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ON ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND ARABIC LANGUAGE AT NUSANTARA

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Darussalam Institut Of Islamic Studies  
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## PROSIDING

### WACANA PENDIDIKAN ISLAM SIRI KE-7 (PERINGKAT NUSANTARA)

Hala Tuju Pendidikan Islam dan Bahasa Arab di Nusantara

*Dianjurkan bersama*

Fakulti Pendidikan

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

*Dengan*

Fakultas Tarbiyah

Institut Studi Islam Darussalam

Gontor, Indonesia

4 – 9 Disember 2009

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## KANDUNGAN PROSIDING

Kata Pengantar Pengerusi Wacana	iv
Kata Pengantar Editor	v
Latar Belakang, Objektif dan Subtema Wacana	vi
Modul pengajaran dan pembelajaran berasaskan masjid dalam Pendidikan Islam KBSM tingkatan dua <i>Mohd. Azman Mohamed Yusuf, Ab. Halim Tamuri &amp; Nik Mohd. Rahimi Nik Yusoff</i>	1-9
Pembinaan model pentaksiran berasaskan sekolah dalam mata pelajaran Bahasa Arab <i>Adnan Abdullah, Zamri Mahamod, Nik Mohd. Rahimi Nik Yusoff &amp; Mohamed Amin Embi</i>	10-23
Penilaian kemahiran bertutur Bahasa Arab dalam kalangan pelajar Program Pendidikan Islam dan Al-Quran (PIPAQ) <i>Zamri Mahamod, Nur Afifah Mohd. Adzami, Nik Mohd. Rahimi Nik Yusoff, Mohamed Amin Embi &amp; Kamarul Shukri Mat Teh</i>	24-36
Meningkatkan kemahiran menulis kedudukan hamzah dalam perkataan Arab dalam kalangan pelajar PISMP Bahasa Arab di IPGM Kampus Tuanku Bainun dengan menggunakan Modul ASADULLAH <i>Mohd. Nazmi Desa</i>	37-47
Persepsi pelajar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Arab melalui kaedah nahu terjemahan: Kajian di Kolej Islam Darul Ridzuan, Ipoh <i>Mohd Arif Jusoh, Maimun Aqsha Lubis &amp; Sabariah Sulaiman</i>	48-56
دور مواقع تعليم اللغة العربية لغير الناطقين بها في الإنترنت : دراسة تحليلية نموذجية لموقع "لوتاه" <i>نسيمة الحاج عبد الله</i>	57-66
Pendekatan pembelajaran dan keupayaan visualisasi-spatial serta hubungannya dengan pencapaian pelajar Kolej Matrikulasi <i>Ahmad Sukari Mohamad</i>	67-89
Teknik diskusi dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran Bahasa Arab dan Pendidikan Islam <i>Kamarul Shukri Mat Teh &amp; Norasyikin Osman</i>	90-99
<i>al'Aqidah education in Malaysian schools: A re-examination of textbooks approach</i> <i>Majdan Alias</i>	100-105

Teknik persediaan nota Bahasa Arab dalam pengajaran <i>Zalika Adam &amp; Che Radiah Mezah</i>	106-113
Pengajaran pendidikan Sains Islam kepada pelajar bidang Sains dan Teknologi: Pengalaman Universiti Teknologi MARA <i>Huzaimah Ismail, Zulekha Yusoff &amp; Mohd. Takiyuddin Ibrahim</i>	114-123
Pengintergrasian pendidikan Islam dan ilmu psikologi dalam pembentukan akhlak pelajar <i>Aidah Bujang &amp; Kamarulzaman Abdul Ghani</i>	124-140
Hala tuju graduan Bahasa Arab dalam pasaran kerjaya berdasarkan keperluan majikan <i>Che Radiah Mezah &amp; Fabiyah Maming</i>	141-151
الطرق المستخدمة في تدريس قواعد اللغة العربية لغير الناطقين بها بجنوب تايلاند : دراسة حالية في جامعة الشيخ داود الفطاني الإسلامية  <i>Romyi Morhi &amp; Arifin Mamat</i>	152-155
Pembinaan instrumen pentaksiran akhlak pelajar <i>Ajmain @ Jimaain Safar, Ab. Halim Tamuri &amp; Mohd. Aderi Che Noh</i>	156-164
Falsafah pendidikan guru: Perlukah dikaji semula <i>Mohd. Ashraf Che Soh</i>	165-181
Amalan pembelajaran tahfiz al-Quran: Kajian di Darul Quran JAKIM dan Maahad Tahfiz al-Quran Negeri (MTQN) <i>Azmil Hashim &amp; Ab. Halim Tamuri</i>	182-197
آراء العلماء في علاقة البلاغة بالتفسير وأمثلتها  <i>إدريس بن عبد الله</i>	198-205
Aplikasi pembelajaran masteri dalam Pendidikan Islam <i>Jasmi Amin, Rosli Ibrahim &amp; Ab. Halim Tamuri</i>	206-219
<i>The use of ICT in teaching Islamic subjects in religious schools and IRK subjects in secular schools in Brunei Darussalam</i> <i>Maimun Aqsha Lubis, Abdullah Awang Lampoh &amp; Tajul Arifin Muhamad</i>	220-230
Etika profesionalisme guru Pendidikan Islam melalui pendekatan hisbah sendiri <i>Mardzelah Makhsin &amp; Mohd. Aderi Che Noh</i>	231-244

ICT dalam pendidikan: Aplikasi, isu dan cabaran dalam aktiviti pengajaran dan pembelajaran Pendidikan Islam <i>Md. Yusoff Daud &amp; Maimun Aqsha Lubis</i>	245-264
Pendekatan pembelajaran koperatif dalam mata pelajaran Pendidikan Islam <i>Norshidah Mohamad Salleh, Siti Zubaidah Ingsa &amp; Suryatee Abd. Rashid</i>	265-275
Hala tuju pembelajaran Sastera Arab: Analisis akhlak dalam kitab Al-Bukhala' <i>Mohd. Sukki Othman, Zawawi Ismail &amp; Muhd. Zulkifli Ismail</i>	276-286
Pendidikan Islam di Universiti Sains Malaysia: Sejarah dan hala tuju <i>Mohd. Nizam Sahad</i>	287-297
Pengajaran dan pembelajaran amali solat di Program Pendidikan Khas Intergrasi Masalah Pembelajaran <i>Jamila K. A. Mohamed Kutty, Mohd. Hanafi Mohd. Yasin &amp; Rosadah Abdul Majid</i>	298-313
Pembaharuan dalam sistem Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia: Asas dan pengaruh <i>Farid Mat Zain</i>	314-321
Pembentukan insan berakhlak mulia daripada perspektif Falsafah Pendidikan Islam <i>Khadijah Abdul Razak</i>	322-332
Evolusi pengajian Tahfiz di Malaysia <i>Adnan Mohamed Yusoff, Norakyairee Mohd. Raus &amp; Khairul Anuar Mohamad</i>	333-351
Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab sebagai bahasa kedua: Tahap sebutan huruf hijaiyyah Arab <i>Nik Mohd. Rahimi Nik Yusoff, Harun Baharudin &amp; Kamarulzaman Abdul Ghani</i>	352-359
Kesepaduan ilmu dalam Pendidikan Islam wacana khaira ummah <i>Rosli Ibrahim &amp; Jasmi Amin</i>	360-373
Mengembangkan keunggulan para profesional muslim non-Arab melalui Bahasa Arab untuk tujuan memahami wahyu (BAUTMW) <i>Anzaruddin Ahmad</i>	374-389
Pendidikan Islam melalui penggunaan filem dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran <i>Mohd. Arif Ismail, Mohd. Jasmy Abd Rahman, Maimun Aqsha Lubis &amp; Rosnaimi Mahmud</i>	390-400

- إدارة محتوى اللغة العربية وتوجيهات علمية بوصفها لغة ثانية 401-421  
 في المستويات الماليزية الأساسية: دراسة وصفية تحليلية  
 راشد عبد الحميد كيريمبوتى وأسماء عبد الرحمن
- Kurikulum pendidikan pondok kini: Satu kajian di Wilayah Utara Semenanjung Malaysia 422-433  
*Jasni Sulong*
- Pendekatan akhlak Islamiah dalam pengajaran Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia 434-449  
*Muhammad Azhar Zailaini & Sofiah Mohamed*
- Hubungan amalan ibadat solat fardhu dengan disiplin pelajar: Satu kajian di SMK. Bukit Saujana, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan 450-462  
*Mohd. Nazmi Awang Besar, Mohd. Aderi Che Noh & Mohd. Ashraf Che Soh*
- Tauhid sebagai asas konsep pendidikan sepanjang hayat dan konsep pendidikan bersepadu 463-473  
*Noorzanah & Mohd. Aderi Che Noh*
- Isu gender dan interaksi di sekolah menengah agama negeri 474-480  
*Nurciana Nasaruddin, Zalizan Mohd. Jelas & Saemah Rahman*
- Persepsi murid terhadap proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran Bahasa Arab di dalam bilik darjah 481-490  
*Kamarulzaman Abdul Ghani, Nik Mohd. Rahimi Nik Yusoff, Zawawi Ismail & Mohd. Aderi Che Noh*
- وضع اللغة العربية في ماليزيا كلغة أجنبية؛ إعادة النظر 491-496  
 زهرية حسين ومحمدان ألياس ونيك محمد رحيمي نيك يوسف وقمر الزمان عبدالغني
- Khatam al-Quran di sekolah rendah dalam kurikulum Pendidikan Islam di Malaysia 497-506  
*Surul Shahbudin Hassan & Muhammad Azhar Zailaini*
- Kaedah pengajaran dan pembelajaran Pengajian Quran yang berkesan di IPTA 507-523  
*Robiatul Adawiyah Mohd., Mohd. Zohdi Mohd. Amin, Adnan Mohamed Yusoff & Nidzamuddin Zakaria*
- Institusi masjid sebagai wadah memartabatkan Pendidikan Islam dan Bahasa Arab di Malaysia 524-533  
*Suhaila Abdullah*
- Infrastruktur bilik darjah Program Intergrasi Pendidikan Khas menyokong pengajaran dan pembelajaran Pendidikan Islam 534-540

*Mohd. Hanafi Mohd. Yasin, Norani Mohd. Salleh, Hasnah Toran & Mohd. Mokhtar Tahar*

- Penguasaan ibadah solat murid-murid pendidikan khas bermasalah pembelajaran: Satu tinjauan di sekolah menengah di negeri Melaka 541-549  
*Rabaishah Azirun, Norani Mohd. Salleh, Hasnah Toran & Mohd. Aderi Che Noh*
- Merokok daripada perspektif Islam: Tinjauan dalam kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah 550-559  
*Shariffah Sebran Jamila Syed Imam*
- Matlamat Pendidikan Islam dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran Pendidikan Islam: Satu kajian kes 560-572  
*Kamarul Azmi Jasm, Ab. Halim Tamuri & Mohd. Izham Mohd. Hamzah*
- Penguasaan perbendaharaan kata Bahasa Arab dalam kalangan murid sekolah kebangsaan menerusi Program J-QAF: Satu kajian kes 573-582  
*Rahim @ Saleh Ramly*
- Beberapa kaedah dan amalan pengajaran Bahasa Arab serta cadangan untuk memperkasakannya 583-595  
*Norsiah Sulaiman & Zamilah Sulaiman*
- Profesionalisme guru Pendidikan Islam 596-609  
*Mohd. Aderi Che Noh & Ab. Halim Tamuri*



## **ĤĤAQĖDAH EDUCATION IN MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS: A RE-EXAMINATION OF TEXT BOOKS APPROACH**

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**Abstract:** Putting into account the importance of clear understanding of and firm holding to the Islamic concepts of belief in a Muslim personality, and given the present scenario of the Malaysian muslims society; a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, with contemporary challenges of thought facing the muslims; the researcher tries to re-examine the approaches adopted in the teachings of ĤĤAqĖdah in Malaysian schools by giving concentration on the text books used. Focus will be given to the suitability of the present approaches in responding to the said scenario. Finally, the researcher will propose an alternative approach in the teaching and learning of ĤĤAqĖdah in light of the present Malaysian scenario.

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the unique features of the Malaysian society is that the society is colored with many races and ethnics. In general the residents of peninsular Malaysia consist of three major ethnic groups. They are the Malays, Chinese and Indians. Originally, the Malays are Muslims, the Chinese are Buddhists and the Indians are Hindus. The Sabah and Sarawak community are more complex. They consist of many different ethnics and every ethnic are embrace different sets of beliefs. Christianity is popular among some of the Indians, Chinese and some ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak. Islam is the official religion in Malaysia, and other religions are allowed to be practiced. Beside the diversity of religious practice, every religion has many streams of thought. Some of these thoughts are acceptable to the mainstream thought of the particular religion, and some of the streams of are not acceptable and thus, are considered as deviated from the teaching of the respected religion. Under Islam alone, one may find various groups with different beliefs. Some of these groups have big number of followers, approaching a few thousands, but some might just have a few hundreds or even less.

At present, in addition to the varsity of religions and religious thoughts, Malaysia is also exposed to the general influence of materialism grounded in idea that all that matters is material welfare, as opposed to spiritual, an important aspect tackled by religions. Furthermore, the threat of religious liberalism that tries to free man from religious commitment has also formed a new challenge for the contemporary Malaysian society.

### **AN OVERALL VIEW OF THE APPROACH IN THE STUDY OF ĤĤAQĖDAH IN FORM 4 AND 5 TEXT BOOKS**

Generally, among issues dealt with in the forms 4 and 5 textbooks are:

1. Prophethood, its importance and wisdom.
2. Levels of faith (*ĖmĖn*).

3. Beliefs or acts that may abandon ones faith.
4. Introduction to the belief of the mainstream, *Ahl al-Sunnah*.
5. Issues in early Islamic thought and the positions of *Ahl al-Sunnah* : the uncreatedness of the Qur'an, the bliss vision, grave sinners and the issue of predestination and freewill.
6. Introduction to other streams of thought such as the Kharajites and Shânites.
7. Deviated teachings and their general characteristics.
8. Examples of deviated teachings: Kadyanism, Bahatism and Taslimism.
9. Good relation with non-muslims.

In general, one can see from the issues included, the curriculum introduces students to two aspects: the true Islamic beliefs (the beliefs of *Ahl al-Sunnah*), and the untrue beliefs (other streams of thought and the deviated teachings). In both aspects the approach adopted is presentation of the teachings. There is no argumentation provided.

### EARLY MUSLIM APPROACHES

The field of *UÛl al-DÛn* is more popular in the works of early muslim scholars by the name *UÛl al-DÛn* and *Ûlm al-KalÛm*. Glancing through these works, one will find that scholars usually define *UÛl al-DÛn* and *Ûlm al-KalÛm* as "knowledge that aims to explain the Islamic beliefs propounded by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and to defend the Islamic beliefs against the critiques of enemies using logical arguments". By definition, this field is seen as having two major tasks: disclosing and defending.

1. The first task, disclosing the Islamic beliefs mentioned in the *Qur'Ûn* and *Sunnah*, concerns with justifying the truthfulness of these beliefs using logical argumentations. In most works the argumentations are dialectical, and sometimes they are demonstrative.
2. The second task is to refute against critiques that were said on the Islamic beliefs, and to show the absurd of other beliefs whether they are other religions existing during that time, or the teachings of sects and groups deviated from the true Islamic beliefs. There is a wide range of Issues tackled. These issues can be categorized under four fundamentals (*al-UÛl*):

### THE DIVINITY (*AL-UÛHIYAH*)

It provides logical proofs for the existence of God, and the unity of His divine essence. Logical proofs demonstrated ranged from simple arguments which can be understood by all, to the most complex logical proofs which are aimed for people who are not convinced with only simple logic such as the philosophers. Early Muslim scholars also dealt with the issue of the divine attributes of God, and the whole discussions are meant to proof the absolute unity of God, and to

show the absoluteness of the divine being. They refuted against the beliefs of the deviated sects that denied the divine attributes such as the philosophers, and who allowed *anthropomorphism* such as the *HashawĒyah*, and the belief of the *Qadariyah* who denied the divine predestination. They also criticized the beliefs of other religions particularly Judaism and Christianity.

1. The Prophecy (*al-NubĒwah*) - The concern in this respect is usually to prove the prophecy of Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. using logical argumentation. Historical evidence concerning the incidents of the presence of JibrĒl p.u.h, the miracles happened to the prophet p.b.u.h., his personality, and evidence in the previous revealed books are among the issues tackled. In all these issues, logical argumentations plays significant role. Directly related to the belief of prophecies is the belief in the revealed books. Scholars normally explain the necessity of believing in the revealed books, and the belief in the special place occupied by the *QurĒn* among all the revealed books. They also criticized the conducts of the *ahl al-KitĒb* towards the previous revealed books, i.e. the *TawrĒt*, the *ZabĒr* and the *InjĒl*.
2. The Resurrection (*al-BĒath*) or the Unseen (*al-GhaybĒyĒt*) - The major concern of this fundamental is proofing the possibility of bodily resurrection, the future events that will take place in the Last Day: the meeting in *mahshĒr*, the bridge (*ĪĒrĒĴ*), the exhibition of deeds (*al-ŃarĒ*), and the blissful vision (*al-ruĒyah al-saŃĒdah*).
3. Leadership (*al-ImĒmah*) - Even though this issue is not one of the fundamentals of Islam, sunni scholars normally tackled this issue in their works to refute against the belief of some of the shĒŃaitis who considered leadership to be a fundamental issue, not a branch issue as taken by the *Ahl al-Sunnah*.

### **SUGGESTION FOR PRESENT APPROACH**

The present setting of the Malaysian society calls us to look into the real needs of our society. The Muslims need to be exposed to more dynamic aspects of Islam, which are capable of offering positive changes to the society. The following are the suggestions for a better approach in the teaching of ŃŃaqĒdah.

#### **Addressing Issues that are Threats for Islamic ŃŃaqĒdah in the Contemporary Malaysian Context**

In this regard, students should be addressed true and relevant information about these threats, and to be equipped with the ability to counter against the threats. Indeed, this method is the method used in the early Muslim traditions. Even though *ImĒmah* is not fundamental to Islamic belief, early scholars included this issue in their discussion as it is the problem contemporary during their time. Among the important elements confronting the Muslims are many forms of

deviated teachings, the influences from religions other than Islam, Liberalism and Materialism.

As stated earlier, in the forms 4 and 5 Malaysian schools textbooks of Islamic Education, deviated teachings are given some attention. The Kadyanis, the Bahais and the Taslims are three groups that are included. While Kadianism and Bahaism are two examples of existing deviated teachings, and both are not only locally popular but also internationally, Taslim does not represent a real existing and popular deviated teaching in Malaysia. The issue here is that when tackling the deviated teachings, more attention should be given to exposing the students to the real scenario happening on the ground. More lively examples should be used, and here probably because the text used is not contemporary, i.e. published in 2002-2004, it is suggested that the government takes necessary steps to revise the curriculum of Islamic *Āqā'idah* in Malaysian schools more frequently, as the challenges of faith definitely are the most crucial challenges to be addressed and confronted.

Another important point is that students need to be exposed in a more detailed manner to variety of deviated teachings existing in the contemporary Malaysian society. Furthermore, clear and dependable statements need to be given regarding the limits that need to be restrained so as a person remains in the domain of Islam and does not go astray from it. These statements will be clearer and can be well internalized if adequate examples can be given to students of the deviated teachings that went beyond the limit of the statements.

Being a country of multi-religious society, Malaysian Muslims could not avoid being challenged by the teachings of religions other than Islam. It is true that efforts have been taken by the government, whether through the constitutional provision or da'wah works to ensure that Muslims faith can be secured, but some unofficial reports on the issue of "*murtad*" showed that these efforts are apparently insufficient.

The current trend of Materialism; a philosophy holding to the belief that the only thing that exists is matter, and all phenomena are the result of material interactions; is also a serious challenge to Islamic faith. Believing that matter is the only substance, makes religion lost its necessity. The danger of this philosophy should be addressed to students, and clear explanation on how it is opposed to Islam needs to be provided.

Liberalism is a trend of thought that stresses on the importance of individual freedom. The final end of this thought is always toleration of different beliefs and of different ideas as to what constitutes a "good life". The current call of religious liberalism seems to be a serious threat for Islam. Students need to be given clear information as to the danger of this trend.

## **More Weight to be Given to the Practical Side of Learning ĤĤAqĖdah**

As seen in the present approach of ĤĤAqĖdah education, the whole thing that is discussed is based only on the text provided for both students and teacher. No effort is given to the practical aspect of what has been written. By sticking to such an approach, there is a possibility that students do not really understand the essence of the deviated teachings as they do not have any exposure to it. It is suggested that for the ĤĤAqĖdah component of Islamic Education, instructors go with students into the real situation in the society so as to enable the students to experience the real situation.

## **Clear Perspective of the Nature of the God and Man**

The main concern of Islamic ĤĤAqĖdah is to give clear perspective of how God relates himself to His creation. To do so it is important to be clear of the nature of God and the nature of man according to Islam. As for God, students need to be addressed of the unity of God in His essence, attributes and actions, and His transcendence over His creation.

As for the nature of man, aspects of man that play important roles in driving man to either “good” or “bad” need to be addressed. Man in his material sense, as the qur’Ėn explains, is of clay, a mixture of soil and water. God says: “I am about to create man from clay”. Man has the potential of preferring his own species or group over the other, and the potential of being self-centered. Desire or lust, i.e. desire for food, desire to monopoly, and sexual desire are the consequences of being of this nature. From the spiritual aspect, the qur’Ėn states that man, in his original creation, is in the state of “good”.

“When your Lord drew forth from the children of Adam from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying); “am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?” They said: “Indeed we do testify”.

To conclude, man in the Qur’Ėn is in the midst of two natural contrasting power endowed in him. Man knows and wants the “good”, but his earthly nature always pulls him towards “evil”.

## **‘Balance’ in Presenting the Islamic Concept of God-Man Relation: Mercy and Justice**

The current approach gives explanations on the importance of good deeds as a requirement to success and gaining divine blessings. This trend of looking at and explaining Islam has been the trend of most people, whether they are Muslims and not. As early as the formation of the earliest Kharijism, muslims were generally concerned with the legitimacy of the last six years of ĤUthmĖn’s ruling, the legal status of his murder, the legitimacy of the battle of Camel, and the legal status of Ali’s position of letting the caliphate to be taken over by MuĤĖwiyah

and his family. The central theme of the disputes was the issue of “justice”. In other words, the theme was the idea of punishment for evil and reward for goodness. God here is presented as “Justice”. The issue is : Where is God’s Mercy?

In a society like Malaysia where Muslims are exposed to other beliefs, giving a balanced presentation of Islam is important. Islam should not only be portrayed as a religion of “justice”. By emphasizing only on the idea of “Justice”, one may think that Islam is a religion wanting people to do good as that will ensure Paradise, and to avoid evil, as evil will put one into Hellfire. Islam is always described as the religion of *ĪalĒl* and *ĪarĒm*. The aspect of God’s Mercy should also be given the same weight as given to “Justice”. The reason is simple; there are many cases where people are more attracted to Christianity having in their minds that it is a religion of “Love”, “Grace” and “Mercy”, and thinking that Islam concerns only with “punishments” for the evil doers.

Glancing through the Qur’an, one may easily recognize that one of the central themes of the religion called Islam is “mercy” (*RaĪmah*). Every day, a Muslim testifies in his five daily prayers at least seventeen times that God is “the Merciful, the Compassionate,” (*al-RaĪmĒn al-RaĪĒm*). The creation of man, the sending of the prophets, the revelation of the Qur’Ēn and the settings of the entire universe, all are the manifestation of His attribute of *al-RaĪmĒn*. Introducing the aspect of God’s divine mercy as one of the overwhelming concept in Islam should be seriously included in the present curriculum.

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