Implementation of the “Integrated Education System” in Brunei Darussalam: Issues and Challenges

Norhazlin binti Pg Haji MUHAMMAD & Dato Osman BAKAR
(Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Sultan Omar ‘Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies & Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies)

Abstract: The issue of a dual system of education has been largely discussed among Muslim scholars and intellectuals all over the world. Efforts have been made by scholars through the proposal of different ideas and approaches towards achieving an ideal Islamic curriculum. This paper aims to share the experience of Brunei Darussalam in implementing a design model of an Islamic curriculum. The idea of designing an Islamic curriculum model was formally discussed among educationists in 1998, although the issue of dualism of education in Brunei was raised much earlier, in the 1970s. Towards achieving this, on January 3, 2004, the Ministry of Education in Brunei Darussalam implemented the ‘Integrated Education System’ in all primary schools in Brunei Darussalam. This system was implemented for only two years (2004,2005). A fieldwork research study using a survey questionnaire

---

① Pg Dr Norhazlin binti Pg Haji Muhammad, Deputy Director of Sultan Omar ‘Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS), Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD), and a Visiting Research Fellow at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, United Kingdom; Dato Osman Bakar, Director and Chair Professor of SOASCIS, UBD & Dr Basil Mustafa, Nelson Mandela Fellow of Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, United Kingdom.
was conducted in 2008 among 114 general primary school teachers to explore the issues and challenges encountered in implementing the system. The findings have demonstrated that although the issue of dualism in education is currently a significant topic of discussion within Muslim societies, teachers and educationist lag far behind in realizing this issue, ostensibly because they have not been exposed to the matter. There are also other issues and challenges in implementing this system, which will be discussed later in this paper.

Keywords: Islamic Education; Islamic Curriculum; Issues and Challenges; Brunei Darussalam; Integrated Education System; Islamic philosophy; Islamic studies

I. Introduction

There is a widespread perception that social and economic development can only be achieved through modern secular education, while religious issues are no longer relevant to human development. Nowadays, the majority of traditional institutions in Muslim countries, such as kuttāb, madrasah and religious schools, continue to serve as institutions that only teach classical Islamic sciences or law, whilst secular institutions are more popular, providing a modern education that avoids religious elements or values. The separation between these two patterns of education, referred to as a “dual system of education,” represents a significant problem faced by Muslim societies. As is the case elsewhere throughout the Muslim world, this Muslim education dilemma is also occurring in Brunei Darussalam.

As such, this paper aims to highlight efforts by the Ministry of Education (MOE) towards addressing this problem through the
implementation of the ‘Integrated Education System’ on January 3, 2004. This paper discusses the vision and aims of this system, which was utilised for only two years. From survey data gathered in 2008 from 114 general primary school teachers at six schools in the Brunei Muara District, it can be concluded that there are five main issues and challenges in implementing this system, and these issues and challenges are discussed in this paper.

II. Dual System of Education

Rahman (1982) argues that the issue of a dual system of education resulted from the decline and stagnation of Muslim intellectualism, further stating that the “duality of loyalty to religion and to worldly affairs” results in a “secularist” state of mind (Rahman, S., 1982: 47). Muslim intellectualism has gradually declined, specifically in the areas of science and philosophy, beginning in the 13 and 14th centuries. Rahman explains that before the period of western colonisation, there were four main factors which lead to this situation. The first related to the favour on the priorities of knowledge. Acquisition of religious science is believed to result in success in the hereafter, and rational science is not conducive to spiritual needs. The second is due to the spread of Sufism, which emphasizes cultivating an internal spiritual life and direct religious experience. Third, degree holders in religious sciences had better jobs as qadis and muftis, whilst philosophers and scientists were limited to court employment. The fourth and final reason was that the opposition to important religious imams, such as Al-Ghazzali, regarding the study of philosophy has been mistakenly interpreted to mean that any scientific knowledge or works should be
avoided. In fact, Imam Al-Ghazzali was only opposed to certain new doctrines practiced by certain Muslim philosophers adapting the Greek theological approach in relation to the metaphysical views such as the eternity of the world, the pure symbolic nature of the prophetic revelation and the rejection of physical resurrection. Further, Al-Gazzali disagreed with the practice of misleading the simpleminded public with clichés such as “look after your health first, then your faith” (Rahman, S., 1982: 33 & 34).

Following this, the madrasah rejected the “rational sciences” in its curriculum, and the latter medieval centuries of Islam original works on religion, such as those related to theology and jurisprudence, were replaced by commentaries and super commentaries, but not on the original text of the Holy Qur’ān (Rahman, S., 1982: 15). Later, during colonial encroachment, the separation between religious and rational sciences became distinct with the practice of a secular colonial policy in education which resulted in some Muslims favouring the adoption of this secular approach (Rahman, S., 1982: 43).

Therefore, Muslim societies should solve the problem of this dichotomy, or dualism, between religious sciences and rational sciences, or between faith and reason, and the way to accomplish this is not only by harmonising between the Holy Qur’ān and science by quoting verses from the Holy Qur’ān that refer to a particular scientific discovery or scientific elements. The book of God has not provided detailed and up-to-date scientific knowledge, but certainly it has provided the philosophy of a metaphysical worldview in its content; thus, humans should use their intellect to develop harmony between faith and reason.
As such, initiatives have been made to harmonise these two different systems of education, aiming towards the revival of the pure Islamic system of education. Al-Ashraf (1985) suggests that Muslim scholars all over the world, as well as authorities, organisations and education centres in Muslim countries, that are interested in implementing an Islamic system of education should make plans or take action in which the initial steps are to “integrate the dual system, firstly at the primary level, and to restructure the training of teachers” (Al-Ashraf, S.A., 1985, pp. 92, 93).

Al-Attas’ (1979) view about solving the problem of a dual education system is to use a holistic approach to education in a manner that considers the human being as a universal creature (Al-insān Al-kāmīl). Therefore, according to Al-Attas, the knowledge to be taught in institutions should reflect the universality and integrity of human entities. He calls for an epistemological revolution by way of Islamising present-day knowledge. In his view, Muslims should not only attempt to de-Westernize or de-secularize knowledge, but it is also important to re-Islamise it and return it to its original Islamic meaning. He introduces certain Arabic-Islamic terms, as well as the creation of a systematic model of thought in the system of education, that reflect the Islamic vision of reality and truth. Education, according to Al-Attas, should aim to produce a “good human being” or a “human being of adab,” who is not only good to himself or herself but also “good” in the general social sense. Humans should also be “good” citizens to the other kingdom (in life or in the hereafter). Al-Attas emphasizes good personal conduct as a requirement for students to enter higher levels of education. He further contends that the fundamental objective in education is to “Islamise the mind, body
and soul and its (objective of education) effect on the personal and collective life of not only Muslims, but also others, including the spiritual and physical non-human elements in the environment” (Cited from Daud, W. W. M. N., 1998, p. 421).

In the case of Brunei Darussalam, Pg. Mustapha Pg. Metassan (1979) has detected the existence of dualism in the system of education since the administration of British Residents in 1904 in terms of control and management. According to Metassan, education would be more effective if the administration of schools was the responsibility of one body, so that there would be no waste of financial resources and manpower. Furthermore, most of the people responsible for administering religious schools are not educationists, so it is better for them to concentrate on the propagation of Islam (cited from Jumat, A., 1989: 59). The same issue was also raised by Jumat in 1989 after the independence of Brunei (1985); this lack of integration has created a situation in which the national education system has come to be divided into religious and non-religious schools. The dual approach to education has created the problem of “two worlds” in the child’s mind, one religious and the other scientific, with each held in isolation from the other (Jumat, A., 1989: 74). This matter was discussed by the late Saedon at the “School Curriculum Towards the 21st Century” convention in 1998. In his paper, “School Curriculum Following Islamic Perspective,” Saedon argued that this dualism in the system has resulted in the categorization of knowledge into religious and non-religious in the mindset of the people. They tend to have a misconception that religious knowledge has no connection or relationship with the world and the environment, and that it also has nothing to do with the development of science and technology.
Further, Saedon argues that knowledge known to be religious knowledge (Naqly) should not contradict acquired knowledge (‘Aqly). Acquired knowledge must be guided by revelation (Saedon, M., 1998, 42). As mentioned previously, this is the essence of the problem faced by most Muslim countries in the world, and it was discussed extensively during the educational convention of 1998.

As a result, efforts have been made to solve dualism in education through the full merger of the Department of Islamic Studies and all religious schools under the administration of the MOE in January 2002. Religious schools and general schools share the same buildings and facilities and fall under the singular management of the MOE. This addresses the problem in terms of control and management, but integration of the curriculum has not yet been addressed.

### III. Implementation of the Integrated Education System

In response to the issue of dualism of education in terms of curriculum, the Convention on School Curriculum Towards the 21st Century was held from March 2-5, 1998. Major actions were taken by the MOE to modify its educational policy and system (Laporan Konvensyen Pendidikan: Kurikulum Sekolah Abad Ke-21, 1999, p.5). The MOE also formulated its own educational philosophy in early 2004. The state’s education philosophy is as follows:

Brunei Darussalam’s Education Philosophy is founded on the National Philosophy of a Malay Islamic Monarchy and incorporates the two key elements of Naqly (on the basis of the holy Qur’ān and Ḥadīth) and ‘Aqly (on the basis of reasoning). These two elements are essential in the development of individuals to their fullest potential,
thereby nurturing a group of people who are knowledgeable, skilful, faithful, pious, and of excellent character—factors that are fundamental in the realisation or emergence of a national identity that is based on the national philosophy and Islamic teachings in accordance with *Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jemā’ah*. This is an important foundation for ensuring loyalty to Islam, the Monarch and the nation (Pencapaian dan Penilaian 20 Tahun Pendidikan [1984-2003] dan Perancangan 20 tahun Akan Datang [2004-2024], 2004, p. 8).

The education philosophy presented above highlights the state’s aspiration to inculcate in the Bruneian people the identity of the “Malay Islamic Monarchy.” The state’s goal is for an individual citizen to have balanced potential and to not only be knowledgeable and skilful in certain fields, but to also possess the intrinsic values of strong faith, piety, and good morality. The Islamic elements of the `Aqly and Naqly sciences are important and useful for guidance in achieving this aspiration.

Under this new education policy, we can see that Malay remains the state’s national language. In addition to the English language, Arabic has been included as an important medium of instruction. The design of the curriculum must be integrated and compatible with the public examinations, which also take into account students with special needs. Study of Islamic religious education is compulsory, and it is important to ensure that sufficient facilities for mathematics, science, information, communications, and technology education are provided, and that co-curricular activities are part of the developing skills required in the national philosophy.

In an effort to address the dual system of education, on February 14, 2002, the MOE ran the Whole Day Schooling Pilot Scheme, called
Skim Rintis Pendidikan Sepadu (Pilot Scheme on Integrated Education) in 37 schools, during which it aimed to integrate both public schools and religious schools under the management of the MOE.

On January 3, 2004, in response to the success of the Whole Day Schooling Pilot Scheme, the new Integrated Education System was implemented. Integrated education refers to the act of integrating religion and general education, or in other words, integrating revealed knowledge (as the foundation) with acquired knowledge. In this way, education is aimed at producing a balanced individual who not only emphasizes intellectual traits, but who also has strong faith, is pious, and is of good character, so as to balance the life of the present world and the hereafter (Skim Rintis Sistem Pendidikan Bersepadu, 2004, p. 5). In this system, religious schools are physically integrated into the public school system. The move began with efforts to integrate the contents of the three curricula: the Religious Schools curriculum, which incorporates single religious education subjects taught in public schools; Islamic Revealed Knowledge (IRK); and Learning Al-Quran and Islamic Religious Knowledge (Pendidikan Agama Islam [PAI]), each of which is integrated into one curricular component within the Integrated Education System (Integrated Education, 2003, p. 7). In efforts towards the reformation of this new system, a model of School Curriculum for the 21st century has been designed, as shown in Figure 1 on the next page.
Figure 1: Model of School Curriculum for the 21st Century: The Integrated Education System

(Taken From Skim Rintis Sistem Pendidikan Bersepadu, 2004, p. 6.)
This curriculum model is founded on the *Tawḥīd* perspective as a way to develop an outstanding and balanced student by means of integration in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, and physical development. Thus, it is hoped that future educational patterns can be planned in this manner.

The rationale of model selection is to:

1. Consolidate the balance and integration of education founded on revealed knowledge.
2. Provide an educational curriculum categorized into *fard ʿAin* and *fard Kifāyah* knowledge, so as to highlight the principle of integration of the life of the present world and the hereafter.
3. Provide an academic educational curriculum to fulfil the need for academic, professional and comprehensive education.
4. Prepare the community to deal with challenges and to produce citizens who are sensitive, innovative and responsive to current developments in fulfilling future needs.
5. Inculcate and foster awareness of the long-life education concept.
6. Produce a student with a personality that is *Al-shumūl* (well-rounded), *Al-tawāzun* (balanced), and *Al-takāmul* (integrated).
7. Form an outstanding, faithful and pious individual who strives for happiness in the present world and hereafter.
8. Improve and maintain the Bruneian identity, as well as develop a modest personality based on the national philosophy of “Malay Islamic Monarchy.”

(Cited from Skim Rintis Sistem Pendidikan Bersepadu, 2004, pp. 6, 7.)
There are five key elements in the module, each of which complements the other in achieving an ideal Islamic curriculum, as follows:

a) Revelation

The main source of knowledge is revelation, which is based on the principles of the Qur’an and Hadīth. This revealed or religious knowledge is also known as Naqly science in the areas of human, social and natural sciences. This science is very important in the study of the welfare and happiness of humankind in the present world and the hereafter. In this context, revealed knowledge is the guideline for intellectual discipline in order to develop a pious individual, ‘insān Al-Ṣālih.’

b) Malay Islamic Monarchy

In line with national aspirations to ensure the sovereignty of Bruneian identity and the development of individuals who love their country, nationality, and religion, the country’s philosophy of Malay Islamic Monarchy should be implemented by way of the two aspects of `ummah development: fard `Ain and fard Kifāyah, above all kinds of skills—intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and physical—so that perfect individuals can be produced.

c) Fard `Ain and fard Kifāyah

`Ain and Kifāyah comprise the basic knowledge necessary for the continuing life of an individual related to areas of religion, social ethics, morality and legislation. Kifāyah, on the other hand, is the basic knowledge necessary for the continuing and
Prosperous life of a community, such as the knowledge of science, geography, economics and history.

From this perspective, farḍ `Ain and farḍ Kifāyah knowledge must be integrated into the educational curriculum to create significant continuity that is both meaningful and effective in the development of a perfect individual (insān). At the same time, revealed information in the form of Sunnat and role examples based on the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth must be implemented in this curriculum in ways that will ensure that the knowledge which is taught will strengthen the faith and morality of students.

d) Emotional, Intellectual, Physical, Social and Spiritual Development

In planning and designing this curriculum model, its intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and physical components and characteristics must emphasize balance in order to achieve harmony between individual humans; between humans and Allah the Almighty; and between humans and the environment. This model is focused on the relationships between spiritual and material elements; various kinds of knowledge; various aspects of individual development, faith, knowledge and practice (`amal); and the individual and society.

Every individual’s potential must be fully developed in order to create a perfect and decent personality that is valuable to the religion, the nation and the state.

e) Environment

Currently, rapid changes and developments in national and overseas environments are taking place, which may make it difficult for some people to determine the conditions and patterns of their
future life. Thus, this curriculum model must equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to fulfil the nation’s needs and face future challenges of globalization. In addition, they must be able to maintain their Bruneian self-identity.

(Skim Rintis Sistem Pendidikan Bersepadu, 2004, pp. 7, 8.)

The objectives of integrated education are as follows:

i) Strengthen the practice and internalization of Islam;

ii) Provide knowledge, skills and moral values;

iii) Incorporate Bruneian values;

iv) Match the learner’s ability and interests with appropriate education;

v) Cultivate basic skills;

vi) Produce learners who are determined to face the contemporary challenges of modernity;

vii) Provide human resource training that contributes to national initiatives and efforts towards human research and development;

viii) Establish a well-defined format for assessment and measurement;

ix) Increase achievement levels in literacy, numeracy, scientific literacy and functional literacy;

x) Give due emphasis to individuals’ physical and overall health conditions; and

xi) Promote co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

(Cited from Integrated Education, 2003, p. 11.)
The implementation of this system begins in preschool and lower primary school classes. All Muslim children take Religious Education as a compulsory subject, while non-Muslims take Arts and Handicrafts, Extended Civics, Library and Malay Language classes.

In this integrated education curriculum, new subjects have been introduced, such as Arabic, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Co-Curriculum. Emphasis was also placed on the Islamisation of knowledge, i.e., the implementation of Islamic elements across the curriculum. Unfortunately, a curriculum for special needs learners has not yet been established, but recommendations and suggestions from experts towards this formulation have already been reviewed and are under consideration (Integrated Education, 2003, p. 4).

There have been opposition and complaints related to the implementation of the Integrated Education System. As mentioned previously, the Integrated Education System was discontinued after only two years, from January 3, 2004, to December 2005. Brunei then continued its former bilingual system and Religious School System. In January 2009, Brunei piloted a new system, Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke 21 (SPN-21).

IV. Issues and Challenges of Implementing the Integrated Education System in Brunei Darussalam

Fieldwork research was conducted in 2008 among 114 school teachers from six general primary schools in the Brunei District. From the survey conducted, it can be concluded that there are five main
issues and challenges in the implementation of the Integrated Education System in Brunei Darussalam.

a) Lack of knowledge on the issue of dualism of education.

The statistical results reveal that among the 114 respondents, more than half of the teachers do not know or have not heard about the issue of dualism in education. The percentages related to these findings are 70.2 percent (80) of the total of 114 teachers, compared to 29.8 percent (34), respectively. This proves that although the issue of dualism in education is currently a significant topic of discussion within Muslim societies, Bruneian educationists are far behind in realizing this issue, ostensibly because they have not been exposed to the matter. This is exemplified in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Knowledge of the issue of dualism in education
Implementation of the ‘Integrated Education System’ in Brunei Darussalam: Issues and Challenges

b) Misunderstanding and incorrect perceptions regarding the aims and curriculum structure of the system.

The chief aims of the Integrated Education System are to solve the problem of dualism in education; inculcate Islamic elements across the curriculum; and provide a holistic education that addresses the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of learners through the delivery of both revealed and acquired knowledge. Unfortunately, as the questionnaire findings revealed, only one teacher answered in a manner that was close to the expected meaning on the aims of the Integrated Education System as stipulated by the MOE, which is “to bring into being students with a well-rounded personality with sufficient revealed and acquired knowledge.” Another respondent stated that apart from the integration of religious and general knowledge, this system was also intended to implement Islamic elements in school subjects and activities. Another statement from a respondent regarding enriching Islamic knowledge emphasized gathering both religious and acquired knowledge, strengthening faith and religious practices, and learning the Arabic language and Jawi script.

Among the remaining respondents, most were not particularly clear, and several demonstrated misunderstandings about the Integrated Education System. Most see this system only from a practical perspective, which is that of the integration of general and religious education under a single system; and the integration of two curriculums, two types of knowledge, and two types of schools under the administration of the MOE. As planned, this system considers a whole day of school as starting at 7:30 a.m. and finishing at 4:30 p.m., coupled with the inclusion of religious education in general schools.
Four respondents misunderstood or misinterpreted this system as follows:

1. Students are no longer studying religious education.
2. The Administration of Religious Affairs falls under the administration of MOE.
3. Religious education is limited to learning al-Quran and the Arabic language.
4. Religious education is implemented during the morning session.

One respondent claimed that he was unclear about the Integrated Education System. The results from this item on the survey reflect the fact that opposition and complaints related to implementation of the Integrated Education System were the result of misunderstandings about this system, especially regarding the perception that it would no longer include religious education. In reality, this system follows what Muslim scholars have suggested in the Muslim curriculum.

The findings indicate that most of the respondents lack knowledge and understanding of these aims. As such, the researcher posits that the dual structure of the educational system now being practised in Brunei resulted from the evolution of traditional practice of the Bruneian people of seeking religious knowledge at religious schools during afternoon sessions, whilst scientific or rational knowledge is delivered in the morning at general government schools. This practice has ultimately contributed to a misunderstanding of the system in general. When the first formal learning institution, the traditional balai,
was established, the curriculum content provided only a variety of religious knowledge. The reason behind this was to strengthen the faith of Islam in the heart of the Bruneian people. When British residents introduced scientific knowledge in a formal manner, it was delivered separately from religious knowledge and conducted formally in a mosque in 1912. It later moved to a building used by the former monopolies office in October, 1914 (Douglas, 1915, p. 5). This marked the beginning of the delivery of two types of knowledge. Therefore, when integrated education was introduced, people tended to have the incorrect perception that religious knowledge was no longer being taught to students.

\textit{c) Lack of infrastructures and facilities.}

To ensure the successful implementation of the Integrated Education System, certain facilities—such as congregation halls, dining halls, taps for ablution, showers, and changing rooms—had to be provided. Unfortunately, this did not occur, which caused many problems, including discomfort and an unclean environment. To overcome this, the students had to use classrooms for prayer, which was not easy since they needed to clear all tables and chairs to acquire the space necessary for conducting prayers. Without proper taps for ablution, the students had to use taps in the toilets, which is improper and unhygienic. Since there were so few taps available in the toilet rooms, the students needed to queue up, which produced time constraints as they attempted to perform prayers within the time allotted. When these facilities were finally provided, the system was discontinued. This action caused the facilities to be wasted, since
schools that do not run religious classes in the afternoons do not need some of these facilities.

d) Culture and attitudes.

One of the factors related to culture is that teachers are accustomed to working a half day. When the Integrated Education System was implemented, they had to be present for work during two sessions, morning and afternoon. This created reluctance among the teachers, which they explained gave them less time to check students’ work, and the long work hours caused them stress and afforded them less rest. We are of the view that the working hours can indeed be tolerated by holding school from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Alternatively, the hours could be from 7:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Nevertheless, the sudden change in working hours resulted in less cooperation from the teachers in implementing the system successfully.

Another cultural factor is related to social “trust.” For ages, the Bruneian people have given their full trust to the traditional religious institutions in delivering religious knowledge. When all religious schools were suddenly administered under the general primary school system, this created anxiety and mistrust, since people believed that this system would not provide proper instruction in religious knowledge. Given the long history of the dual system, people tend to believe that religious knowledge should be delivered separately from scientific knowledge. Thus, to mitigate this problem, efforts should be made to discuss the issue of dualism in education with the public and explain it to them properly. People would then be more confident about the delivery of knowledge through one integrated system. The survey data has shown that teachers prefer the dual system. For
example, 59.4 percent (n=57) of teachers believed that the two different systems were either sufficient or very sufficient in developing a well-rounded individual who is not only knowledgeable, but who is also faithful, pious and of good moral character. In comparison, 62.3 percent (n=70) viewed the integrated approach as insufficient.

It is believed that if integrated education is implemented for a longer period, teachers and the public will slowly begin to accept the change, provided that the weaknesses of this system can be addressed.

e) Insufficient acknowledgement of the implementation of the system.

The statistical results reveal that 36.3 percent (n=41) of the teachers did not have prior knowledge about implementation of this system, compared to 63.7 percent (n=72) who had such knowledge. We view this as an unsatisfying result, because we consider 36.3 percent as representative of a high percentage of confusion among many of the teachers regarding the system.

V. Conclusion

The implementation of the Integrated Education System in Brunei Darussalam was a response to the call to solve the Muslim dilemma of the dual system of education. The exploration of its philosophy and design models reflects the true Islamic model, as suggested by Muslim scholars and intellectuals. The curriculum model is founded on the *Tawhid* perspective as a way to develop, by means of integration, an outstanding and balanced student in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and physical development without neglecting the nation’s philosophy and aspirations. This is in line with the consensus
arrived at by 313 scholars gathered in Mecca at the First World Conference on Muslim Education, which was held at the Hotel Intercontinental, Al-Mukaramah, from March 31-April 8, 1977: “Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of Man’s spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses. The training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality and creates in him an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Qur’an and the Sunnah and be governed by the Islamic System of values willingly and joyfully so that he may proceed to the realization of his status as Khalifatullah, to whom Allah has promised the authority of the universe” (Al-Attas, 1979, p.158-9).

It is regrettable that this beautiful and worthwhile effort was implemented in Brunei Darussalam for only two years, from January 3, 2004, to December 2005. There have been opposition and complaints regarding the system, and survey findings demonstrate that there are five main issues and challenges concerning the implementation of the Integrated Education System. The first is the lack of knowledge on the issue of dualism in education among teachers; the second is misunderstanding and incorrect perceptions regarding the aims and curriculum structure of the system; the third is the lack of infrastructure and facilities; the fourth is the working culture and attitudes among teachers; and the fifth is insufficient acknowledgement of the implementation of the system.

It is our view that the system should have been given the chance to improve and develop further. In the future, it is suggested that any proposed changes to the system should be presented much earlier to teachers, school administrators and the public. Furthermore, a booklet
Implementation of the ‘Integrated Education System’ in Brunei Darussalam: Issues and Challenges

containing information about the new system should be provided. This should be supplemented by clear briefings, the creation of a link to the new system on the MOE web site, presentation of workshops on how to run the new system in schools, and clearly identified points of contact who can explain the system.

Nevertheless, we hope that this model system of education will constitute new and innovative ideas towards the improvement of education in Muslim societies.

References


