

EVALUATING THE *TAHFIZ* MODEL OF *ULUL ALBAB* (TMUA) IN MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Aswandi Laman

School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work
Queen's University Belfast

alaman01@qub.ac.uk

Keywords: Programme evaluation, *tahfiz* curriculum, Qur'anic memorisation

Introduction: In the context of Islamic education in Malaysia, it is becoming increasingly clear that Islamic schools are offering an 'integrated education' system model. The *tahfiz* model of *ulul abab* (TMUA), for instance, integrates *tahfiz* or Qur'anic education and memorisation, into mainstream education as part of the development of a national *tahfiz* curriculum as described in the *Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025*. TMUA is an ongoing educational programme that was piloted over three years from 2014 in three secondary religious boarding schools. An evaluation of the programme is essential to establish the extent to which it has achieved its intended short-term outcomes in relation to the three components of TMUA: Qur'anic skills (as indicated by the successful memorisation of 19 *juz*'), encyclopaedic or academic skills (as indicated by student performance on PT3, the Secondary 3 National Assessment) and *ijtihadic* skills (critical thinking, leadership and communication skills). The results of the evaluation will inform decision-making in relation to any modifications or improvements to the programme and to guide interventions where necessary.

Methods: Data from interviews with TMUA students, teachers and administrators was qualitatively analysed to explore the reflections of those directly involved in the programme. Numerical data relating to student achievement in relation to Q-E-I skills development was statistically analysed, as was the relationships between these three variables. Finally, the encyclopaedic/academic and *ijtihadic* outcomes of TMUA students were compared with those of an equivalent group of non-TMUA students drawn from four religious boarding schools. The study sample therefore consisted of 417

TMUA students and 462 non-TMUA students enrolled in Form 4 in 2017. Six focus group interviews were conducted with TMUA students. Data was also collected through 15 individual interviews with TMUA teachers and administrators.

Results: The findings show that TMUA been successful in terms of the academic achievement of its students, particularly in the PT3 examination and in terms of *ijtihadic* skills development. This achievement is particularly remarkable in light of the obstacles and challenges TMUA students encountered during the implementation process, including a hectic daily timetable, emotional and physical exhaustion, the need to balance Qur'anic memorisation with academic study and the high expectations of their families and the general public. Additionally, TMUA has been fairly effective in increasing students' awareness of the concept of the *ulul albab* generation and the future benefits of the programme, which helped somewhat to motivate them to achieve the targets for these components. By contrast, the data shows that a majority of students (68%) did not achieve their Qur'anic memorisation target of 19 *juz'* in three years due to the failure to include a *Tahfiz* Screening Test (TST) as an essential admission requirement and the orientation of the syllabus towards passing the *hifz* subject in the PT3 examination. This study also found that TMUA students outperformed non-TMUA students in the PT3 examination, with 62% percent of TMUA students earning 9-13 A's, whereas only 30% of non-TMUA students earned 9-11 A's. The results of multiple linear regression also indicated that every student at TMUA schools receive almost one more total A scores than that non-TMUA schools. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in their *ijtihadic* skills achievement.

Conclusion: It is highly recommended that TMUA should be continued with some necessary modifications and interventions because the *ulul albab* generation that is born not only need to be knowledgeable but also highly sympathetic towards Islamic values and will be able to drive the success of the Muslim society.