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## **Malaysian teacher standards and the professionalism development of Islamic education teachers**

**Azarul Razamin bin Mat Said**

Fakulti Pengajian Kontemporari Islam Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu

Corresponding author email: [azarul76@gmail.com](mailto:azarul76@gmail.com)

**Dr. Mustafa bin Che Omar**

Fakulti Pengajian Kontemporari Islam, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu

Email: [mustafa@unisza.edu.my](mailto:mustafa@unisza.edu.my)

**Dr. Najmiah binti Omar**

Fakulti Pengajian Kontemporari Islam, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu

Email: [najmiah@unisza.edu.my](mailto:najmiah@unisza.edu.my)

**Dr. Mohd Allnurulhuda bin Ghazali**

Sektor Pendidikan Islam Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Terengganu

Email: [allnurulhuda@moe.gov.my](mailto:allnurulhuda@moe.gov.my)

**Abstract**--Competency is a set of behaviors that construct a competent employee in a certain profession. In the profession, competency describes an employee's achievement and performance in a task or situation. It enables employees to predict behavior in various situations and functions. Dedicated and trustworthy employees are significant priorities according to Islam. This research paper aims to explain the concept of teachers' competency, analyze the development of teacher professionalism in improving the quality of teaching as well as describe previous studies related to the implications of the Malaysian Teacher Standards policy on teaching and learning process. The research method used in this study is content analysis from literature reviews and official documents published by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. The findings of the study show that the Malaysian Teacher Standard 1.0 has introduced three teaching standards, namely the practice of the values of teacher professionalism, knowledge and understanding; the teaching and learning skills that teachers need to achieve. Each standard contains

a specific domain to create a teacher competent in the duties. Meanwhile, Malaysian Teacher Standard 2.0 introduces four domains of teachers' competency, namely knowledge orientation domain, instructional domain, community involvement domain; and personal quality domain. The implications of the implementation of the Malaysian Teacher Standards show that teachers have strived to increase the level of teaching competency in teachers' professional development programs. This development is supported by the latest research which shows that teachers' efforts are in line with the recommendations of the Teacher Professionalism Division of the Ministry of Education Malaysia to master knowledge orientation competencies, namely understanding philosophy, policy, and curriculum; and increase knowledge progressively about the latest educational trends and developments.

**Keywords---**competency, PdPc, Islamic studies, professionalism, MTS.

## **Introduction**

Islam emphasizes honesty and loyalty in performing a task entrusted to a person. This is sanctioned by Allah SWT as quoted from the following verses which mean:

*One of the women said, "O my father, hire him. Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy." (al-Qasas 28:26)*

*Allah even knows the sly glances of the eyes and whatever the hearts conceal. (Ghaafir 40:19).*

*O, believers! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger, nor betray your trusts knowingly. (al-Anfaal 8:27)*

Hence, an employee needs to equip themselves with knowledge and skills as well as good behavior or morals. These three elements are components of self-competency. Competency is a set of behaviors that construct a competent employee in a certain profession. In the profession, competency describes an employee's achievement and performance in a task or situation (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

## **Research Objective**

The research sets three objectives namely (i) Explain the concept of teachers' competency in professionalism development (ii) Analyze the policy of teachers' professional development in improving the quality of teaching, and (iii) Describe previous studies related to the implications of the Malaysian Teacher Standards policy on teaching and learning process.

## **Research Methodology**

The research method used in this study is content analysis from literature reviews and official documents published by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. The materials are then analyzed comprehensively.

## **Research Findings**

### **Teachers' Competency in Professionalism Development**

The Malaysian Teacher Standard (SGM) 1.0 (Teacher Education Division, 2009) introduces three teaching standards i.e., the practice of the values of teachers' professionalism, knowledge, and understanding; as well as the teaching and learning skills that teachers need to achieve. Each standard contains a specific domain to make a teacher competent in carrying out his or her duties. The standard of practice of the values of teacher professionalism contains three domains which are self, profession, and social. The self-domain consists of constructs of faith in God, trust, sincerity, knowledge, love, patience, courtesy, fairness, consideration, resilience, dynamism, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, voluntary spirit; and efficiency. The domain of the profession consists of passion for the profession, skills, integrity, representation, practicing teamwork, proactive, creativity, and innovation. Whereas the social domain consists of constructs of harmony, social skills, societal spirit, patriotism; and devotion to the natural environment.

Standards of knowledge and understanding consist of philosophical domains, educational goals and objectives, learning outcomes, teaching and learning needs, educational knowledge content, information and communication technology, conducive learning strategies, assessment, and evaluation methods as well as student potential. Teaching and learning skills standards consist of the domains of skills in preparing teaching and learning planning, skills in implementing teaching and learning process, skills in monitoring, assessing and evaluating, teaching and learning effectiveness as well as classroom management skills.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Teacher Standard 2.0 (Teacher Professionalism Division, 2019) introduces four (4) domains of teachers' competency, namely knowledge orientation domain, instructional domain, community involvement domain; and personal quality domains. The knowledge orientation domain contains the following constructs:

- a. deepens and expands the knowledge of Teaching and Learning (PdP),
- b. understands the latest educational philosophies, policies, curricula, and trends; and
- c. increase knowledge progressively about the latest educational trends and developments.

While the instructional domain contains the following constructs:

- a. focusing on the development of student potential,
- b. designing PdP,
- c. implements PdP; and
- d. assesses learning.

Next, the domain of community involvement contains the following constructs:

- a. build relationships and networks with parents or guardians and the outside community to support student learning,
- b. engaging the community to aid student learning, and
- c. celebrating the diversity of the community.

The personal quality domain contains the following constructs:

- a. practicing self-improvement and reflection,
- b. enlivens the practice of teaching,
- c. adopts a gentle educator leadership style; and
- d. accepting cultural diversity.

SGM 2.0 contains four cores of teaching ethics, namely responsibility towards the profession, responsibility towards students, responsibility towards parents or guardians; and responsibility to society and the country. This teaching ethic is a moral principle and value held as principles and practices of teachers in Malaysia. It ensures the teaching profession as a professional career is esteemed by society. Teachers with higher levels of competency are seen to be more effective in delivering lessons. The competency-based approach (CBA) in teacher professional development has assisted teachers in guiding students to achieve better learning outcomes covering cognitive and affective development (Creemers et al., 2013; Venkatraman et al., 2018).

### **Development of Teachers' Professionalism in Improving the Quality of Teaching**

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has launched the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025 which outlines strategies and initiatives that support the transformation of the national education system holistically. The implementation of PPPM 2013-2025 has resulted in changes in national education policy. This instigates a need to review the Malaysian Education Quality Standards (SKPM) (Board of Inspectors and Quality Assurance, 2017). The Malaysian Education Quality Standard wave 2 (SKPMg2) is built with a new format developed specifically as a guide to administrators and school staff in improving the effectiveness of the management and provision process of education.

The SKPMg2 instrument is an action-oriented, quality-focused, and evidence-based instrument. This instrument emphasizes the role of school administrators as leaders, mentors, and motivators in performing leadership tasks in schools. This instrument also emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators in the PdP process (Board of Inspectors and Quality Assurance, 2017). It consists of five standards, namely: (1) Leadership Standards, (2) Organizational Management Standards, (3) Curriculum Management Standards, Co-curriculum, and Student Affairs, (4) Learning and Facilitation Standards (PdPc); and (5) Student Performance Standards.

## **Learning and Facilitation Standards (PdPc)**

The Learning and Facilitation Standard (PdPc) is the 4th standard instrument in the Malaysian Education Quality Standard Wave 2. According to this standard, teachers act as facilitators in the effective learning and teaching process to develop overall student performance and continuously improve student achievement at optimum levels.

- 1) **Teachers as Planners**  
Teachers plan the implementation of PdPc professionally and systematically. As planners, teachers prepare lesson plans and determine appropriate assessment methods. Teachers also provide educational resources according to students' abilities, time allocation, and adherence to the instructions in force.
- 2) **Teacher as Guardian**  
Teachers control the learning process in a professional and organized manner. As a guard, the teacher manages the content of the lesson and the allocation of time given. Teachers also provide opportunities for active participation of students by meeting the learning objectives and according to the ability of students to learn.
- 3) **Teachers also need to control the learning environment in a professional and planned manner. To achieve this standard, teachers as controllers monitor student communication and behavior as teaching takes place. Teachers also arrange the position of students and create an entertaining learning environment.**
- 4) **Teachers as Mentors**  
Teachers guide students by assisting in mastering the content and skills based on the syllabus. As mentors, teachers guide students to make decisions and solve problems in learning activities.
- 5) **Teachers as Motivators**  
Teachers encourage students' minds in carrying out learning activities in a professional and planned manner. As a mind motivator, teachers stimulate students to communicate and collaborate by asking questions geared toward critical and creative thinking. In addition, students are encouraged to make decisions or solve problems when learning activities are carried out.
- 6) **Teachers also encourage students' emotions in carrying out learning activities in a professional and planned manner. As emotional motivators, teachers give praise, encouragement, appreciation, and confidence as well as concern for the needs of students in a prudent, comprehensive, and continuous manner.**
- 7) **Teachers as Assessors**  
Teachers perform assessments in a systematic and planned manner. As evaluators, teachers use various assessment methods, conduct intervention activities, give assignments, reflect on and review student work.
- 8) **Students as Active Learners**  
Students engage in the learning process effectively. To achieve this standard, students respond to teachers by communicating and performing activities collaboratively. In addition, students think critically and creatively, ask questions, solve problems and relate the content of the lesson to daily life.

### **Past Studies on the Implications of the MOE Malaysian Teacher Standards Policy**

The study by Rafizah et al. (2020) entitled *Islamic Education Teacher Competency Implementing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Teaching: Issues, Problems, and Challenges* explain the issues, problems, and challenges of Islamic Education Teachers (GPI) in implementing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching and learning. The findings of the study found that the minimal level of knowledge among Islamic Education Teachers in Malaysia in mastering the concept and understanding of HOTS has caused failure for it to be applied in teaching. In terms of teacher pedagogy, Islamic Education Teachers are less creative in developing teaching methods and only adopt traditional teaching methods such as lectures. This situation is associated with the cause of HOTS not being able to be applied in student-centered learning. Teachers of Islamic Education are more likely to practice teacher-centered teaching causing students not to be interested in learning. In terms of teacher assessment practices, Islamic Education Teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and skills regarding questioning techniques and question concepts based on HOTS. The implications of the study suggest that Islamic Education Teachers equip themselves with knowledge and skills by attending workshops or self-learning to ensure that the goal of producing successful and competitive students will be achieved. Education is currently focusing on the mastery of HOTS among students. This is because HOTS is a significant skill for our students in facing the competition for academic excellence at the international level. The implementation of HOTS in teaching and learning depends on the supporting factors of teachers' competency.

The study of Fadzliyah et al. (2020) aimed to identify the perspectives of novice teachers of Islamic Education on online teaching and learning and the impact of its implementation. The findings of the study show that novice teachers of Islamic Education have tried to provide creative teaching by diversifying teaching methods. The implications of online teaching encourage them to strive to master online technology skills to facilitate teaching and learning. Teachers of Islamic Education have sparked a new spirit among them to ensure that students' learning is not unresolved due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, the study of Norfarahin & Mohd Isa (2019) discusses the competency of teachers in implementing classroom assessment in primary schools in Malaysia. Competency is an important factor in achieving the educational goals set by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). Teachers' competency is needed to implement existing policies for improvement and to implement the new educational policies. The assessment policy in the education system by the MOE is a new initiative to create a world-class education. The quality of teachers' teaching is the most important factor that contributes to the success of students in school. To measure students' level of mastery in learning, teachers' competencies in assessment need to be developed as specific needs to support an effective assessment process. It aims to help each student acquire knowledge, skills, and learning values as a result of a successful learning experience. This study focuses on aspects of teachers' competencies in assessing the development of student learning in academics through Classroom Assessment (PBD). Teachers who are competent in implementing PBD can help students achieve learning

objectives. This is because PBD can help teachers identify the actual level of student mastery in a subject. Therefore, teachers need to strive to improve their level of competencies to help students succeed in primary school.

The study of Norhisham & Siti Hazlini (2020) aims to examine the understanding of Islamic Education Teachers on 21st Century Learning (PAK21) competencies. This study uses a quantitative approach and uses survey methods. This study involved 140 Islamic Education Teachers from primary schools in Kuala Kangsar district and the data were analyzed using descriptive analysis to explain the level of understanding of Islamic Education Teachers about PAK21. The findings of this study show that Islamic Education Teachers in Kuala Kangsar have a clear understanding of the implementation of PAK21 as the latest approach in the education system. The findings of this study indicate that Islamic Education Teachers who are the main arteries that will conduct teaching and facilitation in the classroom need to undergo more training or courses to improve their understanding of PAK21.

The study of Norma & Mohd Isa (2020) aims to identify the level of competence of Islamic Education Teachers (GPI) on Student-Centered Teaching (PBM) or student-centered learning in primary schools. PBM is one of the features of PAK21 that is being practiced in the teaching of teachers and student learning in KPM schools. A total of 500 GPIs from all over Peninsular Malaysia were randomly selected as study respondents. Overall, the findings of this quantitative study showed that PBM skills among GPIs were at a high level (mean = 3.76 and  $sp = 0.50$ ). The tasmi' method is the preferred PBM approach among GPIs (mean = 4.32 and  $sp = 0.76$ ). The implications of this study have suggested that GPI be more exposed to the concept of PBM including making additional references and readings based on pamphlets and related modules.

The study of Rafizah et al. (2020) aimed to discuss the issues and challenges faced by Teachers of Islamic Education (GPI) in implementing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in their teaching. HOTS is one of the features of PAK21 that is being practiced in the teaching of teachers and student learning in KPM schools. The findings of the study show that the current trend of education is more focused on thinking skills among students. HOTS is one of the thinking skills in learning that allows students to compete with each other domestically and also with foreign students internationally.

The implementation of HOTS in teaching is related to the ability or the competency of the teacher to implement it during the teaching and learning sessions. Teaching and learning based on the PAK21 concept require the full involvement of teachers. The results also show that GPI faces various challenges that can be problems in applying HOTS in teaching. Among the factors are time constraints and the diversity of students' intellectual levels in the classroom. This factor can present a challenge to teachers to ensure that all students can understand the teaching and learning process at the same time. Hence, this study suggests that GPIs equip themselves with the knowledge and skills of HOTS application either by attending workshops or doing self-study.

While the study of Syafiqah Solehah & Tengku Sarina Aini (2017) aims to analyze the role of Islamic Education Teachers (GPI) as *murabbi* (educator), *mu'allim* (teacher), *muaddib* (motivator), *mudarris* (instructor) and *mursyid* (mentor) and teachers as role models to show examples of noble personalities towards students. The construct of the study measured is the personality traits of teachers and the moral practices of Form 4 students in selected non-boarding secondary schools in the district of Marang, Terengganu. Measurements of GPI personality constructs and student moral practices include dimensions of appearance, communication, behavior, and emotions. The findings of the study showed that the mean score of the GPI personality construct in the school was at a high level, namely appearance (4.63), communication (4.40), behavior (4.35), and emotion (4.41). These findings illustrate that the teachers have a good personality and are in line with the demands of the Teacher Education Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia. The findings of the study also showed that the mean score of students' moral practice constructs was at a high level, namely appearance (4.41), communication (4.30), behavior (4.43), and emotion (4.43). This study also shows that there is a moderate relationship between GPI personality and student morale formation nowadays. This shows that GPI is not the main cause or dominant factor in the issue of deterioration of school students in academics or morals.

In summary, the findings of Norfarahin & Mohd Isa (2019), Norhisham & Siti Hazlini (2020), Norma & Mohd Isa (2020), Rafizah et al. (2020), Rafizah et al. (2020); and Fadzliyah et al. (2020) in line with the MOE's recommendation for teachers to master knowledge orientation competencies based on the Malaysian Teacher Standard 2.0, which is to understand the latest philosophy, policy, curriculum, and educational trends; and increase knowledge progressively about the latest educational trends and developments. Meanwhile, the study of Syafiqah Solehah & Tengku Sarina Aini (2017) is in line with the MOE's recommendation for teachers to master personal quality competencies as outlined in the Malaysian Teacher Standard 2.0, which is to adopt a humanistic educator leadership style (Teacher Professionalism Division, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Teachers of Islamic Education are essential to master the competencies of teachers as outlined by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to deal with the current challenges to succeed in teaching and student learning. The Malaysian Teacher Standard 2.0 and the Learning and Facilitation Standard (PdPc) in the Malaysian Education Quality Standards Wave Two (SKPMg2) are key guides to help teachers improve teaching practices and accelerate student learning.

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