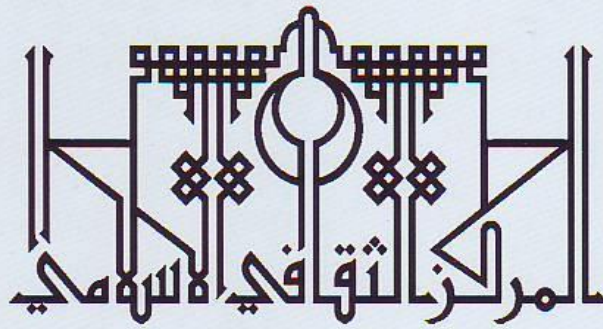


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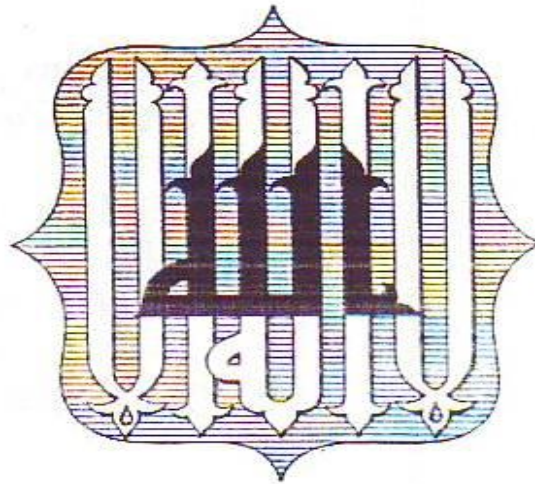
# THE ISLAMIC QUARTERLY



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*There is no deity but Allah*

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# TRANSLITERATIONS

|    |            |   |
|----|------------|---|
| ﺙ  |            | ﺙ |
| th |            | ﺙ |
| h  |            | ﺥ |
| kh |            | ﺥ |
| dh |            | ﺫ |
| sh |            | ﺷ |
| s  |            | ﺱ |
| d  |            | ﺫ |
| t  |            | ﺕ |
| z  |            | ﺯ |
| c  |            | ﺥ |
| gh |            | ﻐ |
| q  |            | ﻕ |
| ā  | Long vowel | ا |
| ī  | Long vowel | ي |
| ū  | Long vowel | و |

# Student's Perceptions of the Jawi (Arabic Script) Curriculum in Malaysia

Dr Arifin Bin Mamat,

Assoc. Prof Dr Adnan Abdul Rashid,

Rohani Binti Khamis

## Abstract

Islamic education is one of the core subjects offered in Malaysian primary schools, but studies reveal a weakness in Jawi (Arabic script) skills. The Ministry of Education has therefore designed a special programme called jQAF to enhance students' abilities in Jawi, the Qur'an, Arabic and Fard 'Ain. This study attempts to investigate the strategies applied by Islamic education teachers in Jawi. The researcher has conducted a case study using questionnaires. The respondents comprised 112 male and 143 female year six students from selected government primary schools in the district of Hulu, Selangor. A descriptive analysis has been employed to provide meanings to the data. This simple descriptive statistical analysis includes percentages, frequencies and means. It was revealed that four methods had been used; flash cards, drill technique, playing games and learning through songs. The findings also revealed that there are several methods applied by teachers of Jawi. It was also found that students have positive perceptions about Jawi. Generally, this study provides useful insights that can benefit those involved in the field of Islamic education.

## Introduction

Acknowledging the importance of Islamic Education, Jawi has been introduced in schools. In 1962, Islamic Education (IE) was introduced in the Malaysian educational system. It was known as Islamic Religious Knowledge and learning Jawi skills was one of the disciplines. Its first attempt consisted of 120 minutes or four periods per week (Abdullah Ishak, 1995). Since 1983, the Islamic Education syllabus has been the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (*Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah* [KBSR]). Early in 1988, Islamic Education achieved good results when the

time allocated to the subject was increased from 120 to 180 minutes or from four to six periods per week in primary schools and to 240 minutes or six periods per week in secondary schools (Ahmad Mohd, 2008).

In order to enhance students' interest as well as to build their character in accordance with Islamic teachings, the *Jawi, Quran, Arab and Fardhu Ain* (j-QAF) programme was introduced at the primary level, starting with year one. The Ministry of Education (MOE) decided that the implementation of Jawi would be carried out together with other j-QAF models. The MOE ensure that teachers of Jawi have wide knowledge and secure at least a Diploma in Education qualification with specialisation in Islamic knowledge. Based on the initial plans, j-QAF programme was implemented formally in national schools starting from 2005 and should complete its implementation 2010.

Islamic Religious Knowledge is one of the component subjects offered in the primary schools for Muslim students. Unfortunately, most of the students feel that they study the subject merely to pass examinations, than to be good Muslims (Rosnani, 2004). Students are noticeably weak in Islamic Education when they are weak in Jawi. Apart from that, Jawi is used to write the content of Islamic Education and mastering Jawi is also needed for students to read al-Qur'ān fluently (Nik Rosila, 1997). Hence, the teaching of Jawi in Islamic education should be more effective to produce students who are proficient in Arabic script after six years' study in primary school and five years at secondary school level. According to Rosnani (2004), Islamic education teachers prefer to use memorisation in their lessons, which does not encourage students to be creative in thought and action.

Most schools face problems with regard to teachers' skills. In another study, Abdul Aziz (1995) asserted that most of the respondents were unable to read Jawi very well and it led to their low interest in Islamic Education. This is because of the Islamic Education text books are written in Arabic script. In order to practise effective teaching of Jawi, the Islamic education teachers must be clear in terms of the strategies, approaches, methods and techniques used. According to Abdul Raof (1993), a combination of various activities involving strategies, approaches, methods and techniques will lead to effective teaching. According to Ibn Khaldun (2000), teachers should ensure that the contents and problems of the teaching process are well planned before progressing to other topics.

Hence, teaching strategies proposed by Ibn Khaldun can help students in effective learning.

On the other hand, effective teaching of Jawi is also related to teachers' behaviour, which not only should be creative in planning, but also creative in the teaching process. This practice is important because it will encourage students to concentrate in class. In addition, the effective use of teaching aids will help the process of teaching and learning in an enjoyable manner and allow the materials to be easily understood by the students (Rashidi and Abdul Razak, 1998). In the teaching and learning process of j-QAF programme, the use of teaching aids is emphasised..

Diverse strategies and methods of teaching and learning will provide opportunity for students to increase their interest. Although the methodology of teaching Islamic Education places much emphasis on teacher-centred approaches, teachers should be more versatile in using appropriate strategies to enhance cognitive and psychomotor skills of students.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study is intended to establish the strategies of teaching amongst j-QAF teachers. The main purposes of this study are:

- 1-To examine the intensity of Jawi instruction and to what extent teaching it for j- QAF programme plays its role in empowering Islamic Education.
- 2-To examine the intensity of the most preferred methodology used by j-QAF teachers at selected government primary schools in Hulu, Selangor.
- 3-To investigate students' performance from learning Jawi under j-QAF programme.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a survey method intended to gain quantitative data on primary school year six students' perceptions of the strategies for teaching



Jawi applied by j-QAF teachers in selected government primary schools in Hulu, Selangor.

In order to obtain students for this study, the researcher used convenience sampling methods. A list of students identified by class was obtained from teachers at each school. The researcher then distributed the questionnaires to all students.

The researcher used questionnaires to analyse the students' perceptions of teaching amongst j-QAF teachers. The validity of the research instrument was ensured by appointing a panel consisting of one expert each from a local university and a government primary school for evaluation in terms of vocabulary and format, as well as clear comprehension of the content. In order to examine the reliability, a pilot study was conducted. The instrument reliability co-efficiency value was found to be 0.75.

The 255 year six students selected as a research sample completed the questionnaires and returned them for analysis. The data obtained were analysed by applying statistical methods to gain the required information using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

## **Research findings**

### Students' demographic background

This section presents some background information about the respondents in terms of sex and schools.

Table 1  
Demographic Characteristics According to Sex

| Demographic Characteristics | N   | %     |
|-----------------------------|-----|-------|
| Sex                         |     |       |
| Male                        | 112 | 43.9  |
| Female                      | 143 | 56.1  |
| Total                       | 255 | 100.0 |

Table 2  
Distribution of the sample by schools

| Name of the school              | Number of the students |        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------|
|                                 | Male                   | Female |
| 1. Sek.Keb.Kuala Kubu Bharu (1) | 26                     | 40     |
| 2. Sek.Keb.Kuala Kubu Bharu (2) | 37                     | 33     |
| 3. Sek.Keb.Ampang Pecah         | 19                     | 31     |
| 4. Sek.Keb.Rasa                 | 30                     | 39     |

Table 1 shows the sample of the study that consisted of 255 year six students. The highest numbers of respondents (143) were female (56.1%), whilst the rest (112) were male (43.9%). In terms of schools, Table 2 shows the list of the selected schools and the number of students in each school.

#### Students' views on the Jawi subject

With relation to the students' perception of the Jawi subject, they were requested to give their opinions on a few aspects related to its implementation. Further details of the students' agreement level can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3  
Students' views on the Jawi Subject  
N = 255

| Students' Views  | SA & A<br>%<br>(n) | U<br>%<br>(n) | D & SD<br>%<br>(n) |
|--|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Jawi is an important subject to be learnt at school.         | 85.5<br>(218)      | 13.3<br>(34)  | 1.2<br>(3)         |
| Jawi is important to facilitate reading al-Quran.            | 85.0<br>(217)      | 12.2<br>(31)  | 2.8<br>(7)         |
| Jawi is important to facilitate learning the Arabic language | 72.9<br>(186)      | 21.2<br>(54)  | 5.9<br>(15)        |
| Jawi is important to facilitate Islamic Education.           | 96.5<br>(246)      | 2.7<br>(7)    | 0.8<br>(2)         |
| Jawi is difficult to learn.                                  | 8.6<br>(22)        | 12.5<br>(32)  | 78.8<br>(201)      |

The respondents gave their opinions regarding the Jawi subject. Overall, it was found that the students understood (more than 85%) the basic concept of the importance of Jawi itself. However there were two items where less than 85% of students agreed; Jawi is difficult to learn (201 students, 78.8%) and Jawi is important to learn the Arabic language. (186 students, 72.9%).

#### Students' perceptions of the methods used in teaching Jawi

The students also expressed their opinions on the methodology of teaching Jawi at selected government primary schools in Hulu, Selangor. The researcher divided the items into 3 groups. Refer Table 4, 5 and 6.

Group 1: Students Views on Activities in Teaching Jawi

Table 4  
Students' Views on Activities in Teaching Jawi  
N = 255

| Teaching Activities  | SA & A<br>%<br>(n) | U<br>%<br>(n) | D & SD<br>%<br>(n) |
|--|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| The use of flash cards facilitates remembering Jawi script | 69.8<br>(178)      | 24.7<br>(63)  | 5.1<br>(13)        |
| Drill technique to spell Jawi is boring.                   | 9.4<br>(24)        | 15.7<br>(40)  | 74.9<br>(63)       |
| I enjoy learning while playing games in Jawi.              | 84.3<br>(215)      | 9.4<br>(24)   | 6.3<br>(16)        |
| I enjoy learning Jawi through songs.                       | 46.6<br>(119)      | 37.3<br>(95)  | 16.1<br>(41)       |

There are a few teaching activities suggested in the Jawi Remedial Class model. With regard to the activities applied by j-QAF teachers, the research findings showed that teaching Jawi is best done through learning with games (215 students, 84.3%) and drill technique (63 students, 74.9%). This was followed by the use of flash cards to remember Jawi script (178 students, 69.8%) and only (119 students, 46.6%) enjoyed learning through songs.

Group 2: Methods Applied in Teaching Jawi

Table 5  
Methods Applied in Teaching Jawi  
N = 255

| Teaching Methods  | SA & A<br>%<br>(n) | U<br>%<br>(n) | D & SD<br>%<br>(n) |
|---|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Jawi teachers used question exercises after a lesson was completed. | 85.1<br>(217)      | 13.3<br>(34)  | 1.6<br>(4)         |
| Jawi teachers provided exercises after a lesson was completed.      | 89.4<br>(228)      | 9.4<br>(24)   | 1.2<br>(3)         |
| Jawi teachers encouraged group activities                           | 65.4<br>(167)      | 22.7<br>(58)  | 11.8<br>(30)       |
| Jawi teachers gave rewards to students who showed improvement       | 58.9<br>(150)      | 24.7<br>(63)  | 16.1<br>(41)       |
| Jawi teachers used examples closest to the students.                | 78.8<br>(201)      | 19.2<br>(49)  | 2.6<br>(5)         |

In relation to the students' perception on methods applied in teaching Jawi, the findings showed that most of the students were satisfied with the methods of implementation in the j-QAF programme. It was found that teachers provided them with an exercise (217 students, 89.4%), used question and answer (217 students, 85.1%), used examples closest to the students (201 students, 78.8%), encouraged group activities (167 students, 65.4%) and gave rewards (150 students, 58.9%).

Group 3: General perceptions on j-QAF teachers

Table 6  
General Perceptions on j-QAF Teachers  
N = 255

| Teaching Methods   | SA & A<br>%<br>(n) | U<br>%<br>(n) | D & SD<br>%<br>(n) |
|--|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Jawi teachers used ICT facilities when teaching the subject.       | 46.3<br>(118)      | 34.9<br>(89)  | 18.8<br>(48)       |
| Jawi teachers used images during lessons                           | 60.4<br>(154)      | 27.1<br>(69)  | 12.5<br>(32)       |
| Jawi teachers' style attracted my interest in learning Jawi        | 82.3<br>(210)      | 16.5<br>(42)  | 1.2<br>(3)         |
| Jawi teachers used a variety of teaching aids in class.            | 66.6<br>(170)      | 25.5<br>(65)  | 7.9<br>(20)        |
| Jawi teachers considered my ability when teaching in class         | 59.6<br>(152)      | 34.5<br>(88)  | 5.8<br>(15)        |
| Jawi teachers prepared enough materials to be used by all students | 75.3<br>(192)      | 22.4<br>(57)  | 2.4<br>(6)         |
| Style of teaching Jawi made it easier for me to learn              | 91.0<br>(232)      | 6.3<br>(16)   | 2.8<br>(7)         |

In terms of students' perceptions of j-QAF teachers, there were mixed responses. The findings show that teaching styles make students feel that learning is Jawi easy (232 students, 91%) and interesting (210 students, 82.3%), but teachers prepared enough materials (192 students, 75.3%), used a variety of teaching aids (170 students, 66.6%) and considered students' ability (152 students, 59.6%). Only (118 students, 46.3%) said the teachers used ICT in teaching Jawi.

Table 7  
Students' Views on the Effect of Learning Jawi  
N = 255

| Statements  | SA & A<br>%<br>(n) | U<br>%<br>(n) | D & SD<br>%<br>(n) |
|---|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Identify Jawi alphabet well                                   | 96.0<br>(245)      | 3.5<br>(9)    | 0.4<br>(1)         |
| Read Jawi syllables well.                                     | 87.8<br>(224)      | 9.8<br>(25)   | 2.4<br>(6)         |
| Write Jawi alphabet well                                      | 85.5<br>(218)      | 12.2<br>(31)  | 2.4<br>(6)         |
| Read Islamic Education textbook without the help of teachers. | 73.8<br>(188)      | 20.8<br>(53)  | 5.5<br>(14)        |
| Able to read materials in Jawi well                           | 75.7<br>(193)      | 21.2<br>(54)  | 3.2<br>(8)         |
| Differentiate English and Arabic loan words                   | 74.5<br>(190)      | 21.6<br>(55)  | 3.9<br>(10)        |
| Eradicate low self-esteem on my ability in Jawi               | 60.8<br>(155)      | 31.8<br>(81)  | 7.4<br>(19)        |
| Confidence to enter Jawi Writing Competition                  | 59.6<br>(152)      | 33.7<br>(86)  | 6.7<br>(17)        |
| Knowing the correct technique in writing calligraphy          | 72.9<br>(186)      | 22.0<br>(56)  | 5.1<br>(13)        |
| Increase interest in Islamic Education                        | 88.2<br>(225)      | 10.2<br>(26)  | 1.6<br>(4)         |
| Help to learn Arabic  | 77.6<br>(198)      | 18.8<br>(48)  | 3.6<br>(9)         |
| Upgrade ability in reading al-Quran                           | 90.2<br>(230)      | 6.7<br>(17)   | 3.2<br>(8)         |

The 12 questions were designed to determine students' views on the effectiveness of learning Jawi. The research findings showed that students were able to master the skills to identify Jawi alphabet (45 students, 96%), reading al-Quran (230 students, 90.2%), increase interest in Islamic

Education (225 students, 88.2%), reading Jawi alphabet (224 students, 87.8%) and writing Jawi alphabet correctly (218 students, 85.5%). On the other hand, more than half of respondents said it had given them extra benefits such as help in learning Arabic (198 students, 77.6%), reading materials in Jawi correctly (193 students, 75.7%), recognising English and Arabic loan words (190 students, 74.5%), reading Islamic Education textbook (188 students, 73.8%) and knowing calligraphic technique (186 students, 72.9%). However, the students achieved low levels for eradicating low self-esteem (155 students, 60.8%) and confidence to enter Jawi competition (152 students, 59.6%).

### **Discussion and suggestions**

Based on the research findings, it can generally be noted that the implementation of Jawi Remedial Class model is effective. This can be seen through the students' perceptions. It had increased their interest in Islamic education. Most of them became aware of the importance of Jawi teaching as related to other components of Islamic Education, such as Qu'ran recitation and the Arabic language. In terms of teaching activities and methods suggested in Jawi Remedial Class, most of the students thought that teaching strategies applied by j-QAF teachers were effective. The most preferred methods amongst the students were learning with games, drill technique, flash cards and learning through songs. According to Musa Musa Daia (1992), students will gain the most if they learn something in accordance with their interest, purpose and benefits.

Even though the teaching strategies with well-planned activities recommended in the j-QAF syllabus are seen as effective, attention should be given to teaching aids. Not many Islamic education teachers seemed interested to use new instructional technology to enrich and improve students' understanding (46.3%). The research findings also showed teachers' behaviour to have favourable impact on students in learning Jawi. Consider, for example, students' different abilities (59.6%), rewards to students (58.9%) and increased student confidence in Jawi competition (59.6%).

A few suggestions are given based on this discussion. First, the Jawi Remedial Class programme must be continued and continuous monitoring for improvement must be undertaken to ensure that students really take an interest in Islamic education, which would lead to a positive impact.



Second, serious attention must be paid to ensuring that j-QAF teachers are provided with intensive Jawi courses to help students gain proficiency in learning Arabic script. This will improve teaching skills as well as helping to achieve objectives. Finally, it would be constructive if the Ministry of Education could provide instructional aids, tools and games for learning, especially for students the Jawi Remedial Class. Perhaps j-QAF teachers need to gain support from all parties in order to ensure success as well as to ensure that teaching Jawi is conducted more smoothly and effectively.

### **Conclusion**

The Jawi Remedial Model Class is among the initiatives taken by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to instil students' interest in Islamic Education. It begins to be instilled from the primary level to ensure that the objectives are achieved. Continuous attention and monitoring, as well as solid support from all parties, must be given to the implementation so that students and teachers can gain the expected benefits.

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