

The Competency of Islamic Education Students (IES) During Teaching Practicum

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Abstract: *Malaysia Education Transformation Development Plan (2013-2025) dignified the teaching profession in Malaysia by focusing on programs and activities to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning. Quantitative research design was used to determine the level of students' competency during school-based teaching practicum. Questionnaires were distributed to 56 former students of Bachelor Islamic Education, ages 21 to 30 years old. The results revealed that competencies in instructional strategies had the highest mean (M=4.19), while competencies in content knowledge had the lowest mean (M=3.93). This study impacted Islamic Education Students (IES) to improve their content knowledge further, identify misunderstandings, scaffold instruction to support students struggling with the learning and materials and incorporate student-led learning into their teaching sessions.*

Keywords: *Teaching Practicum, Islamic Education.*

Introduction

The Education Transformation Development Plan 2013–2025 states that enhancing the quality of teaching and learning through programmes and activities elevates the teaching profession. A comprehensive strategy is necessary to execute the programme and meet the desired objectives. One area of emphasis is the 21st century's instructional characteristics (MOE, 2013).

The Bachelor of Islamic Education program offered by KOED, IIUM, proposed to produce quality graduates to serve at the secondary schools to meet the Ministry of Education Malaysia's (MOE) needs. In addition, this program aims to produce graduates with high potential who can serve as role models to students and surrounding communities. Besides developing teaching skills, the program also equips students with research knowledge and skills, preparing them for postgraduate studies or a career as a researcher (IIUM, 2022).

The program structure includes a four-year duration. The first year is the necessary foundation of education and knowledge in teaching. In the second year, students are expected to gradually strengthen the content of Islamic Education and be exposed to the teaching and learning process in the classroom (IIUM, 2022). Students can experience hands-on research, planning, preparing, and teaching in a mock classroom in the third year. Students will also learn to develop, conduct, interpret and report assessments of students' performance. In Practicum I (School Orientation Program), students are placed in the school setting to familiarize them with the school's management, organization, culture, and classroom teaching. In the fourth year, after completing the remaining courses, students will again be placed in a school (Practicum II) where they will do a teaching practicum supervised by experienced teachers, school administrators, and university supervisors (IIUM, 2022).

Based on a descriptive analysis of research findings, the average mean score of Islamic Education teachers in Malaysian secondary schools is 3.44. Thus, initiatives to strengthen instructors' practice of what they teach should be the main emphasis of efforts to increase students' proficiency in Islamic education (Mohd et al., 2013). Given the length of time this study has been done, it is necessary to identify the most recent information regarding the degree of student competency throughout the practicum.

High pressure levels during a practicum experience cause student-teachers to participate negatively in the teaching process, according to research by Ong, Ros, Azlian, and Sharnti (2004). Supervision and administrative workload are examples of practicum concerns and practicum stress. To improve future learning, the study will determine the competency of Islamic Education Students (IES) throughout their practicum.

Prior studies have addressed challenges and barriers related to practicums. Jusoh (2013) investigated pre-service teacher issues at Malaysia's University of Sultan Zainal Abidin. The findings demonstrated that pre-service teachers had encountered various difficulties, some of which were student-related personal difficulties. Thus, captivating activities that give students a realistic teaching experience should be a part of university-level teacher education study programmes.

To fulfil their obligations as educators, prospective teachers are expected to advance their professional and pedagogical competencies, according to a study by Zulfahmi HB, et al. (2020). Future teachers are

encouraged to actively participate in training and teaching simulations regarding teacher competency to enhance their competence further. According to research by Judith J. Smith and Carol Greene (2013), pre-service teachers can use technology to improve their visual interpretation, lesson planning, and execution.

A study by Mohd et al. (2013) showed the importance of teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession and the high teaching competency to nurture a generation of high-quality students. Attitude and teaching competency of Islamic Education teachers are very helpful in determining students' learning achievement. Meanwhile, Daniels et al. (2013) suggest that creating environments supportive of analytic reflection and collaboration positively influenced teachers' attitudes toward their teaching practice.

Considering that the teacher is directly involved in classroom learning, the role of teachers in raising the quality of instruction positions directly impacts success (Zuhaeriah et al., 2020). To increase the calibre of learning, all these positions call for more significant tangible effort and close attention to the demands of the pupils. Islamic religious education teachers work hard to raise the standard of instruction by giving students direction counsel, watching over them, encouraging them, rewarding them, and employing various techniques to keep their students from getting bored in the classroom (Zuhaeriah et al., 2020). Student-teacher attitudes towards the teaching profession are positively impacted by teaching practicum. With the assistance and collaboration of field-collaborating instructors, this can be accomplished. Based on the discussion above, there are only a few studies focusing on this area. Thus, this study will identify the competency among the IES of KOED IIUM during teaching practicum.

Method

To determine the competency of the IES of KOED IIUM during teaching practice and practicum, this study uses a quantitative research approach. The survey approach, which used closed-ended structured questionnaires, was chosen based on the study's goal. According to Creswell (2008), to characterize a population's attitudes, beliefs, or traits, researchers need to survey a sample of that population. This research used a cross-sectional strategy because data is collected from a sample at a single point in time (Cooper & Schneider, 2011). According to Hair et al. (2010), cross-sectional surveys are commonly used in social science research.

This study population consists of students of Bachelor of Islamic Education who have completed a school-based teaching practicum, which is a requirement of the preservice teacher education program at KOED, IIUM. A sample of 56 former students was randomly selected from the sampling frame based on the formula introduced by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The questionnaires were adapted from Hatice Gülru Yüksel (2014). It comprises two sections. Section A contains items seeking the background information of the respondents. The background characteristics of the respondents were related to their gender, ethnicity, and age, while section B items were associated with the construct of perceived teaching competence. Respondents must indicate their responses to each on a 5-point scale, ranging from (5) Highly Competent to (1) Not Competent at All. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) analysed the data.

Result and Discussion

Demographic Background of The Respondents

The respondents were the students, i.e., 56 students aged between 21 and 30 years. They comprised 18 males (32.1%) and 38 females (67.9%). These figures suggest a higher representation of females in the sample (see Table 1). The majority of respondents (91.1%; n = 51) were between the ages of 21 and 25, with those between the ages of 26 and 30 coming in second (8.9%; n = 5). Of the 49, 87.5% are single, and the remaining 12.5% (n=7) are married. All the respondents are Malaysian nationals of Malay or Bumiputra races.

Table 1. Sample distribution by gender, age, marital status, nationality and race

Backgrounds	Variables	N	%
Gender	Male	18	32.1
	Female	38	67.9
Age	21-25	51	91.1
	26-30	5	8.9
Gender	Male	18	32.1
	Female	38	67.9
Age	21-25	51	91.1
	26-30	5	8.9

The Level of IES Competencies During Teaching Practices and Practicum

This section describes the IES competencies during teaching practices and practicum for the Islamic Education Program at KOED IIUM. This study adopted a five-point Likert scale that included Not Competent at All, Not Competent, Slightly Competent, Competent and Highly Competent as the response categories. Considering this, the student's competency was measured using the formula by Mustika (2009). In this case, the scores for the competency students use are between 1 and 5. The study also divided the student's competency into high, moderate, and low categories. With this consideration, the competency of the respondents was categorised in Table 2:

Table 2. The level of ies competencies during teaching practices and practicum

Mean Range	Level of Competencies
1.00-2.33	Low competencies
2.34-3.66	Moderate competencies
3.67-5.00	High competencies

Competencies In Content Knowledge

Table 3 shows the competencies in content knowledge among the IIUM IES students. We can see from Table 3 that the highest mean score (M=4.30) for content knowledge was for 'I collaborate with colleagues to deepen my understanding of my content knowledge', where 85.7% of the students were competent and highly competent with the statement (n = 48). Only one respondent (1.79%) needed to be more intelligent, while 12.5% (n = 7) were slightly capable.

The item, "My content knowledge in Islamic Education subject is always up-to-date and accurate," received the lowest mean score (M=3.80) for content knowledge competency, with 39 respondents (69.64%) rating it as competent or highly competent. Once more, only one respondent (1.79%) indicated they were not capable, whilst 16 respondents (28.57%) indicated they were only slightly competent for this assertion. This information is consistent with a study by Jusoh (2011), which found that exciting activities that give students a realistic experience and current material for future instruction should be a part of university-level teacher education study programmes.

The percentages of competency and high competency in content knowledge ranged between a low of 69.64% and a high of 85.7%. This indicates that most IES are competent in content knowledge.

Table 3. IES competencies in content knowledge

Items	NCAL & NCN (%)	SCN (%)	C & HCN (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
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My content knowledge in Islamic Education subject is always up-to-date and accurate.	1 (1.79)	16 (28.57)	39 (69.64)	3.80	0.67
I can explain a challenging concept in Islamic Education to students needing help understanding it.	2 (3.57)	16 (28.57)	38 (67.86)	3.80	0.81
I can incorporate current research and best practices in Islamic Education into my teaching subject area.	4 (7.14)	10 (17.86)	42 (75)	3.83	0.84
I can provide an appropriate assessment to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in Islamic Education subject.	3 (7.14)	12 (21.43)	31 (75)	3.94	0.90
I collaborate with colleagues to deepen my understanding of my content knowledge.	1 (1.79)	7 (12.5)	48 (85.7)	4.30	0.76
Average mean and Std. Dev				3.93	0.80

Information

NCAL	Not Competent at All
NC	Not Competent
SC	Slightly Competent
C	Competent
HC	Highly Competent

Competencies In Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Table 4 shows the competency in pedagogical content knowledge among the IIUM IES. Based on the table, the highest mean score ($M=4.36$) is for item 1, "I collaborate with other teachers to improve instruction and student learning. 89.29 % of the students were competent and highly competent with the statement ($n = 50$). Only one respondent (1.79%) needed to be more intelligent, while 12.5% ($n = 7$) were slightly competent. This finding supports the study by Daniels et al. (2013), which suggests that collaboration positively influences teachers' attitudes toward their teaching practice.

The lowest mean score ($M=3.80$) for competency in pedagogical knowledge was observed for item 5, "I can identify misunderstandings and misconceptions in student learning", to which 40 respondents (71.43%) were competent and highly competent. Again, the percentages of not qualified for this statement were small, with only two respondents (3.57%), while 14 respondents (25%) were slightly competent.

This finding aligns with the study by Zulfahmi H.B et al. (2020); prospective educators are expected to improve their pedagogical and professional competencies, which are essential capital in carrying out their responsibilities and duties. To further enhance teacher competence, prospective educators are expected to actively participate in training and teaching simulations related to the field of teacher competence, such as to overcome their misunderstanding of student's learning.

The percentages of competency and high competency in pedagogical content knowledge ranged between a low of 71.43 % ($n = 40$) and a high of 89.29 % ($n = 50$). This indicates that most IES are competent in pedagogical content knowledge.

Table 4. IES competencies in pedagogical content knowledge

Items	NCAL & NCN (%)	SCN (%)	C & HCN (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I collaborate with other teachers to improve instruction and student learning.		6 (10.7)	50 (89.29)	4.36	0.67
I can differentiate instruction that can meet the needs of diverse learners.	3 (5.36)	12 (21.43)	41 (73.21)	3.95	0.84
I can assess student learning and adjust my instruction approach accordingly.	2 (3.57)	12 (21.43)	42 (75)	3.98	0.80
I can incorporate technology in my instruction to ensure it enhances learning.		7 (12.5)	49 (87.5)	4.27	0.67
I can identify misunderstandings and misconceptions in student learning.	2 (3.57)	14 (25)	40 (71.43)	3.93	0.81

Average mean and Std. Dev	4.10	0.76
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Information

NCAL	Not Competent at All
NC	Not Competent
SC	Slightly Competent
C	Competent
HC	Highly Competent

Competencies In Instructional Strategies

Table 5 shows the competencies in instructional strategies among the IES. We can see from Table 5 that the highest mean score (M=4.27) for item 2 “I used technology to enhance instruction and engagement variously, and item 4, “I always modified my lesson plan to meet the needs of various groups of students”, with 89.29 % and 85.71% of the students were competent and highly competent with the statement (n = 50) and (n = 48) respectively. This finding supports Judith J. et al. (2013) study, which suggested that technology can improve pre-service teachers in lesson planning, implementation, and visual interpretations.

The lowest mean score (M=4.11) for competency in instructional strategies was observed for item 3, "I do scaffold instruction to support students struggling with the learning and materials", and Item 5 "I incorporate student-led learning and discussion into my lessons" to which 48 respondents (82.14%) and 50 respondents (89.29%) respectively were competent and highly competent. Again, the percentages of not qualified for this item were small, with only two respondents (3.57%) and one (1.79%), respectively. This aligns with the study by Zuhaeriah et al. (2020), which suggested that teachers must use varied teaching methods and strategies to overcome students' boredom, present a conducive classroom atmosphere, and incorporate student-led learning.

The percentages of competency and high competency in pedagogical content knowledge ranged between a low of 82.14 % and a high of 89.29 %. This indicates that most IES are competent in pedagogical content knowledge.

Table 5. IES competencies in instructional strategies

Items	NCAL & NCN (%)	SCN (%)	C & HCN (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
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I always ensure that students are engaged and motivated in the learning process.		6 (10.71)	50 (89.29)	4.21	0.62
I used technology to enhance instruction and engagement variously.	1 (1.79)	5 (8.93)	50 (89.29)	4.27	0.70
I do scaffold instruction to support students struggling with the learning and materials.	2 (3.57)	8 (14.29)	46 (82.14)	4.11	0.85
I always modified my lesson plan to meet the needs of various groups of students.	1 (1.79)	7 (12.50)	48 (85.71)	4.27	0.75
I incorporate student-led learning and discussion into my lessons.	1 (1.79)	5 (8.93)	50 (89.29)	4.11	0.71
Average mean and Std. Dev				4.19	0.73

Information

NCAL	Not Competent at All
NC	Not Competent
SC	Slightly Competent
C	Competent
HC	Highly Competent

Table 6 presents the summary results of the descriptive analysis, i.e., the means and standard deviations of the IES competencies.

Table 6. IES competencies during teaching practices and practicum

No	Types of competencies	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Competency In Content Knowledge	3.93	0.80
2	Competency In Pedagogical Content Knowledge	4.10	0.76
3	Competency In Instructional Strategies	4.19	0.73

Based on the data, competencies in instructional strategies had the highest mean ($M = 4.19$), while competencies in content knowledge had the lowest mean ($M = 3.93$). This indicates that most IES in KOED IIUM are competent during teaching practice and practicum.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study indicates that most IES are competent in content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and instructional strategies during teaching practicum. However, IES is recommended further to improve their content knowledge in Islamic Education subjects to be up-to-date and accurate. They must also identify misunderstandings and misconceptions in student learning and scaffold instruction to support students struggling with the teaching and materials. Furthermore, student-led learning and discussion must be incorporated more into their teaching sessions.

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