Educational Technology in Islamic Education

Manuel F. Negron

New Jersey City University

 Education refers to the systematic process of gaining knowledge and skills through study and instructions. Schools should have competent teachers and well-equipped infrastructures in order to promote effective teaching and learning. The implementation of this systematic process varies throughout the nation and throughout the globe due to many factors including poverty, socioeconomic status, culture, and religion. Education has many benefits and can have a positive impact in our lives when implemented effectively. An educated person is an asset for any country despite of cultural differences. Globally, human capital is known as the best national resource. An educated person is exposed to better opportunities for themselves and nations benefit from having educated citizens. Education has significantly changed when compared to traditional education. How students learn and how teachers deliver the instruction varies greatly throughout the globe.

**What is Educational Technology?**

Educational technology is a field of study that investigates the process of analyzing, designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating the instructional environment. The main goal of educational technology is to improve of teaching and learning. Specific technology is selected to help us meet these goals. The needs of education must be identified first and then we incorporate our knowledge and technology in order to design an effective learning environment for all students.

In order to implement educational technology effectively, the problem must first be identified, followed by an analysis of the factors of the problem and an identification of possible solutions to the problem. Secondly, the student population and curriculum have to be analyzed. Thirdly, instructional strategies are selected for the specific situation. Fourthly, instructional materials and resources that are best fit for the curriculum and type of instruction must be selected. Once these steps are taken, the program is ready to be implemented, evaluated, and revised as needed in order to meet the goal for school improvement of teaching and learning.

Learning materials and resources have expanded greatly throughout the years because of the advancement in technology. Teachers must have knowledge on what types of resources are available and how to implement/integrate them into the teaching/learning environment in order to meet the goal of improving education. Teachers must also consider the impact that these new materials can have on how we learn and teach. Technology can be used to support a teacher-led, knowledge-based learning approach or it can be used to assist in implementing a student-centered approach. Teachers need help in understanding how technology can reform education. Teachers having the basic knowledge of how to use the technology will lead to enhancing instruction in the educational system. Teaching teachers the maximum potential of technology leads to independent learning, higher-level thinking, and life-long learning.

**Foundation of Traditional Islamic Education**

 Islam is defined as peace and submission; being at peace with yourself and your surroundings and submitting to the will of God. This religion signifies a moral attitude and a way of life. There are five major pillars of Islam which are the articles of faith. These pillars are the following:

1) the belief in one God and that Muhammad is his messenger.

2) prayer which is conducted five times a day

3) fasting which is conducted during Ramadan

4) charity in which one gives to the poor based on ones wealth

5) hajj which is the pilgrimage to Makka is conducted once in a lifetime if one can afford it physically and financially.

The pillars must be equal in height and strength in a building in order to give a building its shape and proportions. It is not possible to conduct one pillar, without conducting the rest.

Islamic education is linked to God and religion. Islam teaches that teaching and learning activities that create an act of worship be closely associated with devotion to God. Islam teaches that there are the rights of Allah and the rights of other creatures on each individual, especially for people who have knowledge and they will soon be questioned how to apply their knowledge. Western education does not address the problem of life before and after death, it simply focuses on learning for the sake of the world, now and here. Islamic education focuses on learning not only for the sake of living in the world today, but also for the happiness of life in the hereafter. Islamic education is associated with reward and sin. Virtues and noble character is an essential element in the education of Islam. The ultimate goal of Islamic education is the realization of perfect man, who is always in the process of formation throughout life (Asrori, 2016).

The foundation of Islamic education places a strong emphasis on the following three concepts: (i) A lifetime education (ii) developing the total potential of the body, mind, and soul integrated and adequately in the three aspects – cognitive, effective, and psychomotor (iii) The capability to carry out duties as a servant of God and as a caliph of God and knowledge and virtuous deeds to achieve happiness in life in this world and the hereafter (Al-Shaybaniy, Omar 1991).

**Progressive Islamic Education**

 The learning process in the Western culture is not linked to God and religion; the general concept of Western education does not address the problem of life before and after death. Students simply learn for the sake of the world, now and here. Also, Western education is not associated with reward and sin. The goal of the concept of Western education in the world is to have optimal prosperity (Asrori, 2016). While there are many differences between Islamic education and education in the Western culture, though with many challenges, Islamic education is slowly taking a more progressive approach.

 **Western influence in Islamic education.** Progressive Islamic education balances religious training with secular knowledge and offers specific expertise in various fields such as technology. It strives to produce ambitious male and female students who graduate, work, travel, and contribute to a wider society. The curriculum is the same for both genders; math, science, Arabic, English, and religion. Daayiee Abdullah, Executive Director of MECCA Institute, states, “an Islamic education that is progressive prepares future generations to alter the status quo, and provides alternative solutions to contemporary challenges”.

 **Conflicts between the influence of western civilization on Islamic education.** The conflict between the influence of western culture on Islamic education is due to radical extremists and their interpretation of the Quran. Tribal areas in the middle east have become a refuge to terrorist networks such as Taliban and Al Qaeda. The battle against fundamentalism relies on the young people and the education they get. Education in some poor areas of the middle east is extremely weak. Poor families cannot afford to send their children to public schools, which require fees for books and uniforms. Families are left with no option than to their children to religious schools that offer free food and clothing, but teach radical agendas. Slowly, schools are offering an alternative approach with the western influence to help reduce the influence of Islamic extremists. Overall, there remains to be a major conflict between ones’ belief and their interpretation of the Quran. Some believe that progressive Islamic schools do not place enough focus on Islam, while others believe that religious schools cannot provide student with modern education needed to compete globally (Tavernise, 2008).

**The Use of Technology in Teaching and Learning**

 Some Muslim teachers prefer to use old technology in their delivery even though technology is widely accepted as the facilitating process of teaching and supporting Islam because of fear of its effects on the Muslim population. The Qur’an states, “Those people who race to search for good deed, those are the people who will be more advanced” (Surrah Al-Mu’minun 18:61). Teachers who have an expertise in the technology field must integrate good spiritual values in its use for educational purposes. Although technology is widely accepted, the accessibility to computers is limited due to the number of computers available. Normally, only one computer room is available which is not suffice to accommodate all of the students. One computer is usually shared among four students. Computers are also not accessible to all teachers; only the math, science, and English teachers can use the computers which is why religion teachers do know how to use computers or integrate them into teaching and learning (Wekke & Lubis, 2011).

**Integration of the use of technology in Teaching and Learning**

Educating students is the primary role of a teacher as they deliver the curriculum into effective teaching in the classroom. Teachers in Islamic education must develop themselves with the skills, knowledge, personality, and professional attitude to promote themselves as a good teacher and a Muslim with good characteristics. “The teacher’s role is made more complex with the development and progress in the field of information technology. Nowadays, it is taken that it is the teacher’s role to help strengthen the society’s spiritual needs especially among the students and young generations” (Wekke & Lubis, 2011). In order for teachers to fulfill duties, teachers strive to self-develop themselves to be more effective. Unfortunately, there are many barriers that prevent effective integration of the use of technology in Islamic schools abroad. Teachers do not have the same opportunities for professional development, schools have weak infrastructures and are not equipped with the latest technology as schools in the United States.

**Integration of Curriculum**

 The value of the curriculum is to assist in expanding the student’s physical and mental potential. It is comprised of activities that are performed in school to develop skills, knowledge, experience, and the personality of students. Implementation of an Islamic education curriculum must be based off the following six principles:

1. Knowledge is the most important to deal with the challenges in life, to self-improve, and to be lifelong learners.
2. Gaining knowledge increases the ability to think. Students must be taught how to think in order to solve problems effectively.
3. To promote good values, the curriculum must contain elements of spiritualism, patriotism, and humanitarianism.
4. Promoting development of the Arabic language as the main language to acquire knowledge and promote solidarity.
5. Instill a culture of being enthusiastic about reading and seeking knowledge.
6. All subjects must co-exist and integrate with each other for students to have a well-balanced and effective learning environment.

When choosing a curriculum, a strong emphasis is placed on these six principles. Teachers in general are passionate about using technology in the classroom because of the benefit to of accessing high quality resources that support the curriculum.

**Conclusion**

While there are major differences in traditional Islamic education versus education in the western civilization. The western culture is influencing Islamic education to move towards a more progressive approach. A major conflict remains between the individuals’ belief and interpretation of the Qur’an. While some individuals believe that progressive Islamic schools do not place enough focus on Islam; others believe that religious schools cannot provide student with modern education needed to compete in the world today. Another difference is the resources and technology in Islamic schools abroad when compared to Islamic schools in the United States.

 The main goal of progressive Islamic education is to create a generation of balanced individuals so that Muslims become better Muslims/citizens along Non-Muslims and live peacefully in harmony to develop the nation together. As Islam focuses strongly on seeking knowledge and the honor, duty, and responsibility of teachers; a strong emphasis needs to be placed on training teachers with the necessary skills needed to provide students with effective teaching and learning both stateside and abroad as well as choosing a well-balanced effective curriculum that is based off the six guiding principles.

References

Abdullah, D. (2016, July 28). Islam and Education. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from http://daayiee.net/islam-and-education/

Al-Qur’an al-Karim

Al-Shaybaniy, Omar. (1991). (trans. Hasan Langgulung), Falsafah Pendidikan Islam (in Malay). “The Philoshophy of Islamic Education”. Shah Alam: HIZBI

Asrori, H. A. (2016). Islamic Education Philosophy Development (Study Analysis on Ta'lim Al-Kitab Al-Zarnuji Muta'allim Works). Journal of Education and Practice, 7(5), 74-81.

Cook, B. J. (1999). Islamic versus Western conceptions of education: Reflections on Egypt. In Learning, Knowledge and Cultural Context (pp. 339-357). Springer Netherlands.

Hamzah, M., Ismail, A., & Embi, M. A. (2009). The Impact of Technology Change in Malaysian Smart Schools on Islamic Education Teachers and Students. World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, 49, 379-391. doi:10.5772/9231

Razak, K. A., Othman, T. T., Hamzah, M. I., & Zulkifli, H. (2014). Information and Communication Technology among Excellent Islamic Education Teachers in Selangor Malaysia. International Education Studies, 7(13), 146-156.

Stack, P. F. (2017, November 19). Islamic school offers Indonesian Muslims a progressive education, but moderates may be losing ground. The Salt Lake Tribune. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from http://www.sltrib.com/religion/global/2017/11/19/islamic-school-offers-indonesian-muslims-a-progressive-education-but-moderates-may-be-losing-ground/

Tabernise, S. (2008, May 04). Turkish Schools Offer Pakistan a Gentler Vision of Islam. The New York Times. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/world/asia/04islam.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FInternational%20Education&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics®ion=stream&module=stream\_unit&version=search&contentPlacement=6&pgtype=collection

Wekke, I. S., & Lubis, M. A. (2011). Educational Technology On Teaching And Learning Of Integrated Islamic Education In Brunei Darussalam. Ulumuna, 15(1), 185. doi:10.20414/ujis. v15i1.215

You are here: Islam Guide Home > Chapter 3, General Information on Islam > What Are the Five Pillars of Islam? (n.d.). Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://www.islam-guide.com/ch3-16.htm

Yüksel, E., Schulte-Nafeh, M., & Al-Shaiban, L. S. (2008). Quran: a reformist translation. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.