the concept Qada 'and Qadar of Allah SWT which is also one of the pillars of faith. The respondents' understanding of the concept Qada 'and Qadar of Allah can be seen when they said they were patient when calamity befall them, they work hard to achieve success in their studies and always make preparations before examinations. However, the respondents do not completely surrender themselves to fate. The concept of making an effort to get what they desire exists in the respondents. Qada' and Qadar is one of the pillars of faith that must be believed by every Muslim who have faith that everything that happens is due to Qada' and Qadar of Allah SWT upon His servants (al-Hanafi, 2007; Abd. Rashid, 2007; Abdullah Akhili, 2006; Ibnu Taimiyah, 2006). The respondents' attitude of being patient when trouble befalls them is the attitude of a Muslim who accepts fate that is decided by Allah SWT. Accepting and being resigned with what is destined by God because God is fair and will never do injustice to His creatures. Meanwhile, the attitude of striving for success also represents the attitude of a Muslim who makes effort instead of doing nothing and just waiting for fate. After effort has been made, it should then be accompanied with prayer and trust in Allah SWT. Belief in Qada' and Qadar of Allah SWT has its importance in the life of the Muslims. According to Abdullah Akhili (2006), the importance of believing in Qada' and Qadar will create a happy life due to the right concept of faith as well as the correct perception about Allah SWT which can also prevent Muslims from committing harmful acts such as suicide due to frustration and despair. Therefore, acknowledging the existence of Allah SWT as the only God, accepting Al-Quran as a guide, not denying the existence of angels as well as permitting and believing the teachings brought by the prophets are the basis of the strength of a Muslim's faith. This can be seen from studies that focused on faith such as studies conducted by Mohd Arip (2000) and Aisyah (2005) that also list the things that have been mentioned above as the basis for a Muslim's faith. Hence, this indicates that the respondents (students and graduates of Polytechnic, Ministry of Higher Education) have the strength in terms of faith behaviour as they possess the behaviour as outlined by Islam.

4. Highlights

Product dimension assessment summary shows that faith behaviour of polytechnic students is at a high level. This situation shows that Islamic Education students in polytechnic still have the awareness to practice faith behaviours such as believing in Allah SWT and His Messenger, believing in the Quran and supernatural things such as sin and reward as well as remembering death in their daily lives. Awareness in this aspect is seen as a factor that is able to form their identity as Muslim youths in which faith is the foundation in forming the Muslim personality. Therefore, the question about faith and Islam that is applied since childhood is an element that can strengthen the personality of a person which consequently can prevent him from dishonourable characters. According to Kamarul Azmi & Ab. Halim (2007), mastering and having an overall understanding of these aspects can mould students to become righteous.

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