

The Development of Mosque Madrasah Education System in Singapore

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Abstract

Children and youth in Singapore have many dreams and goals. As young Muslims living in today's society, they face the challenge as one of anticipation in the face of these challenges, in many Islamic educational institutions in Singapore are aLIVE program Through aLIVE program, Muslim youth to learn how to embrace life and fulfill their potential, in accordance with the provisions of Islamic normativity. This paper examines the program wants. This study is expected to be a reference to the Muslim community, especially the dikategorikan as a minority.

Keywords

development, mosque, madrasah, education, system

Abstrak

Anak-anak dan pemuda di Singapura memiliki banyak mimpi dan tujuan. Sebagai kaum muda Muslim yang hidup di masyarakat saat ini, mereka menghadapi tantangan Sebagai salah satuantisipasi dalam menghadapi tantangan tersebut, di berbagai institusi pendidikan Islam di Singapura terdapat program aL.I.V.E. Melalui aL.I.V.E. program, pemuda Muslim belajar bagaimana merangkul hidup dan memenuhi potensi mereka, sesuai dengan ketentuan normativitas Islam. Tulisan ini ingin mengkaji program tersebut. Kajian ini diharapkan menjadi acuan bagi masyarakat Muslim terutama yang dikategorikan sebagai kelompok minoritase.

Kata Kunci

Perkembangan, masjid, madrasah, pendidikan, sistem

Introduction

Islamic Education plays one of the most important role in a country because a progress or a collapse of a country is based on the stands of the education of the society. One of educational method that contributes to the progress of Islamic Education is the basic Islamic model, which becomes the catalyst that is highly valuable to a nation's inspiration, because by implementing good religious education will bring to better understanding and practice of religion.

Reflect back to the ways of traditional Islamic teaching methodology, perhaps it will bring us to the memory of the scholar's face, wearing "skull hat", with a long cane on one of his hand or we will smile when we remember how our friends laughed at us, when we could not recognize a letter. Then we also recalled a madrasah system which we followed whatever teacher has read,

and copy blindly what was written at the board. But that is all now a memory in the past for every student that was in the '60s and '70s mosque madrasah in Singapore.

Education system in era 2020 might be more and advanced where with one "touch" all information will be displayed. It is therefore, expected that the advanced state of education system in Singapore, Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis, 2004) put in much effort to develop Singapore Islamic Education System. Better known as the aL.I.V.E (Learning Islamic Values Everyday) curriculum, it combines the best of Islamic values education with contemporary teaching methods to make learning Islam an enriching experience. Hence, the students now not only learn the subject taught in the previous curriculum such as Aqidah & Fiqh (Islamic Practices), Tauhid (Islamic Belief), Sirah (Life stories of Prophet Muhammad) and Akhlak (Moral and Character Development), but are also given the opportunity to experience and explore the issues in the content of real-life situations. This approach enables them to internalize and appreciate the relevance of Islam to their everyday lives.

The increasing number of Muslim foreign maids, foreign workers from Bangladesh, overseas Muslim students and expatriates working in Singapore has added to the cultural diversity and heterogeneous practices of Islam within the Muslim community. To remain Islamic Education relevant to all Muslim in Singapore, regardless of their race and nationalities thus one of the recommendations was the adoption of the aL.I.V.E. programme as the baseline curriculum for Mosque Madrasahs in Singapore as mosque are a strategic institution for Islamic learning and social development for Muslim in Singapore.

Mosque History and Leadership

In Singapore, Muis has re-instructed the mosque leadership to ensure that mosque remain the main provider of Islamic learning to the community as leadership is the key factor in implementing the mosque remodeling agenda. Mosque today is led by competent leaders and able staff members. There is now structured training to envision and up skill mosque leaders. Mosque is also employing professionals for their day to day running, under the oversight of the management Boards. Now there are 69 mosques in Singapore together with older mosque (kampong mosque) but only 23 mosques have been built so far under the Mosque Building Fund (MBF). The Mosque Building Fund (MBF) was established in 1975 as a means of gathering funds for the building of mosques in new public housing estates. After the formation of the Mendaki Foundation in 1984, the MBF was integrated with the Mendaki Fund and renamed the Mosque Building and Mendaki Fund (MBMF). Muslims voluntarily contribute to this fund by having a fixed amount deducted from their salary every month.

Mosques have not only imparted knowledge about Islam to develop faithful, practicing and knowledgeable community of believers. They have also imparted social ethos that are necessary to make Muslim live as good members of a multi religious society and good citizens of a secular state.

Mosque today has created more "space" for youth. Youth have greater say in how the mosques are being run as more of them sit on the Management Boards. Mosque today are also more inviting to families. They even catered for family prayer space in the main prayer hall. Programs meant for the whole family are now more popular. Family-based events like marriage solemnization can now be held in the mosques. More importantly, mosques leaders at Mosque Convention 2005 agreed to make mosques important nodes that actively engage other nodes within the grid.

Most of the mosque in Singapore is no longer merely serving as a place of worship for the muslim public but was facilitate with programmes through part-time Islamic education for young children and youth attending national schools from Monday to Friday to learn Islamic knowledge on weekends either on Saturday or Sunday. Even though there are 69 mosques in Singapore, only 32 mosques providing part-time madrasah and only 11 mosques has succeeded providing part-time everyday either in the morning or afternoon session for children attending national schools. Although the teaching approach is still using traditional madrasah model but latest teaching tools and method were used to impart the knowledge and malay language as the medium for teacher to deliver the lesson.

Mosque Madrasah Education System

The mosque madrasah education system at that period aimed at teaching children and youth the reading of the Holy Quran, practice “solat” and Islamic beliefs based on expectation of the parents sending the children to the mosque madrasah. This madrasah system had been practiced in the early days of Islamic education known as “*khuttah system*” but does not practice “*halaqah*” system due to space constrains in the mosque that might disturb the muslim public doing their prayer.

In accordance with awareness of seeking of Islamic knowledge in muslim community in Singapore, therefore Islamic education in mosque madrasah had received overwhelming respond from the muslim community. Firstly, because all six full-time madrasah such as Madrasah Al-sagof, Madrasah al Junied, Madrasah al Maarif, Madrasah Wak Tanjung, Madrasah al-Irsyad and Jamiyah Rabbithah in Singapore are closed for registration due to overwhelming demand from Muslim community. Secondly, perharps the trend or mindset of some muslim community in Singapore choose to send their children to national school on weekdays and go to madrasah on weekends. Hence, mosque madrasah has become their second option for their children to learn Islamic knowledge.

Thus, to ensure mosques today are well organized by mosque leader, Muis has set-up very strict appointment criteria for amongst Muslim who would like to be appointed as a Board member on a mosque. Application is open to all Muslim community in Singapore through advertisement in the newspaper or applicants can either obtain the application forms at the reception counters in the mosque or Muis. Part of the appointment criteria that are of sound moral and religious character, has not been convicted of a criminal offence and are not adjudicated a bankrupt. Muis after a thorough process of investigation and consultation may terminate the appointment of any member if his conduct, whether in connection with the duties of such appointment or otherwise bring discredit upon the mosque, the Board, Muis or Islam.

Mosques in Singapore have, indeed, evolved over the years from being just a place of worship for Muslims to become an important socio-religious institution in the multi-cultural and religious landscapes of nation-building in Singapore. Therefore, mosque should be further developed to qualify as active nodes within the national grid of community development and services. In Mosque Convention 2005, mosques need to reshape content to focus on Islamic Learning in mosque madrasah.

Efforts at remodeling mosques need to take into account emerging trends and other environmental forces that shape the landscape upon which the institution operates. The shaping of the re-

modeled mosques, in turn, must reflect the agenda of change and continuity facing the community. Numerous discussions were held at various platforms involving MMB members, mosque key staff, mosque religious officer and volunteers. Many ideas were gathered and feedback received. Based on inputs and ideas, Muis has decided to revamp the mosque madrasah education system.

aL.I.V.E Curriculum

A new aL.I.V.E. (Learning Islamic Value Everyday) curriculum had been introduced in all mosque madrasah that teach “traditional Islam” in interactive ways that make our young love Islam as their way of life.

The aL.I.V.E. programme are being developed by the Islamic Council of Singapore (Muis) as part of its continuous improvement efforts towards excellence in structured part-time Islamic Education for the young.

As in MUIS Programme Guide (2008), aL.I.V.E seeks to provide a national baseline Islamic Education curriculum for all young Muslim, 5 to 24 years old to help them face life’s challenges and remain true to their Muslim identity in a multi religious, multi ethnic society and global world. It is designed specially to be appealing, developmentally-appropriate and relevant to kids, tweens, teens and youth, the aL.I.V.E. programmes aim to inspire students to continue Learning Islamic Values Everyday.

Multi-sensory teaching methods are used to make lessons more dynamic and interesting. In aL.I.V.E, teachers facilitate the learning of Islamic values in an interactive manner by organizing special themed activities and projects, engaging students through lively discussion, and encouraging them to critically reflect on the lessons they have learnt.

Students study the tenets of their Islamic faith as well as learn to apply them in their daily lives. This nurturing environment helps them to grow in confidence and develop a more positive self-esteem. They are four programmes available:

1. KIDS aL.I.V.E : AGES 5 – 8 years old
2. TWEENS aL.I.V.E : AGES 9 -12 years old
3. TEENS aL.I.V.E : AGES 13 -15 years old
4. YOUTH aL.I.V.E : AGES 17 – 24 years old

The aL.I.V.E. programmes are modular thus it can be delivered through weekly Academic Year or Holiday Programme during school vacation. The core values and principles of aL.I.V.E is thinking, watching and doing. aL.I.V.E. programmes seek to inculcate values through modeling so children can see them being practiced. Teachers will also facilitate these values by providing opportunities for the children to personally engage in the moral process. This is the intuitive instructional model proposed by the Quran and followed by the earlier generation of Muslim scholars.

An active learner consistently looks for knowledge and information. In aL.I.V.E. programme, the child will be shown how to view the Quran as a living, dynamic and relevant source of knowledge for them to consistently discover. Students are encouraged to wonder, plan, investigate, discover, reflect, share and act. At the end of the programme student will understand that a good

Muslim in one of who is firm in his/her belief, consistent in practice and exemplary in character. Student is taught Beliefs, Duties and Responsibilities, Virtues, Prohibited, Manner, Feeling, Attitudes, Life and Quranic Literacy Skills.

A young Muslim who understands his/her religion is better prepared to meet challenges. To strengthen their resolve, the aL.I.V.E programmes cover a range of topics from knowing God and Islam becoming a moral and caring person, interacting with others, facing challenges, and how to lead and make a difference.

To nurture a love for learning Islam, lesson is conducted in an engaging manner to keep interest level high. aL.I.V.E. teaching approach uses meaningful, value based, interactive method to aid active learning and participation.

Useful and interesting discussion topics help students to hone their thinking skills, deepen their knowledge and make real-world connections. This in turn improves their inter-personal communication skills with family, friends and strangers.

Students are assessed via a multiple assessment approach- encompassing different elements a child may experience both in and out of class thus reflecting his/her abilities and knowledge more accurately. Approaches include: organization of materials, consideration of alternatives, quality of content and process, elaborated communication, connection to society and the world, audience, and beyond the classroom.

The aL.I.V.E. curriculum aims to produce Muslim who are:

1. Moral individuals, responsible towards their Creator and His Creation.
2. Imbued with Taqwa, self-monitored (muraqabah) and conscientiousness.
3. Active and responsible partners in human endeavors, participating in community and nation building, and as global citizens.
4. Able to explain and communicate with others the teachings of Islam in an informed, logical manner and with wisdom.
5. Practicing Muslim, committed to the betterment of human life.

The aL.I.V.E. programme adopt a thematic approach to learning. Different themes appropriate to the different levels are being developed and delivered. The subject on Aqidah and Fiqh are presented as "Faith & Practices", akhlaq as "Character & Life Skills", Sirah and Tarikh as "Social & Civilization Islam" while Iqra' & quran reading under "Quranic Literacy".

Depending on the age, the programmes, the module and topics, the four areas may be given different emphasis. For example, more emphasis are given on Quranic Literacy in the Kids & Tweens aL.I.V.E. programme.

According to MUIS (2009), over the last 3 years Muis has been conducting an annual survey to gauge public awareness and acceptance of the aL.I.V.E programme. The results continue to show an upward trend. Since the first survey in 2007, awareness of aL.I.V.E programme among parents with children aged 5 to 14 years old has increased from 38% to 62%. The percentage was even higher among youth aged 15 to 24 years old, with the awareness level increasing by more than twofold from 25% in 2007 to 64% in 2009. From the same survey, it is also heartening to note that more than 90% of parents and youths surveyed gave "Good" or "Excellent" rating when asked how well the aL.I.V.E. Centers. About 85% gave a rating of "Good" or "Excellent".

The efforts by the various stakeholders including mosque, aL.I.V.E. centre and teachers, aL.I.V.E. ambassadors and Muis Youth Development Officers in promoting and conducting the programme continues to give positive result. Even though English language as the medium for teacher to deliver the lesson, it does not affect teacher's performance, but at the same time Muis must seek out and address concerns and challenges so that the quality of lesson delivery and implementation standards continue to be improved. One of the key areas to explore further is teacher training and development as well an integrated training and mentoring programme for teacher. A part of the quality assurance and improvement initiatives. Muis has embarked on a validation exercise where local and international expert are engaged to provide an independent review of the aL.I.V.E. programme to ensure that Singapore Islamic Education System is based on foundations which are noted in the best of Islamic tradition to use at Mosque Madrasah Education System.

Kids aL.I.V.E

Giving your young one a head-start to faith formation in one of the best gifts they can receive. As your child heads off to school, to the playground or to meet up with family members during gatherings, they will be observing the things people around them are doing. As caregivers, you may sometimes find it difficult to shield your young child from negative influences.

Kids aL.I.V.E. is an early start to Islam. It is designed for children aged 5 to 8 years old by introducing Islam and its role as a positive guide in their lives. A holistic and integrated programme promoting Islamic living offers your little ones an insightful and exciting way to learn about Islam. They are taught to understand and practice Islamic values and morals in their daily lives.

A safe, motivating and fun environment gives parents peace of mind as their children spend their time with us. A multi-sensory approach inculcates the habits to inquire, try, see, share, reflect and act. Play is the central approach to learning. Themes are used to illustrate Islamic values and practices. Role-playing helps children to practice model behavior which is an important element of value-based learning.

The desired outcomes for this programme are at the end of the four years, participants can expect to:

1. Develop the love for Allah and Rasulullah s.a.w.
2. Refer to the Sahabahs and Prophets as example
3. Know what is right (Ma'ruf) and what is wrong (Mungkar)
4. Develop the habits to perform solat and good deeds appropriate to their age.
5. Articulate what they have learnt
6. Love their families, friends, teachers and school
7. Be able to express and appreciated the beauty of Allah's creation
8. Be able to recite and understand the general meaning of basic surah/s and du'as
9. Be able to recognize Arabic letters, and read and write basic Arabic

"I love listening to stories of Prophets and Companions. I aspire to be like them, active, tireless, wise, good manners and strong in faith"

(Danial – 8 years old)

Tweens aL.I.V.E.

A strong faith helps a child stay on the right path. Peer pressure, the media, and other forms of outside influences may be positive or negative. A child who understands his/her responsibilities is better prepared to face life's temptations. As caregivers, you realize that knowledge is essential.

Tweens aL.I.V.E. programme is where they exploring, discovering and learning Islam. It is designed for children aged 9 to 12 years old by building on their existing knowledge of Islam. Students should have either completed the Kids aL.I.V.E. Years 3 & 4 programmes or have attended other Basic Learning programmes. Each lesson is designed to be meaningful and challenging. Among the key features are:

1. Integrated learning the combines religious and life skills;
2. Value-based learning which builds moral and character;
3. Active learning involving project work and hands-on activities;
4. Collaborative learning which focuses on home and family support; and
5. Purposeful interactions with peers and teachers.

The desired outcomes for this programme are at the end of the four years, participants can expect to:

1. Distinguish right from wrong
2. Possess moral conducts (akhlaq)
3. Understand, appreciate & practice the Pillars of Islam (Arkanul Islam) appropriate to their age
4. Have a deeper understanding of Islamic Creed (aqidah) –Pillars of Faith (Arkanul Iman)
5. Read the Quran well, memories and appreciated the general meanings of selected surahs.
6. Develop self-confidence as Muslims & members of the community & nation
7. Develop the respect for others and to care and love them in humanity
8. Able to share with and show others what Islam is about, ia an age-appropriate manner
9. Develop an inquiring mind about Allah's creations

"I am inspired by the interactive approach in learning Islam. Islam is with me everywhere I go; at home, school, in the neighborhood and with people around me. Practising Islam is easy

(Mariah -11 years old)

Teens aL.I.V.E

A discerning person needs knowledge and faith as his lifelong companions. With myriad opportunities and challenges facing our teens today. It is important they are equipped with appropriate life skills and religious skills to help them discover their identity and purpose, according to God's will.

Teens aL.I.V.E. Programme is learning, living and loving Islam. It is designed for teens 13 to 16 years old by addressing issues close to the hearts and mind of teenagers. This programme reinforces Islamic values and builds on their existing knowledge of Islam.

A holistic and integrated programme promoting Islamic living offers your teens an insightful and exciting way to learn about Islam. Lesson aim to strengthen the understanding and practice of Islamic values, and morals relevant to teenagers. This in turn will guide teens through their discovery of God's purpose for them.

The teaching approach is active and collaborative learning the central approach. Each lesson is designed to be meaningful and challenging, where students enjoy fun and motivating environment to discuss and learn various topics. A thematic approach used to impart knowledge effectively. Role models and age appropriate lessons on Islam are relevant and interesting to students.

1. The desired outcomes are at the end of the four years, participants can expect to:
2. Acquire a confident Muslim teen identity with strong Islamic moral character
3. Learn, appreciate and manifest Islamic values and teachings appropriate for Muslim teens.
4. Develop passion for learning and Quran –companionship
5. Emulate exemplary spirit of Islam from great Muslim personalities and Islamic heritage
6. Have sound understanding of Islamic tradition appropriate to the age and appreciative of the tradition
7. Believe in Islamic moral code, Amr Ma'ruf Nahy Munkar and practice it.
8. Share with others the teachings of Islam, and practice the message of the Hadith: "Best amongst you are those who are the most beneficial to human beings". (Hadith Riwayat Tabrani)
9. Have a thirst for knowledge and willingness to expand the educational horizon

"I discover myself as I discover Islam. Now I am more connected to Islam and Muslims. I am always keen to attend Teens aL.I.V.E. because there is always something new to learn.

(Filzar; 14 years old)

Youth aL.I.V.E.

The youths are our future. Let Islam be their light for a brighter future. As they start off in tertiary institutions or head out to the workforce, they will benefit from Islamic teachings and practices that will guide them through their challenges.

Youth aL.I.V.E. programme is where they learn about empowering tomorrow's leader with Islam. This programme is designed for youths aged 17 to 24 years old by addressing issues relevant to this developmental stage in their lives. The programme provides a variety of courses for youths with different backgrounds and interests. It also provides an opportunity for youths with minimal or no formal Islamic education background to "catch up" via the "Revisit Series".

A holistic and integrated programme promoting Islamic living offers youth an opportunity to embrace their faith in their daily lives. It takes cognizance of the development stages and needs of the youths as well as their exposure in school. Core themes in this programme include personal development, leadership, relationships and contemporary issues.

The teaching approach is multiple, flexible and appealing teaching approaches are used to engage youths on the topic at hand. Lessons are designed to be meaningful and challenging, where

students enjoy a fun and motivating environment to discuss and learn various topics with their peers and teachers. A range of topics will be taught and explained over the whole periods of the programme. Students can expect to:

1. Have acquired sufficient knowledge on the practices and creed of Islam
2. Be able to differentiate between correct and incorrect teaching
3. Be able to do basic research on Islamic teachings and practices
4. Be enlightened about Islamic history and civilization and able to relate to the pearls of wisdom within it
5. Be comfortable in socializing with people of other faiths and races in various situations and to work together
6. Have acquired knowledge of other civilizations and willing to learn from them
7. Have sound understanding of social responsibility to family, community, religion and the nation
8. Value and respect the opinion of others.

Recognising the demands of young people at this age group, the Youth aL.I.V.E. programmes are presented in full-day or half-day over weekends or during school holidays. Programme available in the Premier Series are:

1. Islamic Civilisation

Discover your heritage –the legacy of Islamic civilization since its humble beginnings to its glorious days in renowned cities such Andalusia, Baghdad and Constantinople.

2. Muslim Thinkers & Islamic Thought

Learn about prominent Muslim thinkers such as Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn, Khaldun and many others in this series and discover their contributions to the world.

3. Quranic Science

Know and appreciate the Miracles and Sciences of the Quran from its revelation to compilation to other important topics such as Tafsir and translation.

4. Hadith

Find out about the second source of Islamic Law-Hadith. Be enlightened about its significance in shaping a Muslim's lifestyle and the different classification of Prophetic Sayings.

5. Fiqh

Ever wondered how a certain act becomes wajib (obligatory) or haram (prohibited)? What is a mazhab? This series can help shed some light into these questions.

6. Young Muslim. sg

Youths are our community's asset. Find out more on how youths can contribute to nation building as enjoined by Islam.

In Revisit Series youth will enhance their knowledge about Islam, basic tenets of religion, such as belief system (aqidah) and other practices like solat.

“Who would have thought that the Braille, Cappuccino and Algebra could trace its history back to the Muslim civilizations? Youth aL.I.V.E. has lead us to discover the fascinating world of Islam”.

(Ella & Eva- 17 & 19 years old)

aL.I.V.E Journey Guid

In aL.I.V.E. Journey Guide (2008), there are six focus areas to learning, living & loving Islam: (1) being responsible, (2) praying five times daily, (3) reading the Quran daily, (4) helping others in need, (5) trusting Allah always, (6) being polite to parents & elders. The roadmap of aL.I.V.E. Journey Guide starts from; An Early Start to Islam; Exploring, Discovering & Learning Islam, Experiential Learning, Holistic, Thematic, Thinking, Watching & Doing, Discover how Islam guides you through every step of your life, Spirit of Inquiry & Discovery, Spiritual & Character Education and end with Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders with Islam.

Conclusion

In spite of the good progress made, it is acknowledged that there are areas that can do better. Mosques must play an active role in showcasing the desire for excellence in the Islamic Education. We believe that the exercise will help better chart progress in develop a credible part-time Islamic Education system in Singapore. The development and sustainability of a rigorous, well-balanced part-time Islamic Education System in Madrasah Mosque for young depends not just on Muis but on all mosques leader. Thus all aL.I.V.E centres and partners to continue efforts to make the Singapore Islamic Education System widely available and well-delivered for the benefit of rooted in Islam and is also line with the needs and aspiration of students. With that an integrated approach and firm commitments from all stakeholders to ensure the success of religious education will help to achieve the aspiration to build a confident Singapore Muslim Community of Excellence.

The efforts to reshape the content of Islamic learning have come to fruition with implementation of the aL.I.V.E curriculum. All 35 mosques that have madrasah now run the aL.I.V.E. programme, with an addition seven mosques running it as a school holiday. The aL.I.V.E. programme touches all level; from children to youths, and to date, some 400 aL.I.V.E. teachers have been trained to teach around 11,000 students. This is a big increase from a mere 4,500 student doing aL.I.V.E. programme in 2007. Funding support was also given to needy children to attend the programme. In all, there is good support and enthusiasm for aL.I.V.E., which delivers Islamic Learning in a contextual and interactive manner, and mosque today can pride themselves for drawing students to be enriched with this curriculum and thereby thriving in to a new atmosphere of Islamic learning that will shape the minds of coming generation.

Ultimately, a community that places a high premium on learning is a community that will always be finding a new ways of doing thing and improving is state of affairs. And it is not just about doing things well to our satisfaction but also about by being objective by ensuring that the way we do things meets international benchmarks and standards.

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