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Teaching of Islamic Studies in Educational Institutions: Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract:

Islamic Studies is an integral part of educational institutes which shapes one's strong moral principles, ethical behaviour, and being fair and honest by better understanding Islamic laws and characters. This research inquires the challenges faced by faculty (while teaching Islamic studies) and students (while studying Islamic studies), with the aim of putting forward the solutions to overcome these challenges in educational institutes. The research can be labelled as qualitative and quantitative. The research was conducted by questionnaire making and interviewing ten faculty members from a renowned university and twenty students, using mixed method research for better outcomes. Qualitative data was collected through asking open ended questions. The main issues highlighted during findings were outdated syllabus, lack of modern resources, lack of interest, influence of media and lack of practical work. Finding solutions to such hurdles can intensify teaching and learning experience.

Keywords: Teaching, Islamic Studies, Curriculum, Educational Institutes, Methodology, Challenges.

Introduction

Islamic studies is not only integral part of educational institutions but also plays a vital role in our daily life values and morals. This subject shapes moral and ethical values of life and shows the right path to follow. Regardless of its momentousness teaching Islamic studies still

faces issues in educational institutes which hampers its efficacy. The teaching of Islamic studies frequently faces backlashes due to outdated/old syllabus, lack of practical work to implement theory, lack of understanding amid students. The main goal of teaching Islamic studies is to instil and intimate understanding of Islamic education and apply to modern entity. This pertains not only learning Islam but also enables thinking critically and decision making. Due to heterogeneity of obstacles in learning and teaching systems this subject is somehow put behind.¹ However, this research article strives to identify challenges and bring forward solutions to these problems. The foremost question includes: What kind of challenges are faced during teaching/learning Islamic studies? How to overcome challenges? What is the perception of students towards Islamic studies? What is the satisfaction level of faculty and students with current curriculum? What steps should be taken by institutions or individuals to develop the interest towards Islamic Studies.

Literature Review

1. Current Practices Overview

Islamic studies curriculum is being taught in educational institutes since decades. However, from enormous volume of empirical studies, there is predominantly the traditional method of instructing, mainly rote learning. It involves concentrating heavily on memorizing contents like the Quran and the Hadith without giving attention to its context in promoting it for critical thinking. Although this ensure students and conversant with the basic texts but there is often very less practical work according to the theory. The improper use of modern innovation into Islamic Studies is another ongoing challenge. While other sectors of education have recently been modernized by technology innovations, Islamic Studies classrooms have mostly been left behind. Insufficient use of digital resources such as engaging apps, discussion forums, and online educational platforms leads to a gap in the efficiency of students' involvement with the subject. Most of teaching methods are traditional, such as lectures and book-based assignments, which do not meet the different learning requirements of modern students.

2. Difficulties Recorded

The literature currently in use gives a number of restrictions on Islamic Studies education and learning. The largest

problem is that it is not easy to complete them taking into account the present-day situations. Questions are also posed on how the Islamic teachings can be relevant and applied to the contemporary matters such as social justice, environment conservation, and ethical dilemmas of technological advancement.ⁱⁱ The variation impacts the overall significance of the subject, subsequently reducing students' engagement and involvement. Continuing with the curriculum, it also fails to address aspects such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Specifically, Islamic Studies classes typically rely on the learning of knowledge in form of textual information as opposed to learning how these concepts could extend to action in various hard-factice contexts. Using this method, students are not well equipped to reason on moral and ethical issues appropriately. Furthermore, fundamental problems contribute to making Islamic Studies instruction less effective. One of the major issues is inadequate number of rooms that would allow for one-to-one learning and close-knit student-teacher relationships. Furthermore, a large proportion of teachers do not possess a specific orientation towards how the Holy Quran is taught and thus can hardly implement what is taught in an innovative and exciting way. This issue is made harder by a scarcity of opportunities for professional development which is why teachers continue using traditional teaching styles that does not cater for the current learners in the world. This is another area that the literature has pointed out as having a theory practice divide. Islamic Studies lays much emphasis on theoretical understanding of the religion but often does not provide opportunities for learners to practice what has been taught in daily life. Hence, students are deprived chances to imbibe Islamic values as guidelines to fashion their lives.

3. Innovative Steps

The current system of Islamic Studies education needs to evolve to make it more unique, interesting, and relevant. Faculty must adopt new teaching techniques to bridge gaps in the subject. One way is to adopt flexible educational systems that offer students diverse experiences, such as videos, quizzes, and games that illustrate how Islamic rules can be applied in real life. Games can be used to engage

students in activities that require them to solve ethical questions using Islamic concepts and enhance their judgment skills. Another strategy is to use practical applications for projects, such as charity drives, environmental conservation, and conflict solving, to engage students in Islamic-based voluntary tasks. This approach helps bridge the gap between Islamic teachings and real-life situations, making Islamic Studies more interesting and relevant. In addition, endeavoring to teach students upon the practical application of the teachings of Islam, these efforts create a feeling of responsibility and camaraderie. It is also necessary to make some changes in the courses for teacher training. Faculty training exercises may enable teachers to incorporate untapped learning aids such as the use of multimedia, the use of scenarios, and storytelling in their teaching activities. This may make Islamic Studies more interesting and relevant to students in some ways through these approaches. Further, associating learning activities such as debates and forum discussions may compel the students to search for and discuss Islamic views on current issues. Faculty course workshops providing professional development may allow teachers the opportunity to use innovative teaching tools like digital media integration, scenario-based instruction, and storytelling. Students may find Islamic Studies more interesting and relatable through these methods. Moreover, creating collaborative environments for learning such as debate sessions or online forums may motivate students to look at and debate Islamic perspectives on present-day issues.ⁱⁱⁱ Even though this subject has immense potential in helping students acquire moral and ethical standards, autonomy of this subject is at this a time constrained by old paradigms and structural barriers. Islamic Studies can potentially expand into an even more interesting and advantageous subject that allows students to navigate modern-day difficulties while staying faithfully rooted in their beliefs by incorporating new-age approaches to learning, as well as technologies into Islamic studies.

Methodology

Design of Research

To enhance the scope of understanding the set research topic, this study employed mixed research method which consist of both quantitative and qualitative research method. Talking about strengths of the qualitative research approach, it should also be mentioned that through getting information right from educators and learners, this type of research allows for studying their points of view as well as the experiences and contextual factors that surround the subject issue. It captures all the other non-numerical factors with the subjective and hidden factors which may not be well presented in quantitative data. This is supplemented by the quantitative component that collects data systematically and analytically searches for patterns, trends, and relationships. Taken together, these methods guarantee comprehensive coverage of the standpoint, linking quantitative information with individual narratives to provide a clearer picture.

Participants

It is a purposive sample of 30 participants, 20 of whom are students and the other 10 are Faculty Members **from Bahria University, Islamabad, which a leading public sector university in the country.** The students selected are ranging from the first semester to the fifth semester and are offered diverse fields of study using qualitative methods. By emphasizing getting information straight from educators and learners, qualitative research enables an in-depth examination of their points of view, experiences, and contextual elements that influence the subject issue. The subjective and hidden elements that might not be effectively conveyed by numerical data are captured by this component. This is further improved by the quantitative component, which methodically gathers and examines data to find trends, patterns, and connections. When combined, these methods ensure a thorough investigation that connects quantitative data with personal experiences to present a clearer overview.

Data Collection

The first approach used in the collection of data was a questionnaire that had been designed in line with the aims and issues identified in the research. It had 14 questions; 13 of them were closed questions, while one was an open question. The use of open-ended question enabled the participants to answer questions using their own word choice and this produced qualitative data which impacted the study by giving it depth. The closed-ended questions were formulated to produce quantifiable data on specific subject areas thus enabled the identification of trends and concrete achievements. In subsequent stages, it was deemed

important for affectivity to administer the final version of the questionnaire personally to participants. This was done to make sure that the respondents are aware of what the study is all about and ensure them that their responses will be kept confidential and anonymous; this ensures that their answers are genuine and not influenced. The data collection exercise was conducted within a two-week timeframe to ensure participants could take their time and provide comprehensive responses to the questions posed on the self-administered questionnaire.

Analysis

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the data, analysis was done systematically. The data resulting from the closed-ended questions was quantitative in nature and hence, descriptive analysis was used to analyse the information appropriately. To achieve this, there were calculations of frequencies, percentages, as well as finding out means in order to establish patterns, trends and overall dominance of certain responses. To make the results easier to interpret and share, the totals were provided and summarized through charts and graphs. The qualitative data from the open-ended question were analysed under the thematic analysis technique. The responses were analysed, and responses in similar categories were assigned themes and subthemes that addressed the participants' unique perspectives and valuable observations. To ensure that all important themes were captured and fairly covered in the analysis, this procedure entailed several rounds of data scrutiny. The study was able to develop a comprehensive story narrative by uniting the qualitative and quantitative results, combining the personal testimonies with the numeric data to provide a balanced and detailed explanation of the results. This research employed a mixed-method approach to ensure that the outcomes collected were credible, reliable, and inclusive of the diversity of experiences and perspectives of the participants. Apart from enhancing the depth of the research, this approach enhanced the validity and realism of the research findings as it was real life like setting that was recreated in the study.

Findings and Discussions

Results

From this study, it was possible to understand some of the major barriers that both instructors and students of **Islamic Studies at Bahria University** encounter. Beginning from the weaknesses of conventional teaching methods, lack of resource materials, and the communication gap between learning theory and practice. The facts provide a broad vision of the state of Islamic Studies and points to the main concerns regarding the learning process resources, and a disconnection between

theoretical knowledge and real world application. The details offer a comprehensive

Understanding of the current state of Islamic Studies education and highlights the primary issue impacting the educational process.

Hurdles Faced By Students:

1. Insufficient Hands-On Application of Theoretical Concepts

The students were frustrated by the lack of practicing the knowledge that they acquire in lectures. This is because Islamic Studies is often taught in a manner that does not impact the students' lives hence they feel alienated from the subject. This is quite a big problem because students memorize data without really understanding that they could use this or that piece of information in life.

2. Insufficient Availability of Up-to-Date Tools and Materials

The traditional approach to teaching Islamic Studies does not include modern tools such as digital devices, innovative forms of collaboration, and multimedia products. These tools are crucial for captivating students, enhancing their learning, and making lessons engaging and appealing. Thus, due to a lack of access to some elements that are considered modern students often feel that the lessons are rather uninteresting.

3. Traditional Instructional Methods

In Islamic Studies, the commonly adopted teaching practices include lecturing and memorization, which do not engage the students' creativity and innovation. Students are passive in following this method of learning and are more often than not, unable to relate what they learn and what they encounter in real-life situations. The system established often lacks the more dynamic, participative teaching and learning that educational philosophies in today's world advocate.

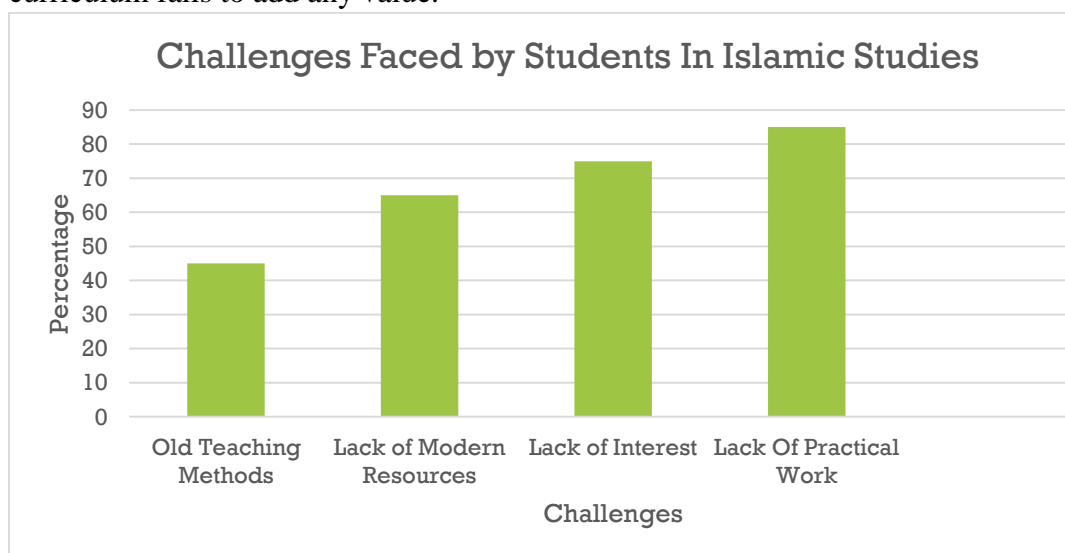
4. Solely Lecture-Based Instruction

From the comments received from the students, a considerable number of complaints were raised concerning the over-reliance on lecture method of teaching whereby the learners act as recipients of information. There is no interaction, little dialogue and exchange of ideas from one person to the other in this approach is discouraged. Students believe the process of learning would be more interesting and effective if teachers apply the variety of appealing techniques, for example, group

discussions, project activity, etc., as well as the cooperation with like-minded friends at school and the active sharing of ideas are not encouraged by this approach. Students think the learning process would be more fascinating and successful if teachers use more engaging methods, like group discussions, project work, and teamwork among peers.

5. Outmoded Course Content

Islamic Studies curriculum are perceived to be obsolete, regardless of current problems in society, technologies or global issues. When it comes to matters pertaining to their religion where more light could be shed, be it social justice, questions of environmental conservation, or questions of ethics in a rapidly technologically advancing world, students tend to think that the curriculum fails to add any value.



Hurdles Faced By Faculty:

1. Students' Reluctance to Embrace

Teachers have complained that many students are bored and have no desire to learn more about Islam. It is considered irrelevant with specific reference to events taking place in society today. Teachers hold that they cannot engage the students in meaningful conversations for this reason as they seldom show that they accept the importance of Islamic teachings to their daily lives.

2. Students' Susceptibility to Media Influence

With reference to media, it has been evident that students' perception has been shaped mostly through social media platforms. Teachers have observed that many students are

influenced by modern media that often present advocacy on issues which are against the teachings of Islam.^{iv} The type of Islam and contemporary issues portrayed in the media more often than not is in direct conflict with the values being inculcated.

3. Scarcity of Resources

One restraint that was raised by teachers is the lack of teaching aids, current textbooks, teaching aids and multimedia gadgets. These resources are important because teachers are unable to design attractive lessons or to address the various needs of their students without them. This is further worsened by the fact that there are no interactive platforms as well as the relevant digital technologies.

4. Un Modernized Course Structure

Similarly, to students, teachers mentioned that the main shortcoming of the suggested curriculum is its failure to incorporate the recent technical and social advancements. Some historical events that might put the material into perspective when delivered to students are not included in the curriculum. For instance, the curriculum lacks or suppresses ways to discuss issues such as the effects of technology, women in society, and preserving the environment.

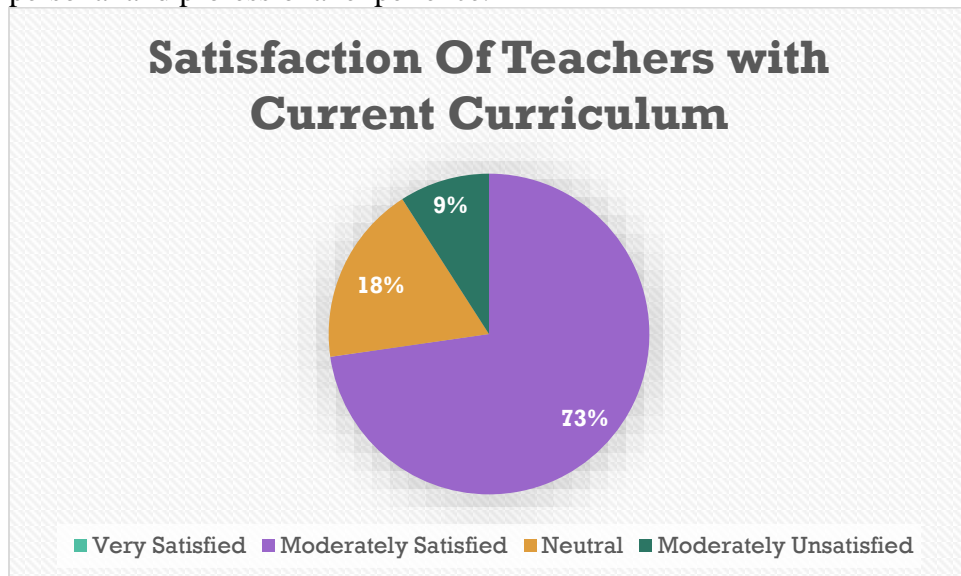
5. Excessively Long Academic Sessions

From the teachers' perspective, it can be noted that lengthy classes are usually inconsequential most of the time, this is because students lose their concentration and focus easily. When fatigued, it becomes difficult to learn and to retain information from classroom instructions and other learning materials. Some of the recommendations that were made in a bid to enhance students' performance and interests included the use of compact lessons. Lecturers raised that out of various and social issues, such as social justice, technology, and Islam's role in the contemporary world, is not featured on the curriculum. The material more relevant and understandable for students are not included in the curriculum. As an example, the curriculum fails to properly tackle topics like the impact of technology, women's roles in society, and safeguarding the environment.

6. Absence of Real-World Practice

Students complained about the absence of such components that could provide them with essential skills and allow to apply the obtained knowledge in practice. Project work, field research and case studies, as stated by teachers can enhance the educational

process and help students to relate the teachings of Islam with personal and professional experience.



Analysis

It is evident from research findings that have addressed problems encountered in the teaching of Islamic Studies, as well as those that support the findings of similar studies conducted earlier. Their need in the present-day educational contexts, processes, outdated nature of curricula and teaching practices of Islamic Studies are often pointed out by research. However, the suggestions given by both, the faculty and students shed light on valuable information regarding how such barriers can be surmounted. The educational institutions have failed to deal with the challenges of Islamic Studies curriculum development and alteration according to the research of Islamic Studies curricula and teaching methodologies, are frequently highlighted by research. Nonetheless, the recommendations made by educators and students alike provide insightful information about how to overcome these obstacles.

Comparison with Literature

The problems that teachers and students encounter align with the results of other studies. Educational institutions find it difficult to modify their Islamic Studies curriculum to reflect current challenges. Moreover, there has been general concern that the overreliance on mainly transmission-based approach of classroom instructions utilizing lectures is unproductive and inhibits students' creativity. For example, studies show that poor academic achievement and truancy are as a result of inadequate interactive teaching and learning approaches and hands-on

activities. Also, one of the major reasons that attributed to students' disinterest in traditional education techniques is the influence of modern technology on them. The same issues were highlighted by teachers in, particularly concerning a lack of professional development, outdated instructional practices, and material resources.

Assessment of Participant Recommendations

The respondents' suggestion and recommendations are aimed at updating and diversifying the curriculum offered under Islamic Studies. Research has evidenced that the use of multimedia technologies, the practical work, and current issue and ideas into the curriculum can assist to enhance the students' interest and their performance in academics.

Suggestions from Participants

Students' Reform Recommendations

Including Digital Resources and a Relevant Curriculum

The respondents strongly agreed that the facilitator should adopt multimedia resources in an effort to actively engage the students in the classroom. Quantitative and Qualitative points from Islamic topics can be made easier to understand by using tangible models, animations, and videos depicting how they can be used. For example, an animated video clip about the principles of zakat and its applications in the contemporary world, including poverty alleviation could help the students create the link between the concept of zakat and poverty in the modern society.

Concerns on Execution of Practice Assignments and Team Debates

In the process of enhancing their knowledge and improving the qualities of training, students put forward practical assignments for successful application, such as case research and study projects. They can promote interactive seminar in which students engaged and participated in open debates thereby enhancing their constructive and creative abilities and solvers.

Research Opportunities and Extracurricular Activities

Students mentioned that such activities as research clubs or charitable organizations' memberships can fill the gap between theory and real life from Islamic perspective. A good way of making students to practice what they are taught as well as helping society is by admitting clubs that support social welfare but from an Islamic aspect.

Reward-Based Learning and Character Development

Through incentives such as awarding students with a certificate, an award or even some kind of an acknowledgment, then the student is

likely to get involved more in the subject. Students also indicated the importance of moral and spiritual activities which are based on Islamic teachings including use of stories, use of drama, work-shops or role-modelling based on the life of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

Teachers' Reform Recommendations:

Curriculum Modernization

Faculty also suggested that there was a need to change the general curriculum of Islamic Studies to reflect today's social and international issues. More topics should be included in the subject to make the subject more real-life oriented: climate change, women's rights in an Islamic context, and ethical uses of artificial intelligence.

Interactive and Useful Teaching Methods

Respondents' recommendations for improvement were to incorporate discussions, debates, and projects as an alternative to a mostly didactic course. For example, students may be asked to undertake an Islamic economic perspective and utilize it in the explanation of the determinants of a contemporary phenomenon maybe the inequality in the society in the context of economics.

Teacher Professional Development

Teachers, therefore, need to be trained from time to time to acquaint themselves with the modern teaching methods and the latest technical tools. Collection of skills in the use of technology, Effective means of instruction, and Innovative methods of associating the teachings of the religion with the prevailing situation in the society can enhance the standard of training in general.

Character Development and Practical Applications

Teachers thus emphasized on the aspect of students' growth and development as individuals in reference to the Shari'ah. Ideas can be related to real-life experiences making a lesson more applicable and effective,^v for example, showing how Islamic principles are incorporated into individual and organizational choices.

Shorter Lectures and Co-Curricular Activities

Some suggestions made by teachers towards inclusion of activities that would ensure participation included; for example, adding on activities such as organization of discussions by the students and preparation of projects with limited guidance. Using interesting activities and providing pauses in the work, students' engagement and attention can be prolonged through aimed and concise presentations.^{vi}

The problems mentioned by both teachers and students hint at a disconnect between tried and tested modes of teaching and the

requirements of learner of today. To address these problems, the enhancement of technology integration in curriculum changes, introduction of practical work, and teacher training are necessary. As such, the subject of Islamic studies will likely increase in popularity, and educational institutions will be able to help students adopt the principles of Islam as applied to people's lives and as a contribution to society as a whole, if the topic becomes more interesting, relevant, and linked to actual events.

Suggestions

These issues suggest that there is a need for a multiple-pronged approach that involves actions that can be done practically and modification of policy.

Modifications at the Policy Level

Required Teacher Training Programs

For continuous professional development, the teachers must attend to update their knowledge and understanding of technological resources, teaching and learning methodologies, as well as the application of Islamic teaching, and the current issues. The government and educational institutions should allocate funds for professional development to enhance the quality of teaching.

Curriculum Revisiting Committees

To revitalize and contemporize the curriculum, set up committees comprised of teachers, curricular developers and content specialists. Such subjects as social justice from an Islamic point of view, anxiety, ecology, and ethics of using technologies should be included into the new curriculum.

Standardized rules for Practical Work

Set down national or institutional policies that require the offering of Islamic Studies practical activities like research,^{vii} field trips or charity campaigns assignments as a way of allowing the students to put into practice the theoretical knowledge gained.

Practical Solution

Integration of Digital Tools

To enhance learning, use media such as presentations, movies, and applications in any form that is responsive. Education can become more engaging and relevant by providing examples of how Islamic principles are implemented in day-to-day scenarios on the social media.

Active and Students' Engaging Teaching Techniques

Include elements such as debates, role play, group discussions and project as alternatives to purely lecture format. As the approach enhances the participation in lessons while promoting thinking abilities, such techniques make lessons more engaging and interactive. Lessons can become more interesting and relatable by using digital platforms to show how Islamic teachings are applied in real-world situations.

Interactive and Student-Centred Teaching Methods

Introduce debates, role-playing, group discussions, and project-based learning to replace strictly lecture-based instruction. By encouraging critical thinking and active engagement, these techniques make lesson more interactive.

Practical Uses of Islamic Education

Apply all the Islamic teachings, by integrating genuine initiatives that could form part of the campaign on environment, community service or morality discussions and campaigns^{viii}. By doing so, students will be able to relate with the Islamic values as they are applied within day by day situations.

Workshops & Co-Curricular Activities

To provide an updated view on existed topics in Islam, coordinate the lectures and discussions, organize awareness workshops, and seminars. Encourage students' engagements in co-curricular activities, research groups, and associations that draw connections between knowledge and application in the society.

Smaller lectures and possible changing of timetable

It is recommended to employ the structured approach with the focus on the stimulating collaborative learning sessions and practical assignments following the shorter, more focused knowledge input. This arrangement enhances the interaction and reduces the boredom. The problem of education in Islamic Studies should be resolved with the help of the proposed recommendations, which highlight the underlying problems.

Islamic Studies can further be made more crucial and relevant area of study by Revising the curriculum and incorporating practical aspect along with ensuring the teachers are equipped with learning material and knowledge. Apart from enhancing the students' educational outcomes, these reforms will assist them in utilizing the values of Islam in comprehensively managing the complexities of the twentieth century as ethical and knowledgeable persons.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the issues that are relevant in the education of Islamic Studies. Despite its significance and applicability to present-day problems, this subject faces challenges that aspiring educators and learners face.^{ix} Old syllabi, lack of relevancy in teaching, conventional mode of teaching and poor resource facilities are some of the major challenges that students are experiencing today. Some of the challenges include: long lecture hours, no training, media influence, student resistance, and a rigid curriculum that does not address current issues. Nevertheless, both groups came up with viable recommendations on how things could be improved. Students recommended appealing tutors, introducing seminars and practical assignments, utilizing multimedia materials, organizing discussions, and enriching the scope and the significance of the proposed curriculum.^x As for interesting and effective learning, both groups stressed on linking what was taught in Islam with real-life scenarios. The findings of this research show the pressing need for change in order to make Islamic Studies more meaningful, more engaging and more in tune with today's society. Obstacles that both teachers and students must overcome. Outdated curriculum, an absence of real-world applications, traditional lecture-based teaching methods, and a lack of modern resources are some of the main obstacles facing students today. Long lecture hours, lack of training, media influence, student resistance, and a rigid curriculum that ignores current issues are some of the challenges teachers face. Despite these obstacles, both groups offered useful suggestions to make things better.

Students

Suggested hiring skilled teachers, adding seminars and practical tasks, using

Multimedia resources, setting up open discussions, and expanding the curriculum's scope and relevance.^{xi} Suggested extracurricular activities, theory-based, hands-on teaching strategies, updated curriculum, workshops, and enhanced training programs for teachers. In order to make learning more interesting and effective, both groups emphasized the importance of relating Islamic teachings to actual situations. These results highlight how urgently changes in institutions are required to improve Islamic Studies' relevance, interactivity, and alignment with modern society.

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