FACTORS INFLUENCING CREATIVE TEACHING AMONG TEACHERS IN ISLAMIC PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN KUALA LUMPUR

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Creativity is an essential element of teaching and learning that brings delight and meaningfulness to the classroom and to students’ learning experiences. Recent calls in education for the implementation of authentic activities and real-world problem solving that promote student-engagement with curriculum content require more flexible and creative ways of teaching. Moreover, dissatisfaction with traditional methods of teaching among the students and teachers of Islamic schools is growing, as traditional pedagogy does not allow for critical and creative thinking. This leaves Muslim educators in a dilemma. This study aimed to investigate the factors influencing creative teaching among teachers of Malaysian Islamic private schools (IPS). The study employed a quantitative research methodology whereby a ‘questionnaire for creative teaching factors’ was adapted and administered to 180 teachers from four selected IPS’s, using a stratified random sampling technique. The data was then analysed using descriptive analysis, independent sample t-Test and ANOVA. The findings show that creative teaching is influenced by eight key factors: motivation, personal effort, learning attitude, teaching belief, school environment, teaching commitment, personal knowledge and growing-up experience. However, after ranking the factors, four main factors were identified that influence creative teaching, namely: personal efforts, teaching beliefs, teaching commitment and personal knowledge. In addition, the findings indicate that there were statistically significant differences between some of the factors influencing creative-teaching for teachers at IPS’s, based on respondents’ demographic details. Finally, the findings suggest that for creative teaching to bloom at IPS’s there is a need for teams of experienced and creative professionals who can respond to a diverse range of learner needs and attitudes.

Key words: Creativity, Creative Teaching, Islamic Private School
Introduction

Education is the bedrock that reflects the values of society and shapes the nature of human beings. Education for some, means the transmission of common beliefs, values, and norms from the adult generation to youth. School curriculum therefore plays an important role in the maintenance and order of society. Learning takes place through the experiences that the learner has, both inside and outside school, while the curriculum assists in planning and organizing this experience into a system of measurable goals. Therefore, creativity and innovative ideas are becoming crucial for knowledge development in the 21st century. Both of these contribute to the prosperity of the economy, as well as individual and social well-being. Educators are therefore a central factor fostering critical and creative thinking skills with creativity being understood as an individual’s ability to produce something new.

Classroom activities and teaching methods are crucial elements of curriculum implementation with engaging materials and effective pedagogy aiding students to improve their achievement in their studies. Educators such as Resnick (1987) have called for schools to emulate real-life activities and settings to enhance student learning and promote creative thinking.

Creativity is classified as higher order thinking whereby an individual is able to produce appropriate and novel ideals, solutions or objects and concept (Hennessey & Amabile, 1988; Ochse 1980)

However, creative teaching is facing a crisis in the 20th and 21st centuries. According to Muhamad Sahari and Hasan Langgulung (1999) who conducted a survey in which 93.1% of respondents at vocational schools agreed that teachers’ failure to use audio-visual aids was the reason for students’ poor attitude towards the teaching in Islamic schools. Rosnani Hashim (2004) highlighted that Islamic Education should be given greater concern by Muslims: “The issues related to Islamic Education are very important for the Muslims because it is not just a matter of acquiring knowledge for earning a living in this life or for the purpose of sharpening of the intellect for material pursuits, but also for the preparation for the afterlife” (p. 234). Several shortcomings in Islamic education have been raised which is why the study set out to investigate the factors influencing creative teaching among teachers of Islamic private schools.

Creative Teaching in Islamic Schools

According to Langgulung Hassan (2001), creativity in Islamic psychology is defined as man’s ability to perform his duties and responsibilities as a khalifah, constructively and morally, in line with faith and love for Allah. Due to that reason, the prerequisites for man’s creativity are based on several conditions;

“His position as a khalifah of Allah, given the freedom to exercise his free-will to choose all that is good for this life and the hereafter, also being Allah’s trustee in this world which demands responsibility and accountability at the same time” (pp. 15).
From the Islamic educational world view, creative teaching is crucial to enable students to achieve knowledge, understanding, good personality, strong faith and the abidance of Allah’s commandments. There is a need for Islamic school teachers have to tackle the challenges of creative teaching especially when they teach certain topics in Islamic studies such as angels, hereafter, and those elements related to the unseen. It is noted from a study conducted by DK Hajah NurAshikin (2013) that the term creative teaching of Islamic religious knowledge is defined as:

“A teaching process in which the lessons are combined with the students “existing knowledge, Islamic value, and hikmah in some novel of understanding. It occurs when the teacher stimulates the fluency of imagination during their explanation by linking the learning to the students” real life experiences and making connections by comprehending the hikmah from the lessons, by which finally the students will be able to realize the importance of iman that can shape their behavior and personalities, and they are able to reinterpret the lessons meaningfully and apply their learning in the new contexts of understanding. It also occurs when the teacher uses their originality in preparing their lesson plan, and improvising them in unexpected ways according to the situation”.

Several researches have been conducted on creative thinking skills in the school curriculum in Malaysia. The study conducted by Rahil, pihie, habibah and Mohd Majid (2004) found that although teachers received training to develop creative teaching; most teachers are not fully capable of incorporating thinking skills into their teaching strategies. The findings of the study suggest three ways to improve student’s ability to think creatively and critically. ”First, teachers should prepare themselves with knowledge and a deep understanding on the meaning of thinking skills and categories such as high level cognitive skills such (explaining, analysising, expressing opinions, decision making, solving problems, and planning) in addition to low level thinking skills. Secondly, teachers should be trained on how to apply creative and critical thinking, vertical and lateral thinking, as well as convergent and divergent thinking in the classroom. Thirdly, teachers should be provided with manuals or guidebooks on thinking skills” (Rahil et al., 2004).Based on this review, creative teaching needs to be included in the process of teacher development because it helps them to enhance the creative ability of the students.

The professional growth of teachers is a slow process that requires an extended period of time since the series of hurdles preventing them from implementing creative teaching are even greater. A comment from a school principal mentions that, “In terms of application and selection of teaching methods, the majority of teachers still rely heavily on classroom lectures and blackboard demonstrations; most of them lack either the ability or the will to develop and utilize diversified, innovative ways of teaching” (Hong, 2005). This is also applicable to education in Islamic schools which has come to a standstill due to the rigidity the objectives defined and partly from the barren pedagogy which emphasizes on memorization, rote learning and the use of corporal punishment during the teaching period (Husain, 2007).
Thus, understanding the factors influencing teachers’ creative teaching is not only essential for the enhancement of teaching effectiveness, but also deserves the attention of every decision maker responsible for the promotion or practise of creative teaching when designing learning activities.

**Research Objectives**

1. To determine the extent that the following factors influence creative teaching among teachers of Islamic private school in Kuala Lumpur: Creative Motivation; Personal Effort; Learning Attitude; Teaching Belief; School Environment; Teaching Commitment; Personal Quality and growing up experience.
2. To investigate the main factor(s) influencing teachers’ creative teaching at Islamic private schools (IPS) in Kuala Lumpur.
3. To examine if there are significant differences in the factors affecting creative teaching in terms of gender, age, high academic qualification, teaching experience, and subjects taught.

**Research Questions**

1. To what extent do the following factors influence creative teaching among teachers in Islamic private school in Kuala Lumpur? (a) Creative Motivation (b) Personal Effort (c) Learning Attitude (d) Teaching Belief (e) School Environment (f) Teaching Commitment (g) Personal Quality (h) Growing up experience
2. What are the main factor(s) that influence creative teaching at Islamic private schools in Kuala Lumpur?
3. Are there any significant differences in the factors affecting creative teaching at Islamic private schools among teachers of different? (a) Gender (b) Age (c) Academic qualification (d) Teaching experience or (e) Subject taught

**Research Design**

Based on the nature of the research questions posed, the researchers selected a quantitative method for this study, more specifically, a survey was administered to the respondents to gain their feedback on their background and creative teaching practises.

Among the benefits of using the survey method is its versatility, efficiency and generalisation (McMillan, 2008, p. 204). This is coherent with Creswell (2003), who states that the purpose of survey method is to generalise from a sample of a population so that inferences can be made about the characteristics, attitudes, or behaviors of this population. This enabled the researchers to identify the attributes of a large population from a small group of individuals (Fowler, 1988; Babbie, 1990). It was clearly stated that survey answers will remain completely confidential in order to get the most open and honest answers as possible from respondents.

The variables that were examined in the study were the factors influencing creative teaching of teachers in four Islamic private schools. Five Likert–scale options were used comprising of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Not sure, Agree and Strongly Agree.
The targeted population of the study was the aggregate of 377 teachers in the four selected Islamic private schools in Kuala Lumpur. These four Islamic private schools were selected due to their popularity in Kuala Lumpur and generalised to other private Islamic schools in the district. Therefore, the researchers used a stratified sampling procedure where participants were selected as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Islamic School IIS (66)</th>
<th>Baseerah International School BIS (50)</th>
<th>Al-amin Gonbak (106)</th>
<th>Adni International Islamic School (155)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population = 377</td>
<td>Sample Size = 180</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IIS) 18%</td>
<td>(BIS) 13%</td>
<td>Al amin 28%</td>
<td>Adni 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratified Sample Size = 180</td>
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One of the principal reasons for using a stratified design for this study was to ensure a more representative sample by distributing the sample throughout the dimensions of the population.

Findings discussion and Recommendation

Factors influencing creative teaching of teachers in Islamic Private Schools (IPS).

This research was carried out to look into the extent to which the factors such as creative motivation, personal knowledge, learning attitude, teaching belief, school environment, teaching commitment, personal efforts and growing up experience; influenced creative teaching of teachers at four IPS’s. The results of the research show that the majority of teachers at IPS’s agreed that their creative teaching is influenced by the earlier mentioned factors. This is in line with the result of a study carried out by Horng (2005) to determine the factors influencing creative teaching and effective strategies among three instructors who received awards for creative teaching. The results of his study highlighted that teachers’ creative teaching is affected by personality traits, family background, growing up and learning experience, peer interaction, devotion to creative teaching, motivation and organizational environment.

The main Factors influencing creative teaching of teachers in Islamic Private Schools (IPS).

In order to have a deeper insight into the most influential aspects of creative teaching of teachers in IPS’s, this research used a statistical analysis that compared the means and standard deviations of eight factors: creative motivation; personal knowledge; learning attitude; teaching beliefs; school environment; teaching commitment; personal efforts and growing up experiences to determine the most influential factors for creative teaching. The results showed that the factors fell into two main categories: those factors portraying the highest Means and the rest of the factors. Factors with high mean scores were four, namely: personal efforts (M = 28.4944, SD = 3.75878) and the teaching beliefs have (M = 27.3667, SD = 3.80076) teaching commitment with (M = 24.7722, SD = 2.80229) and personal knowledge which had (M = 24.9500,
SD = 2.99958). A similar study conducted by Sternberg (1988), Davies (2000) and Fisher (2005) confirmed that personal self-confidence is one of the main attributes of a creative person. Therefore, when teachers are motivated and committed to creative teaching, and put more efforts and improve their personal knowledge, creative teaching will flourish and manifest itself in the classroom.

**Significant differences in the factors affecting creative teaching at Islamic private schools among teachers of different genders.**

In the discussion about significant differences in the factors affecting creative teaching at Islamic private schools among teachers of different genders, the study highlights the result of an Independent t-Test which showed there was a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in IPS in terms of motivation to implement creative teaching. However, there was no such statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in IPS in terms of other factors.

**Significant differences in the factors affecting creative teaching at Islamic private schools among teachers of different ages, academic qualification, teaching experience and subject taught.**

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to answer the last research question which sought to understand whether there were significant differences in the demographic details of teachers and the eight factors affecting creative teaching. The demographic factors were four: teachers of different ages (20-30, 31-40 and 41-50 above), highest academic qualification (Degree and Master), teaching experience (1-5, 6-10 and 10 above) and subject taught (Social Sciences, Art and Both together). Based on the results obtained, the present study failed to reject the null hypothesis because the p value was > .05. The null hypothesis is rejected when the p value is < .05) for all eight factors mentioned in the study.

**Findings and discussion**

In response to the demands by world educational policy and academic research for the promotion creativity, the focus of the study was to determine the factors influencing the creative teaching of teachers at Islamic private schools. Implementing creativity in schools involves many changes, in terms of the learning experiences, of students, the integration of high-order thinking skills into the curriculum, teachers taking on the role of facilitator, and assessment becoming more process oriented rather than product oriented.

A summary of the data and findings of the research illustrates the following conclusion regarding the factors influencing creative teaching of teachers at Islamic Private Schools:

(a) The results of the present study show that all eight factors played a significant role in the creative teaching of Islamic private school teachers, suggesting that creative approaches in Islamic schools necessitate the presence of creative motivation; personal effort; teaching belief; learning attitude; teaching commitment; school environment; personal quality and growing experience among the teachers.

Some teachers’ did indicate doubt about the integration of creative teaching in their classrooms, saying that they are not creative or feel uncomfortable with their
present method of teaching, so the above factors may help to explain the reasons for this.

(b) The Means obtained from the statistical analysis for Personal efforts, Teaching beliefs, Personal knowledge and Teaching commitments seem to depict the most significant influences on creative teaching for teachers at Islamic Private schools, and even though these four factors may not be internally consistent, individual participants rated them as important and meaningful; therefore school managers and administrators should take them into consideration when attempting to develop creative teaching.

(c) In terms of gender, the majority of participants in the study indicated that female teachers are more motivated to implement creative teaching than their male counterparts, specifically when it comes to their ability to serve as a role model in elementary school settings. This finding may be due to the large number of female teachers at the selected Islamic private schools.

Chudgar and Sankar (2008) highlight that male teachers are more focused in maintaining classroom discipline and are more adept at implementing creativity, while Green et al. (2008) note that female teachers perceive behavior challenges to be more severe than their males counterpart do. These contrasting findings merit more attention through further studies in order to make sense of the issues they raise.

(d) The results regarding teachers who teach both science and arts subjects appear to be among the respondents who are more likely to implement creative teaching, as compared to teachers who teach either arts or science. The reason for this can be explained by their high level of personal motivation, personal knowledge, learning attitude, teaching beliefs, school environment, teaching commitment and personal efforts.

(e) The results of the study show that there was no statistically significant difference in terms of teaching experience and the factors affecting creative teaching at Islamic private schools, except for motivation. Here, the results for teachers of different teaching experiences showed a p value (.021) and f = (3.938) < .05). This is similar to the findings for educational qualification and age. It may be due to the fact that creative teaching does not only require self-efficiency, effort and persistence, but also age and experience in order to bring students in their zones of proximal development thereby making teaching and learning creative and engaging.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Mahatma Gandhi once said, “You must be the change of what you want to see in the world”. Teachers who are the key agents of transformation in society must bring about change in the class if they are to fostering and shape creative individuals who can adapt themselves to cause societal changes and find remedies to the social problems of their times.

In the light of the findings and implications of the research, there is a need for further studies in the following areas:

Firstly, the research was carried out in four selected Islamic private schools in Gombak and the findings show that there was a general acceptance that creative teaching is widely recognized among the respondents. All participants identified things that they associate with or influence them in being creative in their various disciplines; however, there was a considerable variation in the levels and details of the responses. Consequently, the researchers suggest conducting a similar research among teachers in rural areas.

Secondly, the study was conducted using a quantitative survey method that employed the administration of a questionnaire, descriptive analysis, Independent T-test and ANOVA to analyze the data collected. It is suggested that further research could be conducted qualitatively via interviews and focus group discussions among teachers to get in-depth understanding of the reasons behind the factors influencing IPS teachers’ creative teaching.

Finally, the researchers suggest that since creative teachers are likely to produce creative learners and since there are many studies about students’ creativity at Islamic schools, there is a need for more studies on teachers’ creativity at IPS’s in order to identify possible physical and psychological barriers to the implementation of creative teaching.
References


