



The Challenge of Integrating Tawhid in Science and History: Case Study of Al-Amin Islamic School

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to highlight the challenge that Secondary School teachers face in integrating the Islamic concept of tawhid in teaching science and history subjects. The research employed a qualitative design using a case study and collect data. A purposive sample consisting of 5 teachers from Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School was selected based on teaching experience. The teachers were interviewed according to a theme-based strategy, and collected data was transcribed and analyzed accordingly. Findings have shown that integrating tawhid in the subjects of Science and History is an aim that teachers in Islamic schools in Malaysia hope to achieve. However, obstacles and challenges continue to hinder their efforts. Theoretical and practical propositions and recommendations to make this aim achievable, such as revisiting the concept of tawhid integration, enhancing teachers' creativity skills in the classroom, and providing relevant training programs by school authorities, would undoubtedly help attain their ultimate objective.

INTRODUCTION

Needless to say that education is an essential agency in any given society. Excellent teaching and learning activities are the backbone for any meaningful effort to progress and build the nation. Most of the success achieved by western countries in making remarkable growth and advancement is attributed to their excellent education systems. Any useful educational experience at any given society would inevitably have a positive impact because it motivates individual and communal impulses of learning, provide individuals with necessary good skills and knowledge, and prepares them to get good jobs or venture into business (Ramdane, 2014).

Since 1987, Malaysia introduced The National Education Philosophy (NEP), which is concerned with human capital's social engineering education. The educational philosophy of the NEP clearly states goals and directions for national education. By drawing up its NEP, Malaysia has designed a unique design for quality regarding requirements from designed quality adopted by other countries (Embong et al., 2020). Established in 1991, Sekolah Menengah Islam Al-Amin Gombak (SMIAAG) or Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School Gombak, Selangor has formulated a comprehensive school philosophy congruent with the Islamic philosophy of education as well as the NEP. It is anchored on faith in Allah, featuring *tawhid*, comprehensiveness, balance, integration, and harmony. Implementing such school philosophy and mission demands teachers an in-depth knowledge of Islam and their ability to assimilate Islam as a way of life in their professional and personal lives (Ishak, 2004). Some of Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School teachers have religious backgrounds, whereas some other teachers have a modern science background. However, both segments must integrate *tawhid* in their teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

Moreover, this school also follows the Ministry of Education (MOE); the Malaysian government supplies all textbooks it utilizes. The teachers at Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School are expected to clearly understand what *tawhid* is and try to integrate it with modern knowledge in their classroom teaching. In this regard, the current study focuses on the challenges teachers at Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School face while integrating *tawhid* in their teaching.

Several studies have been carried out on the subject of integrating *tawhid* in the teaching process. [Tamuri \(2015\)](#) argues that *tawhid* is one of the fundamental concepts in Islam. Technically, it refers to the conviction and recognition that "There is no god but Allah." This concept has always reflected Islamic monotheism and has been the starting point of the Islamic message. From the Islamic perspective, *tawhid* is a significant criterion for differentiation between a believer and non-believer. Due to this significance, the Islamic system of education has since its nascence emphasized that the whole process of individual and Muslim community growth should be based on Allah's belief. Like Haque ([Tamuri, 2015](#)) pointed, such emphasis highlights that the Islamic educational system: "Seeks to fuse the spiritual and the material aspects of man's growth and imparts a training which infuses faith into the whole personality, creating a spiritual or religious attachment to Islam. It enables an individual to follow the Quran and the Sunnah and be governed by the Islamic system of values. A firm belief in Allah and a good understanding of *tawhid*'s concept would shield individuals from mischiefs and ultimately lead them to the life of purity and bliss as they realize the consequences of disobedience in this life and in the Hereafter. From the Islamic educational perspective, the metaphysical authority-divine authority based on the six pillars of *iman* should restrain any Muslim from committing acts that displease the divine.

METHOD

This study is qualitative, employing a descriptive case study ([Yin, 1984](#)). The researchers used a semi-structured interview technique as an instrument for data collection. The study opted for a purposive sampling procedure—a technique widely used in qualitative research—because it allows the researchers to select people who can best understand the focusing phenomenon. Meanwhile, the sample of this study consisted of five (5), two (2) of them were teachers of history, and three (3) were teachers of Science at Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School. As far as this study's limitation is concerned, it involved two components, the population, and the instrument. The population was about the secondary school teachers at Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School only.

Meanwhile, the data collected was exclusively from interview questions that have been given to the secondary school's teachers in Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School who teach Science and History of Malaysia. This study was conducted only among teachers at Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School in Gombak. The results may not be generalized to teachers in other Islamic secondary schools. The researchers used anomaly detection to keep the participants' information confidential. Hence, codes were used for the respondents. Both the instrument's reliability and validity were tested, and the researchers used a theme analysis to analyze the data ([Boyatzis, 1998](#)).

RESULTS

In this study, five teachers were chosen: four females and one male. All of them have been teaching in the school for many years. The researchers found three themes, and seven sub-themes were reported for this question based on the interview data analysis. The first theme described the challenges that teachers in the Secondary level at Al-Amin Islamic School. For this theme, the researchers created two sub-themes: lack of teacher confidence and teacher competence.

The second theme showed challenges at the school management level, and two sub-themes were reported for this theme, namely lack of time and technical support. The last theme illustrated strategies to counter the challenges, followed by three sub-themes: preparation, discussion, and question.

Table 1. Themes and Sub-Themes of the Interview Questions

Themes	Sub-themes
Challenges at the level of teachers	1. Lack of teacher's confidence 2. Lack of teacher's competence

Themes	Sub-themes
Challenges at the level of the school management	1. Lack of time 2. Lack of technical support
Strategies to counter the challenges	1. Preparation 2. Discussion 3. Question method

Theme 1: Challenges At The Level Of Teachers

According to [Bingimlas \(2009\)](#), two of the challenges teachers face in teaching are teacher-level and school-level challenges. He highlighted three factors on teacher-level challenges: lack of teacher confidence, lack of teacher competence, and negative attitudes. However, based on the interview data respondents (respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), the researchers emphasized two challenges: lack of confidence and lack of competence.

Sub-theme 1: Lack of teacher confidence

According to [Becta \(2004\)](#), two reasons can make teachers feel incompetent in the classroom, limited teacher knowledge and fear of entering the classroom. Based on the data from respondents (2, 3, 4, and 5), when the researchers asked them about the challenges they faced in integrating *tawhid* in teaching, it was found that lack of confidence was one of the factors which hampered the effort of the teachers challenging to integrate *tawhid* in teaching. Respondent 2 said:

There are challenges in explaining the meaning of certain Quranic verses or hadith and relating it with some topics. It is because of the limitation of Islam's knowledge and does not enough time (Respondent 2/DU 29).

According to the data above, both knowledge and time shortage limitations were two significant challenges to the respondent. It was because of her knowledge limitation that she could not explain the meaning of certain verses of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. She also felt it challenging to integrate *tawhid* in teaching history in specific topics. Similarly, respondent three expressed little confidence to integrate *tawhid* in teaching science because she felt it was difficult to explain the meaning of *Quranic* verses and *hadith*. She said:

There are challenges in explaining the meaning of certain Quranic verses or hadith and relating it to some topics because I have not much knowledge about Islam. Furthermore, I do not know how to relate science to the tawhid (Respondent 3/DU 29).

Respondent 4 mentioned that she does not have enough knowledge to explain the meaning of the *Qur'anic* verses or *hadith* and how to relate the content to the *tawhid*. She said:

I am facing many challenges: explaining the meaning of certain Quranic verses or hadith and relating it with some topics. What I mean is that I do not have much knowledge about Islam. Therefore, I am not confident to explain the Quranic verses or hadith when I try to relate the Quranic verse or hadith to science (Respondent 4/DU 29 and 31).

Respondent 5 mentioned that she has not enough knowledge and time, and then the curriculum is also not supported by her to integrate *tawhid* in teaching. She said:

There are challenges in explaining the meaning of certain Quranic verses or hadith and relating it to some topics. The time and curriculum limitations are not supported because the Al-Amin school curriculum follows the government (Respondent 5/DU 27).

As seen from the above excerpts, most respondents claimed that they do not possess sufficient knowledge to integrate *tawhid* in teaching history and science-based; therefore, they do not find themselves confident in the classroom.

Sub-theme 1: Lack of teacher competence

The other challenge highlighted by respondents from secondary school teachers in Al-Amin Islamic Secondary School is the substantial lack of competencies. It means that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to integrate *tawhid* in their respective subjects' teaching. Respondent 1 said:

There are challenges such as students' spirit in the teaching, and learning is decreased because I do not have enough skills to integrate tawhid in teaching history. Moreover, the available teaching aids are not enough to support the teaching process (Respondent 1/DU 29).

Theme 2: Challenges At The Level Of The School Management

To successfully integrate *tawhid* in the teaching and learning process, teachers need support from their management. There is no doubt that teachers alone cannot fully integrate *tawhid* in teaching history and science subjects if the School management at Al-Amin Islamic School is not supportive of that effort. [Bingimlas \(2009\)](#) named three challenges associated with school management: lack of time, lack of practical training, and technical support. Based on the responses of Al-Amin interviewees (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), the researchers identified two significant challenges related to school management, which contributed to the poor integration of *tawhid* in the teaching of history and science; lack of time and lack of technical support.

Sub-theme 2: Lack of time

Several teachers possessed confidence and competence in integrating *tawhid* in the classroom but could not connect their lessons to the concept of *tawhid* because of time limitations. According to [Becta \(2004\)](#), the lack of time impacted teachers' performance in many aspects, including their ability to complete pedagogical and non-pedagogical tasks. Respondent teachers are specifically stating which aspects so many topics they should finish in one semester.

When asked about their failure to integrate *tawhid* in teaching history and science, respondents (1 and 5) attributed it to the lack of time. Respondent 1 said:

I do not have enough time to integrate tawhid into the lesson because many topics should be done during the year (Respondent 1/DU 31).

Respondent 5 mentioned that integrating *tawhid* in the classroom becomes a serious challenge because of the many topics he needs to cover and the lack of time. She said:

For example, there are many topics in the syllabus that I should finish around a year. I do not have enough time to teach because of many syllabus topics (Respondent 5/DU 29).

Sub-theme 2: Lack of technical support

According to the respondents, lack of technical support and resources is another critical factor that hindered integrating *tawhid* in teaching at Al-Amin Islamic School. Without excellent technical support, teachers cannot be expected to overcome the challenges in the classroom ([Bingimlas, 2009](#)). However, the interview data indicated that technical support is a significant challenge in integrating *tawhid* in teaching. Respondent 1 said:

The History book syllabus topics do not support me to integrate tawhid in teaching, and the resources about integrating tawhid in subject History are challenging to find (Respondent 1/DU 31).

Textbooks and other resources are significant for respondents 1 and 2 in integrating *tauhid* in the History classroom. Respondent 2 said:

My study, resources, and textbook background do not help the teacher integrate tawhid in teaching history. First, my background study is not from an Islamic program. Because of my study background, I face difficulty integrating the tawhid when I teach the lesson—next, resources. I find the resources

that can help me integrate tawhid in the teaching time—the latest textbook. In Al-Amin, the textbook for subject History using a textbook contributed by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (Respondent 2/DU 32).

Respondent 3 said that Science textbook is one of the challenges that do not help integrate *tawhid* in her teaching. She mentioned:

Topics of Science textbooks in Malaysia do not help to integrate tawhid. I have to relate science to the tawhid on my own. The resources about integrating tawhid in science are hard to find (Respondent 3/DU 31).

Simultaneously, respondent 4 reiterated that the subject syllabus and school textbook do not help her relate the contents to *tawhid*. She said:

First, as far as the syllabus is concerned, Al-Amin School uses the government syllabus because Al-Amin uses the textbook from the Ministry of education of Malaysia, and then the textbook does not integrate tawhid. Second, I have difficulty finding out the content for resources to integrate the tawhid in teaching science. Third, I do not have sufficient Islamic knowledge, especially integrating tawhid in teaching Science (Respondent 4/DU 33).

Respondent 5 complained about the significant number of topics that need to be covered in the textbook and its syllabus. That leaves her with little time. She said:

First, technical, for example, textbook contents. Second, syllabus, for example, so many topics on the syllabus that I should finish around a year. Third, I do not have enough time to teach because of many topics on the syllabus. Fourth, curriculum example I should follow the government curriculum (Respondent 5/DU 29).

According to the data above, all respondents agreed that textbooks, syllabus, and resources are significant challenges that impacted integrating *tawhid* in the classroom.

Theme 3: Strategies To Counter The Challenges

Planning is essential to achieve the lesson's objectives. It consists of four steps: curriculum, syllabus, work schemes, and lesson plan ([Musingafi et al., 2015](#)). The researchers found that teachers at Al-Amin Islamic School prefer three strategies; they can be classified into three sub-themes: preparation, discussion, and question method.

Sub-theme 3: Preparation

Respondents (3 and 5) mentioned strategies they often used to overcome *tawhid* inclusion in their teaching. Respondent 3 informed that she always reviews the contents of the topic before coming to the classroom. She said:

I always prepare the content of the topic before entering my class (Respondent 3/DU 33).

Respondent 5 explained that as a teacher, she tried to understand the curriculum in Al-Amin. Doing so makes it easier to prepare the content of each topic before the actual teaching. She said:

I must understand Al-Amin's curriculum before teaching the lesson because if I understand the curriculum requirements, it will be easy to prepare myself before teaching (Respondent 5/DU 31).

Sub-theme 3: Discussion

Most respondents (2, 3, 4, and 5) preferred to use the discussion method to overcome *tawhid* integration in the teaching. According to respondent 2, she decided to attend workshops to meet Islamic education experts and learn from them. She mentioned:

Okay, I prefer attending the workshop and referring to the Ustaz or the expert in Islam. First, I attend Islamic workshops, for example, the Islamic education workshop. Second, I refer to the Ustaz or experts. For example, I may ask about the meaning of some Quranic verses or hadiths related to the lesson (Respondent 2/DU 33).

Respondent 3 related her use of the discussion method and the sharing of information with other Science teachers. She said:

I share the problem that I feel difficult with Science teachers in Malaysia using Instagram and WhatsApp groups (Respondent 3/DU 33).

Respondent 4 enjoyed the use of the discussion method to overcome the challenges. That included sharing information and referring to Ustazs. She said:

I share the information that I feel difficult to find Science teachers in Malaysia using Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook groups. I ask Ustaz about related challenges. Also, about Quranic verses or hadiths related to the topic I teach. Moreover, I will feel confident to teach if I get the information from an Ustaz (Respondent 4/DU35).

Respondent 5 informed that she likes to discuss with other teachers to overcome the challenges. She mentioned:

I share the information with other teachers, especially an expert on Islamic knowledge (Respondent 5/DU 31).

Sub-theme 3: Question method

The question method is one of the strategies to overcome pedagogical challenges. Respondent 1 preferred the question method by asking students one by one or assigning presentation tasks to them in the classroom. He said:

I question the students one by one about how far he/she understands the lesson and encouraged them to relate the lesson's contents to the tawhid. Sometimes, I ask my students to present the lesson in front of their classmates (Respondent 1/DU 33).

DISCUSSION

Data extracted from the interview have successfully addressed the problem of the current inquiry. The researchers classified them under three themes and seven sub-themes. Firstly, researchers collected that teacher-level challenges are a part of all respondents' challenges in integrating tauhid in teaching from the respondents' data. Most of the respondents (2, 3, 4, and 5) conceded that they do not possess enough confidence in integrating *tawhid* in teaching because they do not have enough knowledge. In other research, [Beggs \(2000\)](#) argues that limitation in teachers' ICT knowledge makes them feel anxious about using ICT in the classroom and thus not confident to use it in their teaching.

In contrast, respondent 1 argued that he does not have a good skill and knowledge in integrating *tawhid* in teaching. Australian research by [Newhouse et al. \(2007\)](#) found that many teachers lacked the knowledge and skills in using a computer in teaching. Similarly, this study argues that teachers' challenges may result from teachers' lack of confidence and competence. It is because respondents do not have enough skills and knowledge to integrate *tauhid* in teaching.

Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that other challenges could be attributed to the school management. [Bingimlas \(2009\)](#) explained that the school management usually is responsible for some academic and pedagogical challenges, such as lack of time, lack of practical training, lack of accessibility, and lack of technical support. Based on the data, all respondents claimed that lack of time and technical support are significant challenges in integrating *tawhid* in teaching. Both respondents 1 and 5 argued that they could not manage the time to integrate *tawhid* in their teaching because the significant volume

of topics should be covered in the syllabus. On the other hand, according to the data, all respondents mentioned that textbooks, syllabus, and resources are among the challenges respondents faced in their effort to integrate *tawhid* in their teaching. Bingimlas (2009) mentioned that lack of technical support in teaching consists of a lack of resources, syllabus, and textbook support.

Lastly, all respondents tried to use strategies to overcome the challenge, such as preparation, discussion, and questioning method. The planning process consists of four steps: curriculum, syllabus, the schemes of work, and the lesson plan (Musingafi et al., 2015). Most respondents (2, 3, 4, and 5) preferred to discuss with religious teachers (*Ustaz*) and attend workshops. In contrast, respondent 1 likes to use the question and answer method in teaching history. Respondents 3 and 5 emphasized the importance of preparation before entering the classroom.

Hence, based on the data, the significant challenges that Al-Amin Islamic School faced while attempting to integrate *tawhid* in teaching their respective subjects are related to the teacher himself and the school management. According to Sentance et al. (2017), intrinsic and extrinsic factors are the challenges in integrating *tauhid* in teaching. Eisner (1991) refers to extrinsic challenges as first-order and cites access, time, support, resources, and training and then inherent challenges as second-order, and cites attitudes, beliefs, practices, and resistance. Respondents need pedagogical strategies to solve those challenges. The validation of strategies depends on the situation which necessitates it. Preparation, discussion, and questioning method are among the popular strategies employed by teachers.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to address the challenges teachers of history and science at Al-Amin Islamic School faced integrating *tawhid* in teaching their respective subjects. The researchers found that those challenges could be classified as challenges at the teachers' level, which includes lack of teacher's confidence and lack of teacher's competence—also, challenges related to school Management. For *tawhid* integration to succeed, Al-Amin Islamic School needs to provide training programs for non-religious subject teachers. Furthermore, the school has to produce its history, science, and other non-religious subjects, which would guide teachers of those subjects. Further research in other Islamic schools could greatly benefit from validating this current study's findings or raising new insights into the matter.

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