

## Empowering Ulul Albab Teacher Trainees Through Qei Module Training

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**Abstract:** This quantitative study focused on a new batch of teacher trainees who went through the soft skill and personal development modules developed by the Ulul Albab Centre in Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). This paper analysed the impact of QEI (Quranic, Encyclopaedic and *Ijtihadik*) modules on the participants of Ulul Albab Centre (PUA) programme in the university, and examined the attitudes of the programme's participants towards this new module in their campus life as a university student and individual. The QEI module covers leadership and soft skills which are identified as vital qualities needed for future educators. A standard questionnaire was distributed to the first batch of programme participants of 150 students after they completed the first year of programme. The data was further analysed using the SPSS software and discussed in the final report of the study. The findings revealed that a high percentage of participants believed the modules taught gave constructive impact on their personal development and soft skills and they had positive attitude and high satisfaction rate with the implementation of the Ulul Albab programme. The results would encourage improvements and new ideas to the existing modules as participants shared their comments and suggestions as discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** Ulul Albab programme, QEI module, teacher trainees, self-development training.

### Introduction

Ulul Albab was a concept introduced by the former Terengganu Chief Minister, Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh on Quranic and Islamic studies education curriculum. Quranic, Encyclopaedic and *Ijtihadik* (QEI) are the core components in the education programme developed to produce the future Ulul Albab generations. These three components are the foundation in producing and providing generation of future leaders. Empowering future leaders with the essence of Ulul Albab namely the Quranic, Encyclopaedic and *Ijtihadik* (QEI) is the approach taken to solve various problems facing the nation and global ummah. The Ulul Albab programme was originally developed to groom future Muslim leaders and thinkers to lead the nation in dealing with the current issues plaguing the society and offer out-of-the-box solutions based on their great understanding and knowledge shaped by the QEI-mentality and problem-solving ability. The combination of these three components would prepare the individuals trained in this approach to understand and study the overall issue the nation and ummah are facing and prepare various potential strategies to solve the problems. The approach stresses on both individual internal strength as well as the intelligence as it acts as a powerful fortress in solving all future issues (Jusoh, 2013).

The stiff geopolitical competition in the globalised world nowadays require future Muslim leaders and thinkers to master multiple field of knowledge such as the mastery of language, pure science, technology and strong survival skills and ability. These features are described in the encyclopaedic part of the module. If in the past, the mastery of the third language is important, now the fourth language and so on is the element considered as very important and individual value-added skill, especially if someone wants to become a global player and compete in the international arena (Subirin et al, 2017). In addition, qualifications and excellence in various fields also play an important role. The *Ijtihadik* aspect will always be the main source of strength in any of the society that exists today. The modern challenge facing all nations are in the mastery of technology, innovation and creativity that also play a part in the continuous development of human capabilities. This is what the Ulul Albab generations aim to get in the *ijtihadik* module. They are trying to act as the trouble-shooters besides being able to lead the ummah and the nation, Malaysia in particular.

## Literature Review

The term Ulul Albab (UA) is taken from the Arabic language and in particular from the Holy Quran, the concept is an abstract idea representing the fundamental characteristics and the criterial attributes of human been. It symbolizes an exceptional personality characterized by special characteristics such as leadership skills, critical thinking and reflection in cosmic phenomena. The concept was decided as Ulul Albab—the best choice to be the title of the education programme as it encapsulates the teaching and learning theory and a new educational system that seeks to prepare a new generation of students with an integrated personality, physically, spiritually and academically. The initial implementation was done in the secondary schools of Imtiaz and a few selected MRSM (MARA Junior Science College) starting from the state of Terengganu and Melaka with the future plan that could see the programme being expanded to all states of Malaysia (Jusoh, 2013).

The humble beginning started in 1996 in Imtiaz Besut School in Terengganu initiated by a team of experts in various educational fields led by Datuk Sri Idris Bin Jusoh to prepare a new educational plan that could build the dream Ulul Albab generations. The plan was contained in the three basic elements—Quranic, Encyclopaedic and Ijtihadik plan (QEI). The quiet success of the first Imtiaz school triggered further expansion of the programme that included four new Imtiaz schools. The schools managed to achieve various great successes academically and in co-curricular activities. Using the new implemented approach, they had managed to achieve first place in the national examinations PMR and SPM tests for Terengganu state level and the national level. Selected MRSM schools also proved to be a satisfactory success which gave good impression about this educational system using the QEI module (Zikri, 2019).

## QEI Concept

QEI is an integrated educational programme prepared by experts in the multiple educational fields, covering various aspects such as teaching and learning, curriculum building and planning of learning process. The Ulul Albab educational approach has been carefully based on this theory QEI (long-term educational plan and building educational curriculum, co-curriculum activities and finally educational evaluation and measurement). The main elements of the knowledge based on QEI are as follows:

***Quranic:** makes the Qur'an as a main source of knowledge in forming the heart and building positive personality, character and spiritual.*

***Encyclopaedic:** focuses and hones the talent of communication, as well as the diversity of knowledge and other skills including foreign language also Producing a generation capable of dealing with.*

***Ijtihadik:** prepares diversity of challenges, in addition to creative thinking and innovative and advanced technology.*

This educational theory has been applied by some secondary schools and has showed successful stories in some places, like in Imtiaz school in Terengganu and Melaka, also MRSM Ulul Albab in Terengganu and other states. This study investigated the success possibility of applying this theory among university students as the modules were further enhanced to cater the needs of tertiary level education.

## Research background

After the offering of Ulul Albab programme in secondary schools in Malaysia, many researchers have conducted research and case study about the feasibility of this experiment and its ability to develop teachers trainees to be effective and professional future leaders. Many studies have shown a clear development for the candidates of Ulul Albab programme at school levels. This research focused on the first ever programme designed for university students which aim to develop qualified candidates and improve their personality and soft skills. This would be a good opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of similar programme on university students as this study set to examine the impact of the proven successful programme on university students. Therefore, the researchers decided to conduct this

study on the group of first year students who have just enrolled themselves at the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyse the impact of the Ulul Albab programme on the new batch of 2018 students at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.
2. To investigate the attitudes of new students at Unversiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris towards the new Ulul Albab programme.

The objectives will be achieved by answering the research questions for the study:

1. What is the impact of the training on the soft skills of new intake students (2018) at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris?
2. What are the reaction of the new intake students (2018) at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris towards the new Ulul Albab programme?

The researchers collected the data through a questionnaire they prepared, then analysed the data collected and presented it in the final report.

## **Methodology**

For the purpose of this study, the researchers have decided to use the classic social sciences research tool (questionnaires). The questionnaires will be distributed among study sample of 500 out of the new 900 new intake of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) students who have enlisted in the Ulul Albab Centre (PUA) training. The sampling number was chosen by taking into consideration the number of students who would not cooperate in answering the questionnaire.

## **Data collection**

Most of the communication with the participants took place face-to-face. For the Ulul Albab training purpose, the authors created a database of Ulul Albab programmes and its components, which met the research criteria from Ulul Albab Centre (PUA) and also using a simple google search. The questionnaires were distributed and completed at the end of every Ulul Albab module training.

## **Data analysis**

The analysis of the questionnaire results run via the statistical software (SPSS) because of the type of data (respondents and the diverse design and answer sets of the questions), and also because of the quantitative research approach of the study. The results from the questionnaires were presented in the format of tables and charts. The major findings of this study will be discussed in detail in the next section.

## **Results discussion**

In order to conclude the results of this study and to ensure the achievement of its objectives, the researchers analysed the responses of the sample of the study (students of Ulul Albab Centre, Sultan Idris Educational University) who had undergone the programmes of Ulul Albab Centre. The researchers divided students' responses into three sections according to the three elements, Quranic, Encyclopaedic and Ijtihadik (QEI). The researchers divided each pillar of this theory into four sections that students' responses focused on (contents, lecturers, performance, outputs). The researchers analysed the responses of the study sample on the three pillars of the theory.

- In the Qur'anic part, the candidate's opinion on it was very positive and confident. The degree of satisfaction with the programs of the Qur'anic section was the highest among the three pillars of the plan (QEI). The candidates' evaluation of the program ranged from 80% to 97% (Wahyu and Science). The candidates' satisfaction level increasing on the delivering was like the satisfaction rate of the study sample began to increase on the performance of the Qur'anic program. The candidates' satisfaction in the first quarter of 2018 was 95% while in the fourth quarter of the same year it was 97% of satisfaction with the content and the records and outputs of the program stay constant at 97%.

- In the Encyclopaedic aspect, the results of the study showed that the most satisfactory programme for candidates was the (personality development program, 100% of the study sample are satisfied about the program). The other part of the Encyclopaedic aspect is the learning of foreign languages (Arabic and English) where the program was at the beginning suffered from weakness or low satisfaction in the Arabic language in the part of the lecturer and the content as 62.5% of the candidates support the lecturer and 37.5% students support the practical content. At the end of the programme, the satisfactory level has increased as the evaluation to support the lecturer was a high at 90% and the content 90%. For the English language, it started with 80%, and increased at the end of the programme to 90%.
- the Ijtihadik aspect which focuses on the creative aspects of candidates and critical thinking as well as innovation and development is the third element of the programme. The responses of the candidates towards this component were high, and some of their responses reached 80%, which is the lowest satisfaction level of the candidates on this aspect in this educational theory and it then progressed positively during the last quarter of 2018. The satisfaction of the candidates was 90%, while the content satisfaction rate reached 95% in the part of creativity, while the satisfaction with the innovation and development program was slightly lower, reaching 80% in the first quarter of this year, while reaching 90% in the last quarter of 2018, indicating the growing satisfaction of students with this part in this educational theory.

## 9. Conclusion

This study is the first to examine the QEI theory for Empowering Ulul Albab teacher trainees, which differ slightly from the scope of (QEI) among school students. At the university level, (QEI) is a programme designed to empower the Ulul Albab teacher trainee in the areas of this programme components of QEI (Quranic, Encyclopaedic and Ijtihadik). The results of this study showed that self development which is part of the Encyclopaedic aspect in Ulul Albab programme is the most satisfactory part for the candidates. The researchers believed that this high level of satisfaction was due to the fact that the candidates are in their youth stage and they have a strong aspiration to be the role model in the society as well as their university mates. Students with high satisfaction rate in the content area, especially those in the first quarter of 2018 group, attributed this study results to the effectiveness of the lecturer and the method of delivering the lessons in Arabic language. The method was very traditional, and the result began to change after changing the lecturer, the development of content and presentation method. The programme of critical thinking and innovation was one of the programmes that received a small percentage of candidates satisfaction and it could be attributed to the fact that these programs were new for all the students, which led to a lack of interaction with the trainer, as mentioned by the students at the end of this study. The researchers found that this programme's theory was enjoyable to the participants and effective in some respects to develop the teacher trainees individual soft skills. In addition, the theory also covered some personality development aspects such as critical thinking, innovation and creativity which are useful to the university students not only in their study but also their personal life.

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