

Islamic Education Teachers' Competency in Teaching Qiraat Sab'ah for the Quranic Class

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ABSTRAK

There are five elements in the Quranic Class (BM: Kelas Kemahiran Quran/KKQ) including Qiraat. Teaching Qiraat requires teachers to be competent in many aspects, specifically in practicing Qiraat in the classroom. Previous research has highlighted the low level of student achievement in these skills. However, there is limited evidence on the level of competencies among teachers. The present study aims to assess competency level among KKQ teachers in teaching Qiraat Sab'ah. Using the survey method, survey data were collected from 46 KKQ teachers at Johor. The questionnaire was set to assess teachers' knowledge, teaching skill, and teaching practices in Qiraat Sab'ah among KKQ teachers. Findings show that teachers have various level of knowledge in Qiraat, the level of skills among teachers in Qiraat is at a moderately high, and the most common method used in teaching practice among teachers is by asking student to practice Qiraat and assess their level of performance in the classroom. These findings show that teachers have different levels of competency in the field of Qiraat Sab'ah. KKQ teachers need to upskill and develop knowledge in Qiraat to improve the quality of KKQ implementation and achieve the learning objectives.

Keywords: *Teachers competency, KKQ, Qiraat Sab'ah*

INTRODUCTION

The Quranic class (BM: Kelas Kemahiran Quran/KKQ) in mainstream Malaysian education system has been designed to enhance knowledge and skills among students in five areas including Quranic Sciences (*Ulum al-Quran*), *Tajwid*, Memorization several verses from Quran (*Hifz*), *Tarannum al-Quran* and *Qiraat* (KPM, 2012; 2014). In the latest development, assessment in the classroom focused on measuring students' performance in learning about *tajwid*, *Qiraat Sab'ah*, *hifz* and *tarannum* (KPM, 2020). The syllabus focuses on theoretical and practical aspects in learning the Quran. In theoretical parts students learn *Tajwid* and knowledge about *Ulum al-Quran*, *qiraat* and *tarannum*. However, the syllabus emphasizes more on

practical aspects of *tarannum*, and *qiraat sab'ah* (Mohamad Khairul Latif, 2013). In practice, teachers will identify and assess students on several aspects before they are accepted to enroll in the program. Students must have excellent skills in reciting the Quran. They must finish reading the whole Quran, be able to write *Jawi* (a Malay text with Arabic character) and have a positive attitude towards the program (Mohd Zainul Arifien, 2008).

In order to ensure the KKQ achieved the objectives at the end of course, teachers have to manage the class and to ensure that students understand, achieve mastery level at reading the Quran, and acquire skills in reading the Quran according to the seven Imam of *Qiraat* in the Muslim society. Students are also expected to acquired several skills in *Qiraat Sab'ah* including *Ithbat al-Alif*, *Hazf al-Alif*, *Silah Mim al-Jamak*, *Idgham al-Kabir*, *al-Qasr*, *al-Tawassut*, *al-Ishbah* ', *Mad al-Muttasil*, *Mad al-Munfasil*, *Isymam*, *Naql*, *Saktah*, *Imalah*, *Taqlil*, *Tarqiq Ra'*, *Taghliz Lam*, *Biduni al-Ghunnah*, *Ha 'al-Kinayah* and *Tahqiq* (Suarni, 2018; KPM, 2008a; KPM, 2008b).

One of the main approaches in teaching Qiraat is using an exemplary teaching approach in the classroom which requires teachers to demonstrate the skill in reading the Quran following the method of recitation by the seven imam of Qiraat (also called as *Qurra'*). Using an exemplary teaching approach, teachers are required to demonstrate reading the Quran in various types of Qiraat, the knowledge and skills contained in the KKQ curriculum to students. Students learn about *Qiraat Sab'ah* by first listening to a teacher's demonstration in reading the Quranic verse. Several short surahs in the juz '*Amma* were selected to learn and practice *Qiraat Sab'ah*. Then, the students will recite the surah following the techniques demonstrated by the teacher. Teaching Tarannum also uses the same approach because the objective of learning Tarannum is to enhance students skill in reading the Quran based on several melodies by well-known Quranic reciters. Therefore, It is suggested that teachers who are responsible for teaching KKQ must be competent in reading Quran skills.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Several researchers highlighted the current development of KKQ in Malaysian educational systems and some of them were suggested to carefully look into several aspects for an improvement (Farah Ilyani, 2011; Azmil Hashim et al., 2014; Mohammad Raffe, 2017). Zainora Daud and Mustafa Abdullah (2014) also raised a concern about the time allocated for KKQ, lack of teaching aids, and extensive content in the curriculum to improve KKQ teaching and learning.

There were many studies conducted to assess the level of mastery among KKQ students. A study that was conducted to assess perception among students towards KKQ by Abd Rahman Ghani *et al.* (2012) found that *Usul* and *Farshy Hurf*, insufficient learning time, lack of understanding in Arabic language and limited learning sources affect their level of mastery in *Qiraat*. A study by Ahmad Junaidi and Mohd Abd Nasir (2016) showed types of motivation in learning Qiraat and the performance level in reading *Surah Fatihah* based on *Qiraat Sab'ah* among 308 students in the Quranic course. On students' performance, they found only 10 students (3.2%) out of 308 samples were excellent, another 72 students (23.3%) very good, 114 students (37.0%) good, 92 students (29.8%) passed and 20 students (6.4%) failed. On *Syafawi*

test for *Qiraat Sab'ah*, only 10 students (3.2%) out of 308 samples were excellent, 56 students (18.1%) very good, 109 students (35.3%) good, 107 students (34.7%) passed and 26 students (8.4%) failed. A critical examination of student achievement could inform the current development in the field of study with empirical data. However, it seems that the students' performance is still a focus in the field of *Qiraat* although researchers are approaching students' performance from different aspects.

Several studies were conducted to assess undergraduate students' performance in *Qiraat*. A study by Zainora Daud *et al.* (2018) for example, highlighted that most undergraduate students enrolling in *Qiraat* courses actually have not been exposed to the learning about *Qiraat*. Out of 201 respondents, 74.6% of them (150 students) admitted they never studied *Qiraat* during secondary school. Only 25.4% (51 students) had early exposure to the knowledge of *Qiraat Sab'ah*. Overall, they were excellent at reading the Quran and *Tajwid* but having an intermediate level of knowledge in *Qiraat*.

A few researchers highlighted the importance of carefully looking at the educational system and assessed teachers competency in teaching KKQ. Mohd Safwan (2007) argued that KKQ teachers were appointed among untrained teachers and most of them are amongst Islamic Education teachers with "on loan" status. Teachers were selected without assessing their level of knowledge and skills to teach the Qur'an, including *Qiraat Sab'ah*. These problems also include teacher qualifications, curriculum, teaching and learning time allocation, lack of teaching aids, limited number of references, language barrier and lack of student motivation. Mohd Aderi (2009; 2011) highlighted the importance of teaching skills among Islamic Education teachers for student performance. All the above situations show that there are many constraints inherent in the teaching and learning of *Qiraat*. These problems might affect the level of mastery and achievement of students in the knowledge of *Qiraat Sab'ah*.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Against this background, this study focuses on teachers' competencies in teaching *Qiraat*. The present study was developed to assess the level of competencies among KKQ teachers based on their knowledge of *Qiraat Sab'ah*, their skills of *Qiraat Sab'ah* and their teaching practice in the course of *Qiraat Sab'ah*. This study was also conducted to contribute knowledge to the field of *Qiraat*. According to Jahidih Sali & Azmil Hashim (2019), a review of research related to KKQ found that there is a limited number of research done on the field of *Qiraat* in KKQ. They also stated that there is still less research done on KKQ, especially in the field of Quranic Studies, *Hifz*, *Tarannum* and *Qiraat Sab'ah*. So, this study aims to provide empirical data to the field of *Qiraat* in KKQ.

METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative study using a survey method to achieve the objectives of study. The data about teachers competency in teaching *Qiraat* was collected by giving respondents a set of questionnaires called 'Your Teaching *Qiraat* Competency'. The questions asked teachers competency in three aspects including the content knowledge in the *Qiraat* syllabus, skills of *Qiraat* and methods in teaching *Qiraat*. Participants were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree (5) to agree (4), not sure (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

Respondents were selected among 54 KKQ teachers from *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama* (SMKA) and *Kelas Aliran Agama* (KAA) Johor. Only 46 sets of questionnaires have been used for the data analysis because another 8 sets of questionnaires have data missing and incomplete answers. In total, the data shows there are four KKQ teachers from SMKA and 42 KKQ teachers from KAA were involved in this study. The scale to measure Knowledge, Skills and Teaching practices achieved at Cronbach alpha coefficient of .97, .96 and .92 respectively. This indicates that the level of reliability of the scales in this study were high.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

First, the data on teachers' knowledge in sciences of *Qiraat* has been analyzed using a descriptive statistical analysis. The data shows 87% reported agree and strongly agree know the science of *Qiraat*; 80.4% respondents reported agree and strongly agree know the terminologies discussed in the science of *Qiraat*; 78.3% reported agree and strongly agree understand the importance of *Qiraat* in Quranic studies; 76.1% reported agree and strongly agree can explain the names of Imam in *Qiraat* tradition and know very well about the narrator of each Imam; 73.9% reported agree and strongly agree can explain the history and development of *Qiraat* knowledge; 60.8% (28 people) reported agree and strongly agree know the general method of *Qiraat* Imam Hafs originating from Imam Asim; 52.1% reported agree and strongly agree know the recitation methods for each imam of *Qiraat*; and finally, 47.9% reported agree and strongly agree knew the historical background of the imam and his students.

Overall, the data indicated that teachers were having a different level of knowledge in the field of *Qiraat Sab'ah*. Majority of respondents understand the science of *Qiraat* in Ulum al-Quran, understand the terms contained in the knowledge of *Qiraat*, understand the importance of *Qiraat* in Quranic education and can explain the names of imam and his students well. However, some of the respondents have a low level of understanding towards the knowledge asked in the questionnaire. Almost half of the respondents admit that they have limited knowledge on method of *Qiraat* by Imam Hafs that's originating from Imam Asim, the method of recitation for each imam, the history of the development of *Qiraat* knowledge, and the historical background of imam and his students.

The level of knowledge among KKQ teachers on *Qiraat Sab'ah* needs to be improved because the effectiveness of a lesson is dependent on their content knowledge (Kleickmann *et al.*, 2013; Gudmundsdottir, 1995). Atan Long (1981)

stressed that teachers need to equip themselves with knowledge and renew it all the time, because the field of knowledge is constantly evolving and expanding. In fact, according to Shulman (1987), to create effective teaching, teachers not only need to master the content of the subjects taught alone, but also need to be sensitive to students' learning styles and master appropriate teaching and learning strategies for their students. Generally teachers are aware of the importance of content knowledge in the teaching component, however most teachers are found to have poor mastery in this aspect of knowledge. Azizah (1999) suggested that teachers can increase their knowledge by studying with skilled people, reviewing and reading books. Teachers also need to equip themselves with supporting knowledge in order to effectively teach the students (Kamarul Azmi, 2010).

The **second** part of the questionnaire asked teachers about their skills of *Qiraat*. The data shows 82.7% reported agree and strongly agree they were able to give examples of *Saktah* in *Qiraat* recitation; 80.4% reported agree and strongly agree they were able to give an example of of *Taslisul Badal* in *Qiraat* recitation; 80.4% reported agree and strongly agree they were able to recite a verse in Quran with *Isyam*; 76.1% reported agree and strongly agree they could distinguish between *Taqilil* and *Imalah*; 76.1% reported agree and strongly agree that they were able to recite a verse in Quran with *Idgham Kabir* ; 74% reported agree and strongly agree they can give an example of reading *Raum*; 71.8% reported agree and strongly agree they were able to recite a verse using *Tashil* method; 71.8% reported agree and strongly agree they were able to demonstrate reading a verse with *Imalah*; and, finally 69.6% reported agree and strongly agree they were able to recite a verse with *Taqilil*.

Based on the data, the analysis indicated that KKQ teachers have different levels of skills in *Qiraat Sab'ah*. The data indicated only 3 skills that more than 80% or respondents scored higher including the skills to recite a verse with *Saktah*, *Taslisul Badal* and *Isyam*. Only around 70% of KKQ teachers taking part in the survey admitted they have excellent proficiency in practicing the *Qiraat*, including recitation of *Taqilil*, recitation of *Imalah*, recitation of *Idgham Kabir*, recitation of *Raum* and recitation of *Tashil*. The data also indicated a small number of teachers weak in practicing the above skills. All important parties in the development of KKQ in the Malaysian education system should look closely at this data.

According to Shahabuddin et al, 2003, Quranic teachers must have skills to convey instruction in the classroom, demonstrate reading Quran and be able to determine a student's level of performance in reading Quran. In addition, KPM (2008a) and KPM (2008b) also require teachers to have skills in certain reading methods and be able to demonstrate the various reading methods to students. Reflecting the Ibn Khaldun (2000) approach in teaching and learning, teachers should gradually assess students and emphasize on the method of repetition. Incompetent KKQ teachers specifically in practicing the method of reciting *Qiraat Saba'h*, could resulted in ineffective implementation of *tasmi'* (revision) and *tashih* (correction). This also will affect students' learning and achievement (Mohd Aderi, 2009).

The last part of the questionnaire asked participants on their techniques in teaching *Qiraat*. The data shows 89.1% reported they were asking student to practice *Qiraat* in the classroom and assess their level of performance; 82.6% reported they were demonstrating *Qiraat* to students in the classroom; 69.7% reported they were

using digital tools such as cassettes and video in teaching Qiraat; and 63.1% reported they were using graphs or tables in teaching Qiraat.

The data indicated the most common methods used by KKQ teachers in teaching Qiraat. The practice and assessment approach is the highest teaching practice in the classroom. Teachers are more in check and correct the recitation of the Quran by students. Several teachers applied a demonstration teaching method in the classroom. Below than 70% teachers used teaching aids in the classroom for *Qiraat* course.

The teaching of *Qiraat* has its own characteristics where teachers need to ensure their students will be able to recite the Qur'an with the accuracy of *tajwid*, excellent in reading a verse (*fasahah*), know the differences in recitation methods according to the imam and be able to understand the recitation methods in *Qiraat*. The data of this study shows that most commonly practiced by KKQ teachers have the characteristics of *talaqi*, *musyafahah*, *tasmi'* and *tashih*. The teaching of such skills i.e. the method of *talaqi* and *musyafahah* can only be achieved with a skilled teacher (Mohd Yusuf, 2000). This practice is a method of learning the recitation of the Qur'an that has been passed by the Prophet SAW through the teachings delivered by Jibril a.s (al-Buti, 1991). However, teachers should also diversify the form of teaching Qiraat without abandoning the method of *talaqi* and *musyafahah*. Support of other methods such as the use of ICT, CDs, audio recordings, video, graphs, and other digital tools increase students' interest because it attracts attention, is easy to use, universal design, time-efision and interactive. It is also well accepted that students are more interested in digital-based materials and technology (Johnson, 2012). The success of a lesson depends on the level of skills of the teacher and the learning methods used by students.

KKQ teachers need to improve their mastery of *Qiraat Sab'ah* skills. This effort can be done by *talaqqi* with competent teachers, following courses organized by departments or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They can improve knowledge by sharing with other teachers who are skilled, experienced and experts in the science of *Qiraat*. In the context of teaching, a good teacher cannot be comfortable with one skill or avoid a task just because he feels unskilled, they need to constantly add other skills because those skills can be learned (Ramli Awang *et al.*, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides important information to the field of Qiraat studies. This study was also conducted to specifically focus on assessing KKQ teachers' competency in teaching Qiraat. Several KKQ teachers in SMKA and KAA were involved in this study. Based on the findings, the level of knowledge among KKQ Johor teachers in the field of Qiraat Sab'ah was moderately high. The results also showed that they had various levels of understanding in the knowledge of Qiraat. Their skills level also varied with some of them having excellent level of skills. There were at least three KKQ teachers who admitted they have limited knowledge and skills of Qiraat. On teaching practice, the study found several teaching methods have been implemented by teachers. Teachers commonly used the practice and assessment approach in the classroom.

Although it is an important method, teachers must have knowledge and skills in Qiraat to demonstrate in the classroom on how to recite the Quran.

The implementation of KKQ helps in strengthening al-Quran education and producing a young Muslim generation in Malaysian society who have a proficiency in Quran knowledge. To achieve this noble goal, a great responsibility has been placed on KKQ teachers. Therefore, KKQ teachers must improve their knowledge and skills in teaching Quran specifically in the knowledge and skills of Qiraat. The Malaysian Ministry of Education and other responsible institutions also should help teachers to support their improvement in teaching competency. Teachers should also consider implementing the latest teaching technique using various approaches such as digital learning tools to enhance students' achievement.

The present study suggested more studies to be conducted to support teachers' improvement in teaching knowledge and skill. Future researchers can focus on several aspects to explore teaching practices such as teaching patterns, factors that shape skills, self-motivation, efforts made and others. This is to determine effective teaching methods in the field of Qiraat. This study only focused on the lower secondary *Qiraat* curriculum, it is recommended that a more comprehensive study be made covering the lower secondary and upper secondary *Qiraat* curriculum.

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