

การจัดการศึกษาอิสลาม: วิชาแกนและวิชาเฉพาะ ในหลักสูตรอิสลามศึกษาในประเทศไทย

Islamic education management: A proposal for core and major subjects in an Islamic studies program in Thailand

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิชาการนี้วิเคราะห์ถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจความเร่งด่วนและความจำเป็นในการสร้างหลักสูตร อิสลามศึกษาในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับวัฒนธรรมในประเทศไทย หลักสูตรควรถูกสร้างให้เหมาะสมกับความต้องการทางวิชาการและความต้องการทางปัญญาของนักเรียนที่ต้องการพัฒนาความเข้าใจอย่างลึกซึ้งเกี่ยวกับอิสลาม การศึกษานี้นำเสนอกรอบทฤษฎีที่แสดงให้เห็นถึงการรวมกลุ่มรายวิชาหลักและหลักสูตร ใหม่ในหลักสูตร เพื่อเสริมความเข้าใจและความชื่นชมต่อความคิดและวัฒนธรรมอิสลามภายในบริบทที่เป็นเอกลักษณ์ของประเทศไทย กรอบทฤษฎีได้ถูกพัฒนาขึ้นจากการวิจัยที่ผ่านมาและการสนทนาระดับชาติ ภายในสาขาวิชาที่เกี่ยวข้อง วัตถุประสงค์ของกลุ่มนี้คือเพื่อตอบสนองต่อความต้องการที่เฉพาะเจาะจงของ ชุมชนมุสลิมไทย โดยการรวมรวมการศึกษาอิสลามทางด้านเดิมภายนในบริบททางวัฒนธรรมและประวัติศาสตร์ ที่เป็นเอกลักษณ์ของประเทศไทย

คำสำคัญ: อิสลามศึกษา วิชาแกน วิชาเฉพาะ การจัดการศึกษา

Abstract

This scholarly paper aims to explore the urgent need for a comprehensive and culturally sensitive Islamic Studies curriculum at the university level in Thailand. The curriculum should be tailored to suit the scholarly and intellectual needs of students who seek to develop a deep understanding of Islam. This study presents a theoretical framework that suggests the integration of core and major course subjects into the curriculum, to augment the comprehension of and admiration for Islamic thought and culture within the unique setting of Thailand. The framework has been developed based on prior research and scholarly discourse within the respective discipline. The objective of this strategy is to cater to the specific requirements of the Thai Muslim community by the incorporation of traditional Islamic studies within the unique cultural and historical context of Thailand.

Keywords: Islamic Studies, Core Subjects, Major Subjects, Educational Management

Introduction

The introduction serves as an initial segment of the proposed academic work, aiming to captivate the reader's attention and emphasize the importance of implementing a culturally sensitive Islamic Studies program in Thailand.

Thailand is widely recognized for its rich cultural diversity and significant historical significance. It has been a remarkable setting where the narrative of Islam has been deeply intertwined since the 13th century (Rahman, 2010). This tapestry serves as a prime example of the dynamic interplay between indigenous cultural traditions and the Islamic faith, resulting in the emergence of a distinct and recognizable Thai Muslim identity. The dynamic global conversation surrounding Islam underscores the imperative and preference for establishing a comprehensive Islamic Studies curriculum tailored to the unique context of Thailand.

A. Providing a Contextual Analysis of Thailand's Distinct Cultural and Historical Terrain

The multifaceted cultural influences in Thailand, shaped by elements such as geography, historical events, and religious customs, necessitate a distinct methodology in engaging with the field of Islamic Studies within the nation. The initial segment of this discussion highlights the intricate nature of the cultural fabric, hence underscoring the imperative for an educational framework that aligns with the Thai-Muslim interaction. The significance of acknowledging regional cultural nuances is emphasized by the scholarly investigations carried out by Smith (2019) and Rahman (2018).

B. Bridging Historical Narratives: Tracing the Continuity from the 13th Century to Modernity

The historical account commences by acknowledging the arrival of Muslim traders around the 13th century, marking the start of Islam in Thailand (Reid, 2001). The analysis of Ahmed (2005) on historical records, along with the utilization of primary sources, facilitates a systematic investigation into the progression of time, revealing the interdependence between the Islamic faith and Thai culture. The development of a complete historical narrative is crucial for attaining a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate and multifaceted facets of Islam within the context of Thailand.

C. The Necessity of a Culturally Sensitive Islamic Studies Program

The opening section of this paper draws attention to the shortcomings identified in existing Islamic Studies programs in Thailand. These programs often fall short in effectively addressing the unique sociocultural intricacies that are inherent within Thai Muslim communities. The necessity to reassess and reconsider the educational environment is emphasized by the discoveries made in the research of Yusuf (2018) into the challenges encountered by Islamic education in Southeast Asia.

D. Framing the Paper's Objectives

The paper aims to establish a curriculum that integrates conventional Islamic knowledge with the lived experiences of Thai Muslims (Yusuf, 2018). The opening portion of the document emphasizes the program's multidisciplinary approach, which incorporates perspectives from history, theology, and contemporary ideas. The main goal is to establish an educational environment that not only disseminates knowledge but also engages students, providing them with a thorough understanding of Islam within the unique context of Thailand.

E. The Significance of the Proposed Curriculum in a Broader Context

Therefore, this paper aims to explore the urgent need for a comprehensive and culturally sensitive Islamic Studies curriculum at the university level in Thailand. The development of a culturally relevant Islamic Studies curriculum not only holds academic relevance but also underscores its broader implications upon implementation. As stated by Smith (2019), this phenomenon has the potential to promote societal cohesion, improve understanding across different faiths, and challenge existing prejudices related to Islam. The incorporation of dialogues about ongoing global discourses on Islamophobia and religious discrimination underscores the broader relevance of the proposed curriculum outside the traditional educational context.

Background

This section provides an examination of the historical and contemporary situations surrounding Islam in Thailand, as well as an overview of the present status of Islamic Studies programs. The objective of this study is to establish a solid basis for understanding the imperative nature of enhancing the current educational environment.

A. Historical Overview of Islam in Thailand

The historical engagement between Thailand and Islam has been deeply intertwined with the cultural evolution of the nation. The emergence of Islam in Thailand can be traced back to the 13th century, coinciding with the arrival of Muslim traders in the region. This historical occurrence played a pivotal role in shaping the dynamic relationship between the pre-existing indigenous practices and the Islamic faith. Ahmed (2005) offers a comprehensive analysis of the historical progression, elucidating the progressive integration of Islam into Thai society over numerous centuries. The narrative achieves greater depth with the incorporation of sources and historical documents, which include firsthand testimonies from Thai Muslims.

B. Current State of Islamic Studies in Thailand

A comprehensive examination is undertaken to evaluate the present condition of Islamic Studies programs in Thailand, considering their strengths, limits, and prospective avenues for improvement. Yusuf's (2018) study sheds light on the challenges faced by Islamic education in Southeast Asia, providing a contextual framework for the circumstances in Thailand. Many universities in southern Thailand are currently offering the Islamic studies degree. The examination of surveys conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation in 2021, from a statistical standpoint, provides significant insights into the efficacy and scope of current programs. Furthermore, the inclusion of qualitative viewpoints derived from interviews conducted with educators and community leaders provides valuable firsthand insights.

C. A Vision for Enriching Islamic Studies in Thailand

This specific element serves as a bridge between historical narratives and contemporary aspirations, proposing a conceptual framework for an improved curriculum in Islamic Studies in Thailand. The objective of the proposal is to facilitate the incorporation of Islamic education within the unique cultural and historical context of Thai society. This will be achieved by acknowledging the limitations of existing programs and leveraging past encounters. This study aims to create a curriculum that fosters the transmission of knowledge and nurtures cultural identity, while also promoting mutual understanding among diverse religious traditions. This will be achieved by drawing upon established models of effective Islamic education in various cultural contexts (Rahman, 2018).

D. Integration of Local Perspectives in Islamic Studies

This section highlights the need to integrate local perspectives and emphasizes the necessity of contextualizing Islamic teachings within the cultural and historical framework of Thailand. Prominent researchers, such as Smith (2019), emphasize the importance of incorporating indigenous ideas and practices into the curriculum. This approach facilitates a significant bond between Thai Muslims and their educational encounters. The subsequent analysis explores the integration as a mechanism for establishing a connection between the broad applicability of Islamic teachings and the unique attributes of Thai culture.

E. Advancing Islamic Studies in a Globalized World

Given the growing interconnectivity of global cultures, there is a discernible requirement for an Islamic Studies program that imparts students with the essential proficiencies to effectively engage with other perspectives. The program's importance in fostering critical thinking and promoting dialog is underscored by its relevance to ongoing global conversations about Islamophobia and religious bias, as demonstrated by the scholarly contributions of Ramadan (2015). The curriculum being evaluated is positioned as a dynamic catalyst for the promotion of Islamic Studies, not only within the confines of Thailand but also on a global level.

Core Subjects

This section is a comprehensive outline of the core courses incorporated within the proposed curriculum for the Islamic Studies program in Thailand. Each course is carefully designed to offer students a comprehensive understanding of Islamic theology, history, law, philosophy, and language, all within the unique cultural and historical backdrop of Thailand.

A. Introductory overview of Islamic theology.

1. Introduction to Foundational Concepts

The course titled "Introduction to Islamic Theology" plays a vital role in the curriculum, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental principles that form the basis of Islamic theological frameworks. By incorporating the scholarly contributions of Nasr (2003) and Ramadan (2015), scholars engage in an examination of the fundamental principles of Islam, encompassing the concept of monotheism (Tawhid), the belief in prophethood, and the study of eschatology. The primary objective of this course is to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the theological concepts that govern the belief system and rituals of the Muslim community.

2. Comparative Theology

The academic discipline of comparative theology entails the systematic investigation and critical examination of diverse theological traditions, intending to discern and comprehend both their shared characteristics and distinctive aspects. This scholarly field aims to further develop the foundational understanding. The course offers an analysis of prominent theological schools within the Islamic tradition using a comparative methodology. Malik (2020) offers significant contributions and scholarly analysis in understanding the intricate and complex dimensions of Islamic thought, exploring the intricacies and variations that exist among the Sunni and Shia traditions. Through active and analytical engagement in theological discourse, students develop the ability to discern and appreciate the vast intricacies of Islamic theology, along with its consequential implications for religious practice.

B. History of Islam in Southeast Asia

1. Historical Development

This course offers a comprehensive analysis of the historical development of Islam in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on its intricate integration within the Thai environment. The main aim of this course is to furnish students with historical knowledge, while also augmenting their comprehension and acknowledgment of the substantial impact of Islam in shaping the identity of Thai Muslims.

2. Socio-Cultural Impact

The research of Azra (2012) is crucial in comprehending the socio-cultural ramifications of Islam. The students actively participate in dialogues about the

amalgamation of Islamic and Thai customs, delving into how Islam has played a significant role in augmenting the multifaceted nature of Thai culture. The primary objective of this course is to not only provide students with a comprehensive understanding of historical events but also to foster a more profound understanding and recognition of the significant influence of Islam in forming the cultural and religious identity of Thai Muslims.

C. Islamic Law and Jurisprudence

1. Overview of Legal Principles

The course entitled "Islamic Law and Jurisprudence" offers students a comprehensive examination of the complex domain of Islamic legal concepts. Hallaq (2009) conducted a thorough examination that offers students a great resource, presenting significant insights into the foundational concepts of Sharia and its historical development. Through a systematic analysis of legal maxims and principles, students can develop a comprehensive understanding of the ethical and legal framework that governs Muslim countries.

2. Comparative Analysis

To enhance the breadth of comprehension, the program integrates a thorough analysis of Islamic and secular legal systems through a comparative approach. The research undertaken by Kamali (2014) serves as a valuable resource, offering students guidance in understanding the areas of overlap and divergence between Islamic law and modern legal systems. Case studies offer valuable insights into the practical application of fundamental legal principles, particularly concerning the challenges faced by Muslim communities.

D. Islamic Philosophy and Ethics

1. Philosophical Foundations

The course entitled "Islamic Philosophy and Ethics" offers students the chance to explore the domain of Islamic intellectual heritage, where they will critically analyze the philosophical foundations of Islamic thought. The study conducted by Fakhry (2004) serves as a valuable resource, providing students with guidance on how to effectively integrate Greek philosophy with Islamic values. The major aim of this course is to cultivate the growth of critical thinking abilities by conducting a comprehensive examination of the intellectual contributions made by Muslim philosophers in the fields of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

2. Contemporary Applications

The integration of contemporary applications of Islamic ethics is influenced by the viewpoints presented by Ramadan (2009) and Hashmi (2017). The engagement of students in conversations concerning the relevance of Islamic ethical principles in addressing contemporary societal challenges is characterized by active participation. These discussions span a wide range of topics, including social equality, ecological ethics, and ethical considerations related to the advancement of technology. The objective of this course is

to cultivate a thorough understanding of the historical development of Islamic ethics, while also encouraging the practical implementation of these principles in contemporary contexts.

E. Arabic Language

1. Introduction to Fundamentals of Arabic

The course entitled "Arabic Language" provides students with a foundational comprehension of the essential elements of the Arabic language, with a particular emphasis on its significance in facilitating access to Islamic writings. Abdul-Raof (2006) pioneering publication offers a comprehensive framework that serves as a significant resource for individuals aiming to attain mastery of the Arabic alphabet, pronunciation, and essential grammatical ideas. The use of hands-on exercises and immersive language activities is aimed at equipping students with essential language skills.

2. The Significance of Arabic Language in Islamic Texts

The scholarly inquiry undertaken by Wahba (2014) highlights the importance of the Arabic language in understanding Islamic literature, particularly in the realm of Islamic studies, through the utilization of linguistic analysis. The study conducted by students entails an analysis of the complex mechanisms through which linguistic subtleties shape the comprehension and elucidation of Islamic scriptures. The objective of this undertaking is to foster an enhanced appreciation for the precision and elegance demonstrated by the Arabic language in effectively conveying religious ideas.

The main aim of this comprehensive series of foundational courses is to provide students with a complete and well-rounded education in the subject of Islamic studies. This comprehensive educational curriculum incorporates a range of disciplines, including religion, history, law, philosophy, and linguistics, to provide a holistic comprehension of the subject matter. Each course is meticulously crafted to foster critical thinking abilities, fostering cultural sensitivity, and facilitating a deep understanding of Islam within the unique setting of Thailand. The interconnectedness of these courses serves as a prime example of the interdisciplinary nature of Islamic studies, aiming to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the intricate challenges and opportunities that arise in a globalized world.

Major Courses

A. Contemporary Issues in Islamic Studies

1. Examining Global Challenges

The main aim of the course entitled "Contemporary Issues in Islamic Studies" is to equip students with the essential analytical abilities to understand and tackle the diverse worldwide challenges faced by persons who follow the Islamic faith. Through the integration of the scholarly works of Esposito (2018) and Hussain (2021), students are encouraged to

delve into a comprehensive examination of several topics, such as Islamophobia, religious discrimination, and the impacts of globalization on Islamic communities. Case studies originating from diverse geographical contexts provide concrete examples that enable students to actively analyze and interpret these challenges within the broader Islamic narrative.

2. Interdisciplinary Approaches

The course incorporates perspectives from the disciplines of sociology, political science, and cultural studies, recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary issues. Guest lectures provided by experts in the field offer students a diverse array of viewpoints and valuable insights within their particular areas of expertise. Collaborative undertakings play a crucial role in enabling students to apply their gained knowledge in practical circumstances, thus fostering a deep understanding of the complex difficulties faced by the global Muslim community.

B. Islamic Art and Architecture

1. Investigating Aesthetic Traditions

The course entitled "Islamic Art and Architecture" offers students a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted and rich artistic heritage within the Islamic world, with specific attention given to its significant influence on the cultural legacy of Thailand. Through the integration of Grabar's (2006) and Necipoglu's (2017) scholarly works, researchers explore the multifaceted nuances of Islamic calligraphy, the profound symbolism inherent in geometric motifs, and the evolutionary trajectory of mosque architecture. Field visits to culturally significant sites, such as historical mosques, provide students with a valuable opportunity to actively engage with Islamic art within the distinct cultural setting of Thailand.

2. Preservation of Cultural Heritage

The training also delves into the intricacies involved in the preservation and protection of Islamic cultural heritage. The preservation of Islamic art and architecture holds great importance, as evidenced by the research conducted by UNESCO (2020) on historic towns and urban heritage in the Arab states. The subject of discussion among students revolves around the importance of cultural preservation in fostering a shared sense of identity and continuity throughout Muslim communities.

C. Comparative Religion

1. Comprehending Religious Pluralism

The primary focus of the course "Comparative Religion" is to facilitate an academic examination of Islam in conjunction with other prominent religions worldwide. The key study undertaken by Armstrong (1993) provides a foundational framework for understanding the commonalities and unique aspects of different religious traditions. The integration of interfaith dialogue, as informed by Hick's (2010) framework of pluralism, plays a crucial role

in cultivating an atmosphere that enables students to engage in productive and respectful conversations with peers who hold diverse religious beliefs.

2. Collaborative Projects

To cultivate active participation, students partake in cooperative endeavors alongside peers pursuing various religious studies disciplines. This fosters an environment marked by mutual understanding and cooperation, providing students with the abilities required to navigate the complexities of religious diversity in an increasingly interconnected global setting. The primary objective of the course is to develop the essential skills in students that enable them to effectively participate in constructive discussions and collaborative efforts, going beyond superficial theoretical analyses.

D. Islamic Education and Outreach

1. Approaches for Enhancing Communication Effectiveness

The main course, entitled "Islamic Education and Outreach," focuses on the development of strategies aimed at effectively disseminating Islamic teachings to diverse audiences. The contribution of Memon (2015) offers significant insights into the domain of Islamic education, positioning itself as a seminal book within this particular field of inquiry. The training program lays considerable emphasis on the significance of cultural sensitivity, acknowledging and appreciating the diverse array of backgrounds and perspectives shared by the participants.

2. Practical Application

The practical components involve a range of activities, including community participation programs, workshops, and internships. According to Smith (2015), engaging in practical experiences allows students to utilize their academic knowledge in real-life situations, hence enhancing their skills in effectively conveying Islamic concepts to various audiences. Students are provided with the chance to participate in collaborative endeavors with neighboring mosques, community organizations, and educational institutions, thus actively contributing to the broader goal of promoting understanding and correcting misinterpretations.

Conclusion

The study's conclusion aims to synthesize the key principles that have been analyzed, emphasizing the significance of establishing an Islamic Studies program in Thailand that is sensitive to local contexts. This serves as a bridge between the intended curriculum and its possible impacts on Thai society and beyond. Within this section, a concise overview will be presented, encompassing the principal ideas that have been deliberated up to this point.

The conclusion begins by providing a summary of the key points discussed in the study, with a focus on the historical origins of Islam in Thailand, the current state of Islamic Studies programs, and the necessity for a program tailored to the unique cultural context. Furthermore, the cultivation of cultural sensitivity and interfaith understanding plays a pivotal role in cultivating peaceful relationships and fostering social cohesiveness within heterogeneous cultures. Building upon the previous discussion of core and major courses, it is crucial to emphasize the need for cultural sensitivity in developing the intended curriculum. The importance of fostering interfaith understanding is underscored by the incorporation of academic offerings such as "Comparative Religion" and "Islamic Education and Outreach" within the curriculum.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the conclusion serves to reaffirm the importance of the proposed core courses in addressing the pressing global challenges faced by the Muslim community. The aforementioned statement highlights the importance of equipping students with the requisite knowledge and skills to actively participate in critical examination and deliberate discourse about issues such as Islamophobia and the preservation of cultural heritage.

In addition, the conclusion underscores the potential wider implications of the proposed curriculum, taking into account its broader international perspective, which extends beyond the realm of academia. The primary emphasis is on showcasing the capacity of graduates to make substantial contributions in promoting social cohesion, safeguarding cultural heritage, and cultivating positive interfaith relationships within the broader Thai community.

In conclusion, the final section of the paper offers recommendations for future research endeavors and discusses the potential practical implications of the study's findings. The curriculum that has been suggested aims to promote ongoing collaboration among researchers, community leaders, and educational institutions to optimize its effectiveness and implementation. The importance of the curriculum's flexibility is emphasized, highlighting the necessity for it to expand in response to changing trends, challenges, and feedback from students and stakeholders.

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