

## TEACHING AL-QURAN TO DEAF STUDENTS: CHALLENGES FOR ISLAMIC EDUCATION TEACHERS

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### ABSTRACT

Al Quran as a book of revelation, gives guidance to the muslims through sharing the principles on how life should be led by every muslim in order to achieve everlasting happiness and peace on earth and in the afterlife. It is obligatory for every faithful muslim to learn, appreciate and apply the teachings of Al Quran in their life. This obligation does not exclude people with disabilities such as the deaf, blind and mute. Nevertheless, the method of learning for them is quite different depending on their disability. This article tries to look into the problems encountered during the process of teaching and learning Al Quran to the deaf students in Special Education Schools and Special Integration Programs in secondary schools in Malaysia. This qualitative research involves an interview with 4 special education teachers for Islamic Education subject (GPIK) and 2 former students with hearing problems (BPP). As a result, a few problems and challenges that hindered the teachers from successfully teaching these deaf students to master and appreciate the subject were found. The deaf students found it hard to learn as they have problems with the pronunciation and the reception of sounds. Furthermore, additional problems arise in the form of teaching aids, teachers' lack of skills in the Fakhir method and also the students' short term memory problem. Henceforth, a few suggestions were made in order to solve these problems, such as creating teaching aids and materials that suit the students' ability, exposing Fakhir skill to the teachers, using Kiu pronunciation training to deaf students who still have a little hearing ability and providing suitable hearing aids materials. As a final point, teachers also need to upgrade their innovation in the teaching and learning of Al Quran to deaf students.

**Keywords:** *Problems in teaching Al Quran, deaf students*

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## INTRODUCTION

Every child is born with the ability to adapt to the surrounding around them. This ability is biologically inherited through the use of perfect senses that help them to explore the world. In order to achieve complex goals in life, these children need to go through a learning process and this starts with the use of senses which are later kept as part of life experience (Mohd Shahrani, 2004). Similarly for deaf children, learning is very important for them in order to gain knowledge. However, with their disability, their grasp for understanding and mastery of new knowledge do not happen at a normal rate, thus creating problems in teaching and learning of all school subjects, learning Al-Quran in Islamic Education especially, is included.

“Deaf Student” refers to a person who has hearing impairment or loss of hearing. In Malaysia these special needs people may study in Special Education School or in Special Integration Programs. These deaf people communicate using either sign language or to some minor others, verbal communication. However, sign language is very widely used because these people prefer to mix only among themselves. During teaching and learning sessions, Bahasa Melayu Hand Code (KTBM) is used (Nik Hassan et al., 2015; Mustafa et al., 2015). A few problems arise during the teaching and learning of Al-Quran to deaf students. One of them is the difficulty in pronouncing the Quranic Arabic letters (Nik Hassan, 1997). The disability to use verbal language creates a big impact on the deaf students as they cannot master the learning skills based on the curriculum given (Abdullah, 2014). Some of the deaf students were also not properly exposed to the learning of Al-Quran (Ab Aziz Mohd Zin, et al, 2009; Global Pekak Muslim, 2014). Besides, the deaf students’ performance in the subject is not at all desirable. Based on the examination result, they achieved nothing with zero percent (0%) achievement (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia, 2003). So it is overtly obvious that the deaf students’ performance is still very weak (Abdullah & Che Rabiaah, 2004; Easterbrooks & Baker, 2002, Moores, 2001). This failure to achieve anything can be contributed to the lack of teaching aids and materials for the Islamic Education Subject as none can be found or sold in the markets. Another unfavourable factor is some teachers teaching the subject do not have appropriate ICT skills to help them teach effectively (Efthimiou & Fotena, 2007; Siew et al., 2007). In addition, there are also issues involving teachers who do not have the pedagogical and communication skills (Hamdi, 2011). In this research, a few problems are also discussed from the principal researcher’s personal experience gained from the 6 months’ stay at a special education school.

## AL-QURAN EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR DEAF STUDENTS

The current education system in Malaysia made it compulsory for all muslim students, including the deaf ones to take Islamic Education as a subject. Islamic Education in schools starts in primary schools under the New Primary School Curriculum (KBSR) and continues in the New Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM) in the secondary schools. In KBSR, students are focused on reading the Al-Quran and learning the Fardu ‘Ain (personal obligations) and the Islamic way of life. Meanwhile in KBSM, students are fully directed towards the reading and understanding of Al-Quran, as well as instilling and applying the forms and functions of Islamic way of life. (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1988). Al-Quran recital is one of the components found in the Islamic Education curriculum and it focuses on three things. First, reading Al-Quran with correct tajwid (elocution) rules. Secondly, it focuses on reading and understanding Al-Quran and third is that reciting it with the correct tajwid. The objective of Al-Quran recital in KBSM is to create students who would always read and memorise Al Quran inside and outside the school, to produce students who are well educated in Quran and to generate students who appreciate Al-Quran as a way of life (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia 1988). For that reason, Ministry of Education Malaysia through KBSM has stressed on the importance of the skills in reading Al-Quran and students need to master this in the Islamic Education subject (Mohd Yusoff, 2000).

Students with special needs, especially deaf students are also involved with the formal syllabus in which they have the same opportunity, rights, examination and access to the knowledge and education with the normal students, including the need to learn Al-Quran recital (Nafishah, 2000; Roshaida, 2004). They are privileged as Special Education Program set up under the national education system in this country helps them go through this formal and fair education. Their spiritual needs are not ignored and they will never be left behind, theoretically.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research was conducted with the purpose of getting an early picture on the issues that arise during the teaching and learning of the Islamic Education subject, especially the Al-Quran recital under the Special Education Program in Malaysia. To be more specific, this research was very much interested in getting the teachers' views on these areas of concern:

1. Problems faced by deaf students while learning Al-Quran recital.
2. Problems faced by special education teachers (GPIK) while teaching Al-Quran recital to deaf students
3. Suggestions on how to improve the teaching and learning of Al-Quran to deaf students.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

It is hoped that the findings of this research will give awareness to the teachers about the importance of understanding the problems faced by deaf students. If such issues can be detected at an early stage, the teachers would be able to find a solution to plan and provide suitable and effective activities that will help deaf students to understand more competently during the teaching and learning process. Apart from that, the teachers can provide appropriate learning aids and materials to help these students. Therefore, this research will help enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Islamic Education subject (Abdullah, 2014).

## PROBLEMS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING AL QURAN

Similar researches about problems faced by deaf students in learning Al-Quran have been conducted by a few local researchers such as Mohd Huzairi (2012), Nor Aziah et al., (2012) and Hamdi (2011). Mohd Huzairi (2012) conducted a research regarding teaching Al-Quran to students with hearing disability. Four teachers in the special education school came to an agreement that the problems are short term of concentration, memorization problem and failure to read Al-Quran. Meanwhile, Nor Aziah et al. (2012) concluded that Islamic Education teachers do not have the extra skills and are not sent to courses in enhancing their knowledge to teach effectively. Some only use the traditional method of teaching, such as "chalk and talk". There is no method in teaching disability students such as sign language or hand sign used. Deaf students also have prior self-perception that they could not read Al-Quran. Hamdi (2011) added that it is very challenging to teach Al-Quran reading to students with hearing disability because they could not read nor pronounce the words. This indeed will create problems for them.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a qualitative method in which interviews were conducted. Two former students with hearing disability (BPP), who now themselves are teachers took part alongside four teachers from the Special Education School (GPIK). A few secondary schools that offer Special Education Integration Program and Special Education were involved. The service of a translator was engaged for the interviews. Communication through a form of writing had also been utilised. As for instruments, besides structured questions, video recording and voice recording using ICrecorder were also used to record the interviews. The interview texts were then transcribed verbatim, and typed using microsoft word, and finally analysed.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the research done and information gathered, a few problems faced by both teachers and deaf students in the teaching and learning of Al-Quran have been identified. The first problem is the difficulty in pronouncing the "Hija'iyah" words because of their disability. For critically deaf students who have lost their hearing more than 71 decibel (dB), it is hard for them to hear and imitate the sound that exists around them. They will not respond to any words or give reaction towards any sound. They could not hear any words uttered nor could they master the language spoken. Islamic Education teacher 1 (GPIK 1), Islamic Education teacher 2 (GPIK 2) and Islamic Education teacher 3 (GPIK 3) shared the same view and their experience on this problem. GPIK 2 explained that it is hard for deaf students to blurt out words, in fact there was no sound at all. This difficulty may have ben

caused by their physical disability in which their speech organs may have ceased to function due to lack of practice and this hinders their articulation.

The interview with the special education teachers also revealed another problem. They informed that deaf students could not identify and master word articulation. These problems are faced by deaf students who have hearing problems from 40 dB to 70 dB. They have problems in pronouncing the Hija'iyah words as it is hard for them to differentiate the differing sounds and the sounds are not clear to their ears. Even if they managed to utter the words, the sound would still be different from the normal students. GPIK2 explained that these students could not differentiate the similar makhrāj words like 'ha' and 'kha'. Some deaf students who can still hear through the use of high raising voice would still have difficulty in uttering Hija'iyah words and the interconnection of these words or sounds.

The next problem is related to the teachers' teaching option when they trained to be a teacher back in their university years. There are some teachers who have the qualification of teaching Islamic Education, but do not have the skills and knowledge of special education. This will create problem as they will have to learn sign language when teaching their subject. The extra skill they need to master burdens them. GPIK 3 shared that "During my days in the University, I never learned sign language as my option was on special education in difficulty of learning" GPIK 2 and GPIK 1 admitted that the same issue is faced by most teachers as they were not in Islamic Education courses yet they have to teach it in Special Education Integration Program.

Short term memory problem is also an issue in which the students cannot retain the information gained for a long time. A person can only remember something consistently if they frequently use it. This poses a problem to students who have hearing disability. They cannot use nor relate the information gathered to the things around them, thus making it hard for them to retain it. This will then create short term memory problem. Consequently, they will not remember the things they learned.

Another problem that is uncovered is that the syllabus does not really cater to their needs. It does not help them at all since it is designed without giving much thought to their disability. This matter has been discussed by the teachers and they agreed that the current syllabus is not designed for deaf students as it does not have any difference than the syllabus for the normal students.

The interviewed special education teachers also added that another problem is the lack of teaching aids. There are no teaching aids in sign language and deaf-friendly materials that would be of help to these students. The absence of these aids and materials make it harder for the teachers to teach deaf students. Such problems need to be looked into by the authority responsible in looking after the affairs of deaf students.

Lack of motivation is another issue. Deaf students feel themselves small, unable to do things and admit that they are weak. They do not practise positive thoughts like perseverance, thus this will make them admit defeat too soon. The unavailability of hand code also makes it hard for deaf students to learn Hija'iyah words. They could not memorise the words, making it much harder to learn. Teachers are also demotivated since some of them do not have the needed knowledge and skills to teach deaf students, especially in the Fakhri methods. It is because when they studied at the university, they were not exposed to such methods. The teachers also could not handle the deaf students in terms of disruptive behaviour and emotional instability. Methodology wise, they are not exposed to the latest techniques nor are they technologically supplied with latest materials in teaching Al-Quran recital. Consequently, teachers need to adapt, adopt and learn on their own, creating another burden for them to carry. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should look into this matter and help train the teachers with knowledge on how to teach the deaf students and also supply them with latest teaching materials.

Further probe found time constraint to be another issue. In secondary schools, there are only three periods per week and one extra period for additional practice. Such a limited time will make it hard for deaf students to learn the subject especially in Al-Quran recital. The time allocated is also meant to be used for testing and Al-Quran recital. Understanding is not tested in the general examination. That is why additional time should be added to make sure teachers have the time to train the students. They should also have more time for personal one on one tutorial. Students should also be put into smaller groups where teaching and learning will be more conducive

and effective. Such problems for students can be seen from the teachers themselves who are weak in helping the students to understand better the subject (Hajarul Bahti, et al., 2010).

## DISCUSSION

The research interviews revealed that there are a few problems in teaching and learning Islamic Education subject to deaf students such as difficulty in pronunciation, lack of motivation, lack of teaching aids and materials, time constraint, and unspecific syllabus. The inability to say what one wants is something normal for deaf students. It is hard for them to form words, and for teachers, this would be a problem as they need to hear the correct pronunciation (Makhraj). This is supported by Abdullah's (2014) findings on the symptom of communication problems with special education students. These students have problems in saying things they want to say and are unable to understand what others are saying.

There are also teachers who do not have Islamic Education Subject as their teaching option for the Special Education Integration Program. This is in line with the finding earlier mentioned by Nor Aziah et al. (2012) that teachers in Special Education schools do not have the basic training and skill in teaching Al-Quran. Some do not even have the basic knowledge especially in the Al-Quran recital and they also lacked the basic skills of Fakhri method. This finding exposes the fact that the teachers who are given the responsibility to teach Islamic Education to deaf students are themselves not qualified nor equipped in the first place. They lacked mastery in content, delivery skills and pedagogical knowledge. Such issue has been mentioned by Mohd Mokhtar Tahar & Aliza Alias (2003) in their research. They found out that there are only 34.7% teachers in Special Education Schools that have knowledge in the strategy of teaching special students, while only 30.4% know the strategy of teaching Islamic Education subject. The research also found that most teachers do not focus fully on the Quran recital, instead they tend to finish the syllabus and train students for the examination as examination results are seen to be an indicator of success. The recital of Al-Quran component is not being given its deserved attention compared to other components of the subject.

Another finding shows that the students face problems in memorization. The main factor causing this problem is that deaf students cannot connect or relate the things they see to other things in their memory, making it hard for them to retain their memory. Such case has been reported by Mohd Huzairi et al. (2012). In teaching and learning Islamic Education subject, students are found to be unable to remember the things they learned. What was taught cannot be retained for a long period of time. They have the inability to relate what they see to what is in their mind. Such problem may be solved if the deaf students can master a few skills such as identifying the things they see and remembering the code with the objects that they have learned.

The research has additionally shown that teaching aids for deaf students are inadequate. The existing teaching aids seem to cater more to the needs of the normal students. Siew et al. (2007) agrees with this finding. Moreover, text books must also be made easily available for deaf students to use. While the current syllabus may not be fully helpful to the deaf students, teachers could make some adjustments in order to cater to the needs and the students' level (Hamdi, 2011).

Finally, there is a problem in the form of hand codes. The codes are insufficient especially for use in Islamic Education. GPIK1 and GPIK 2 agreed with this. Even though over 32000 words exist, not all are hand-coded (Kamus Dewan, 2005). Abdullah (2011) believes that the problem of not having sufficient codes even in Bahasa Melayu will make it hard for certain words and sentences to be recognized by the students. This makes both teachers and students difficult to understand each other.

Based on the findings and interviews conducted on the research respondents, a few suggestions have been identified in order to help upgrade and enhance the teaching and learning of Islamic Education subject to the deaf students.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. Teaching aids are very important especially to the students who still have a little ability in hearing and speaking. They can be trained to pronounce the correct Al-Quran words/sounds by using modern technological tools. By training them with such tools, students can master the correct pronunciation and recite Al-Quran correctly. KIU pronunciation training can benefit the students as while by using hearing aid, students can pronounce Hija'iyah words correctly.
2. Skilled teachers are also needed in order to help the deaf students learn better. Based on the interviews with the GPIKs and former students (BPP), it was concluded that skills and techniques play important roles in the success of teaching and learning. GPIK 3 believes that teachers should master the communication skills using sign language. GPIK 2 and GPIK 3 also believe that ICT Skill is very important. Teachers with this skill will be able to access new information and techniques in teaching the deaf students. Lined and connected Al-Quran alphabets will be much easier for deaf students to learn and master.
3. Item Building Collaboration

Selecting the appropriate teaching materials is important in order to get an effective Al-Quran lessons. Based on the interviews and discussion there are a few things that need to be addressed in selecting such materials. First of all, visual aids are very important and must be made compulsory as they will help students understand better and clearer. Secondly, it must be user-friendly. While selecting teaching materials, students' level and ability must be considered and looked into, as what Islamic Education and Special Education professionals suggest:

“we never consider other people's needs and these special students still have their vision and sight, therefore we should enlarge the fonts, make it clearer and interesting. We should test them and do action research and keep on upgrading”  
(PP)

For some schools and higher learning institutions, they should collaborate with other professional fields in order to create an effective item building for deaf students. For example, schools should collaborate with special education experts who have the skill and knowledge in creating materials for special students. Such teamwork should be an ongoing effort:

“we should collaborate with universities and teachers, Computer Science Department should expose the teachers as current materials do not help our special students, and thus it becomes a limited resource.”

4. Teaching period for Islamic Education subject should be added especially giving focus to Al-Quran recital. This can be done by giving extra period during school time or after school. Extra class should focus on certain topics and skills. More teachers with skills should also be brought to the schools.
5. Special Education teachers should also be trained and exposed to the related skills and methods, especially in term of Fasih. All teachers in special education schools should be exposed to the Fasih modules.
6. Modern technology should be used in teaching and learning, especially in reciting Al-Quran. Teachers can use Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and type using Arabic fonts in computers and other softwares. Teachers can pronounce the words that they type, making easier for the deaf students to learn and follow.

7. Early intervention should be given to deaf students when they are still small. Through this process, deaf children will be exposed and trained by using hearing aids. This will help the children achieve correct articulation when communicating with other people.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings that have been explored, this paper gives focus on the issues and problems faced by deaf students and the GPIK teachers. This can be seen as the Islamic Education subject, especially related to Al-Quran has not been given its due importance since the syllabus does not cater to the needs of the deaf students. A few suggestions have been forwarded to the people involved for them to revise and upgrade the syllabus, so that it could enhance the quality of teaching and learning of Al-Quran to deaf students. Finally, the success of deaf students comes from the support and hard work of the teachers and all parties. This paper paves the way for those involved to step up and find whatever means necessary in solving the problems discovered in the research.

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