

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION TEXTBOOK IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract. Islamic Education is often taught as an academic subject like any other subject. The discipline of teaching Islamic doctrine and beliefs (Aqidah) requires a change of paradigm in both methodology and content. This is important to educate Muslim students to respond critically to modern challenges. The present study aims to analyze the Islamic Education Textbook of Secondary School (KSSM) in Malaysia on inculcating Aqidah (faith) for Form 1 students. One of the topics from the textbook was chosen for analysis, i.e., 'Islam, Religion of Fitrah.' The research used a qualitative content analysis method on the Islamic Education Form 1 Textbook from the Ministry of Education. Findings suggested that the Islamic Education Textbook should focus on developing the best and most informative content while encouraging students to act and reflect on their role as vicegerent of Allah through its structure, content, layout, and design. Finally, the study offers suggestions on how the textbook can be improved to facilitate effective teaching of Aqidah to the students.

Keywords: *Textbook, Islamic Education, Inculcate, Aqidah*

A. INTRODUCTION

According to Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the implementation of Secondary School Standard Curriculum or Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) and Primary School Standard Curriculum or Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) was the revised version of Integrated Curriculum Secondary School or Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM) and Integrated Curriculum Primary School or Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR). The revision was part of the Government's aspiration to prepare students for 21st-century needs. The changes were set to balance the knowledge and skills such as creative thinking, innovation, problem-solving, and leadership. The new curriculum focused on student-centred, problem-based, and project-based work.

Islamic secondary education aims to cultivate individuals who, as dedicated servants and caliphs of Allah, embody intelligence, knowledge, virtue, and proficiency. These characters are in line with the Quranic and Prophetic teachings. According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the Islamic Education curriculum has the following objectives:

- 1- Practice reading the Quran and practising Quranic verses in daily life.
- 2- Formulate an understanding of hadith and practice it in life.
- 3- Formulate an understanding of Islamic beliefs.
- 4- Formulate an account of the Sirah of the Prophet Muhammad and Islamic civilisation and take lessons from it.

- 5- Understand Islamic morality and life.
- 6- Read and write Jawi as it is a cultural heritage.

In addition, The KSSM Islamic Education highlights the essential aspects of knowledge, practice, appreciation, and culture. These aspects provide students with a basic understanding of the Quran, the Hadith, the Faith, the Fiqh, Islamic Civilization, and Islamic Morals. Islamic education is a continuous effort to impart knowledge, skills, and appreciation of Islam based on the Al-Quran and as-Sunnah. In other words, the main goal of Islamic Education is to produce Muslims who are *hablum minal Allah* and *hablum minan nas*. In the philosophy of national education, the goal is to form a comprehensive individual from all aspects of life without neglecting any of those aspects.

In today's world of digital technology, the need for the textbook is still relevant. Some information requires thorough examination as it comprises introductory notes from the Islamic heritage. According to Okeeffe (2012), textbook review is a way to determine the efficacy of textbooks. Islamic Education textbooks aim to introduce the origin of Islam, creeds, core beliefs of Islam, history and scripture, revelation legend, and fact (Gilbert, 2008). Therefore, textbooks should be prepared precisely to document the knowledge accurately.

According to Azlina and Adnan (2019), the need to utilize resources to transfer knowledge should be emphasized to all religious teachers in Islamic Education while recommending that teachers use various educational materials. It shows that Islamic education teachers commonly use traditional teaching methods, relying on textbooks as essential resources in teaching and learning. Consequently, the content and structure of textbooks are significant as a source of information for teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. While the lecture-based approach has long been applied, it is still applicable in some subjects, for example, in teaching Tafsir al-Quran, Hadith, and many others. In contrast, these subjects heavily depend on teachers (Azlina & Adnan, 2019). So, The content of the Islamic Education textbook KSSM Form 1 from the topic of Islam, Religion of *Fitrah* on inculcating teaching' *aqidah* was analyzed in this study.

B. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Islamic Education is often taught as an academic subject like any other subject. Even though it is one of the core subjects, it is essential to point out that Islamic Education can be translated as a way of life for Muslims. Teaching Islamic doctrine and belief (*aqidah*) is crucial, as it equips the young generations of Muslims with credible answers to modern world problems (Mohd et al., 2012). The doctrinal elements are belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His prophets, the afterlife, and predestination.

According to Mohd Aderi and Ahmad Yunus (2012), Islamic Education textbooks suffer from shortcomings in many areas: the needs of the pupils, motivation; layout and language presentation, linguistic understanding, levels of the pupils; collaboration between the syllabus and the writers of Islamic Education texts on the one hand, and the teachers applying those textbooks on the other (cited in Al-Naqa, 1979 & Alalaoy, 1989). In addition, Islamic Education teaching methods tend to encourage memorisation, recall, and rote learning. The discipline of teaching Islamic doctrine and beliefs (*aqidah*) requires a change, embracing a new paradigm in both methodology and content. Such is essential to give Muslims a credible response to modern challenges. Islamic diversity and up-to-date theology must be emphasised by addressing the evolving contemporary needs using genuine sources.

Textbooks can be defined as the backbone of every educational system. Otherwise, it may be a good guide for assessing teaching and learning development. Today, textbooks are still the most common sources of knowledge transfer. It is a significant source used as a teaching guideline, particularly for teachers in Islamic education. According to Wittlin (1978), good textbooks need to consider content, aspects of value creation, elements of motivation, accessibility, diagrams, and study guides. It needs to promote a thirst for information and knowledge. Textbooks should aim to support and inspire students to learn.

Mikk (2000) stressed the need for exciting and creative textbooks; "students have plenty of knowledge available, and if their books could not be more exciting, they are reluctant to learn it. Curiosity in the subject grows through fascinating and enthusiastic textbooks. Therefore, religious textbooks should provide meaningful and valuable material to tackle current political, social, and

cultural issues. The research will help ensure that textbooks are geared towards achieving this goal thus the core values of the traditional textbook will remain relevant.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Textbook is one of the teaching tools used for teaching and studying Islamic Education. Several analyses on Islamic Education textbooks were conducted in Malaysia. The following is a collection of articles on Islamic education and textbook analysis in other science fields.

Norhasnira and Kauthar (2014) examined and classified the status of each hadith in the KBSM Form Two Islam Education textbook. This was done because many students, teachers, and the community ignore or are unaware of the dissemination of false hadith in the syllabus, which would undoubtedly harm the belief of Muslims in Malaysia. Forty-nine hadiths were included in the textbook as proof and evidence. The findings show that the hadiths provided were authentic hadith *hasan sahih*, *hasan sahih gharib*, *da'if*, and *mawdu'*.

Next, Eman (2015) examined problems in Islamic education textbooks in the three grades (grade 1,2,3) of secondary schools in Iraq according to the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy. The result showed that the three-grade secondary school Islamic education textbook questions concentrate on the first two stages of Bloom's Taxonomy (Knowledge and Comprehension). Another study was conducted by Mahek (n.d.) to define the content of the Islamic Studies textbook that promotes civic sense, including group, ties, responsible citizen, and law-following knowledge. Furthermore, the study proposed suggestions to enhance civic sense content in the Islamic Studies textbook. The findings showed that textbooks need to improve some areas of student civic awareness.

On the other hand, Isnatur (2018) examined the Islamic Life Tool Pack, an English textbook for Islamic school grade 7 junior high school students centered on the scientific approach domains based on the 2013 curriculum. According to the study, the researcher concluded that no chapter in the textbook adequately covered all areas of the scientific method, indicating room for improvement in addressing these deficiencies. Based on the result, the research sample did not include all areas of the scientific approach; instead, it focused on observing, questioning, experimenting, associating, and communicating. Next, Ruzai (2018) found out that there are materials that do not follow Islamic teachings. The study's sample consisted of five textbooks used in an intensive English course. The findings from the study showed that the content of the English language textbooks could generally be classified into three groups: neutral, positive, and negative groups.

The research by Linda (2018) aimed at the requirements of a successful English textbook. The study sought to assess the suitability of materials in the textbook "Basic English of a Second Language." The textbook was evaluated using four criteria for a successful English textbook: aim and objective, encouraging learning method, activity or exercises, and vocabulary. The result showed that the lesson expectations in the textbook followed the criteria of an excellent English book. However, one material does not follow the requirements because it does not provide any concrete illustration in promoting the teaching-learning process. In addition, the exercises do not follow the standards of an excellent English textbook because pair or group work was not included, and it should be further developed.

Different studies have different focuses on analyzing textbooks. Besides, not many studies have been conducted concerning the analysis of Islamic Education Textbook KSSM, especially regarding Aqidah (faith). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the topic of Islam, the Religion of Fitrah (Islam Agama Fitrah) from the Islamic Education Form 1 Textbook.

Islamic education is frequently taught in classrooms alongside other academic subjects. It is important to note that, despite being one of the primary disciplines, Islamic education can be understood as a Muslim way of life. Teaching Islamic philosophy and belief, or *aqidah*, is essential because it provides the next generation of Muslims with reputable solutions to contemporary global issues (Mohd et al., 2012). Belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His prophets, the afterlife, and predestination are the theological components.

D. METHOD

The present study adopted content analysis as its leading research design. Specifically, the "Islam Agama Fitrah" section in the Islamic Education textbook was analyzed. Hence, this study is qualitative. In addition, the document analysis method was applied in collecting and analyzing the data. The data in this research are the words or sentences in the text of the materials contained in the KSSM Islamic Education Form 1 textbook.

The data source is the Islamic Education textbook used by Form 1 secondary school students published by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. The data for analysis was collected from one of the *Aqidah* sections in the textbook entitled "Islam Agama Fitrah". Because the source of information is in the form of a document, the method used to gather data is called the documentation method.

Data collection in content analysis is called document collection. In this research, data was collected from the Islamic Education KSSM Form 1 textbook, specifically the section entitled "*Islam Agama Fitrah*". "Islam Agama Fitrah" is one of the four topics from the segment on *Aqidah*, where it contains reading material for Form 1 students. The Islamic Education textbook comprises six parts, namely Quranic recitation, Hadith, *Aqidah* (Faith), *Fiqh* (Ibadah), *Sirah* (Prophetic Biography), and *Akhlak Islamiyyah* (Islamic Morality and Manners). In the section of *Aqidah*, there are four topics which are "*Islam Agama Fitrah*" (unit 13), "*Aqidah Islam*" (unit 14), "*Beriman kepada Allah*" (unit 15), "*Al-Khaliq dan Al-Musawwir*" (unit 16). The researcher chose to review only the first topic out of the four topics from the *Aqidah* section. Data collection procedure involved (a) reading the entire textbook and (b) determining the contents and units analyzed using the documentation method.

Firstly, the researcher familiarised with the entire content of the selected title. Secondly, the researcher focused on the analysis observed from the textbook contents. The feasibility of the content-oriented towards understanding the concept; the actualities of the sample material; the material encourages curiosity; the language used in textbooks; the suitability of language with student; and the use of symbols, terms, or pictures. Figure 1 shows the framework for the analysis of the *Aqidah* topic in the KSSM textbook:

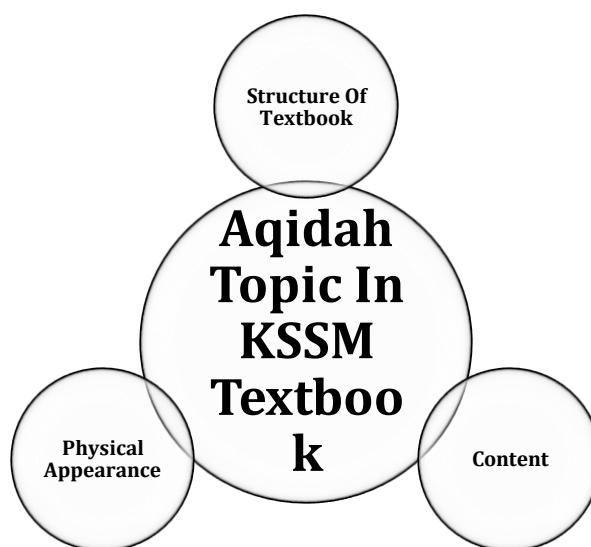


Figure 1: Framework for Analysis of *Aqidah* topic in KSSM Textbook. Adapted from Mohd Aderi and Ahmad Yunus (2012)

Islamic Education is often taught as an academic subject like any other subject. Even though it is one of the core subjects, it is essential to point out that Islamic Education can be translated as a way of life for Muslims. Teaching Islamic doctrine and belief (*aqidah*) is crucial, as it equips the young generations of Muslims with credible answers to modern world problems (Mohd et al., 2012). The doctrinal elements are belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His prophets, the afterlife, and predestination.

E. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The discussion centres around the framework's three aspects: the textbook's structure, content, and physical appearance.

1. Structure of Textbook of Islamic Education Form 1

Islamic Education textbook by Malaysia's Ministry of Education is produced to fulfil students' and teachers' needs. The Islamic Education textbook's *Aqidah* (Faith) section consists of reading materials focusing on Islamic beliefs. This *Aqidah* (faith) section focuses on three main aspects: *Ilahiyyat*, *Nubuwwat*, and *Sam'iyat*. The focus of this study is on the *uluhiyyat* aspect. "Islam Agama Fitrah" is a topic that discusses issues related to Islam, a religion of *Fitrah* or also known as nature disposition.

Every topic is listed in its respective segments. Each segment has a stimulus page. Islamic Education textbook comprises six segments, namely Quranic recitation, Hadith, *Aqidah* (Faith), *Fiqh* (Ibadah), *Sirah* (Prophetic Biography), and *Akhlaq Islamiyyah* (Islamic Morality and Manners). One topic was chosen, which is "Islam Agama Fitrah". Under this topic, three sub-topics were highlighted: introduction to the concept of Islam as a religion of *fitrah*, Quranic sources, and the characteristics of Islam as the religion of *fitrah*. This textbook deals with the need for religion in human life and the need for God in our lives. The theme concerns God, who creates us upon a *fitrah* (natural disposition) and acknowledges Allah as The Creator.

The topic "Islam Agama Fitrah" comprises six pages, including a stimulus page for the segment *Aqidah* (Faith), the first topic under the segment, a subtopic, a standard learning number, a teacher's note, suggested teaching and learning methods, activity, assessments, pictures, character, and high order thinking skills (HOTS) questions.

2. Contents of the topic

The text was written in *Jawi* font to explain Islam as a religion of *fitrah* in a broader context. The study's objectives were not stated in the textbook but were mentioned in the Standard Curriculum and Assessment Documents DSKP provided for the teachers. (Figure 2)

3. عقيدة

مستلرد قريستاسي		مستلرد فمبلاجرن	مستلرد كانلدوغن
تفسيرن	تاهف قغواسان		
• مپاتانن مقصود اسلام اكاه فطره، اسلام اكاه يغ بنردان مسواي دغن فطره ما'نسي، دليل عقلي دان نقلي يغ بركا'ين دان جيري ۲ اسلام سباكاي اكاه فطره.	1	3.1.1 مپاتانن اسلام سباكاي اكاه فطره.	3.1 اسلام اكاه فطره.
• مپاتانن مقصود اسلام اكاه فطره سرتا دليل عقلي دان نقلي يغ بركا'ين.	2	3.1.2 مرغكن هان اسلام اكاه يغ بنردان مسواي دغن فطره ما'نسي.	
• منجلسكن اسلام اكاه يغ بنردان مسواي دغن فطره ما'نسي سرتا جيري ۲ اسلام سباكاي اكاه فطره.		3.1.3 مغموكانن دليل نقلي دان عقلي بهاوا اسلام اكاه فطره دان درضاي اوليه الله ﷻ.	
• مپاتانن مقصود اسلام اكاه فطره سرتا دليل عقلي دان نقلي يغ بركا'ين.	3	3.1.4 مرغكن جيري ۲ اسلام سباكاي اكاه فطره.	
• مرغكن اسلام اكاه يغ بنردان مسواي دغن فطره ما'نسي سرتا جيري ۲ اسلام سباكاي اكاه فطره.			
• مپاتانن مقصود اسلام اكاه فطره سرتا دليل عقلي دان نقلي يغ	4		

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Figure 2: The Objectives Of The Topic 'Islam As A Religion Of Fitrah'. Standard Curriculum and Assessment Documents DSKP Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015)

Based on Figure 2, the topic's objectives are declaring Islam as a religion of *Fitrah* and elucidating why only Islam is true according to human nature. Additionally, it seeks to explain the features of Islam as a religion of *fitrah* and to believe and practise Islam consistently in day-to-day living. Quranic sources (*naqli*) and rationale (*aqli*) on Islam, a religion of *fitrah* and the only religion accepted by Allah, are also provided.

Referring to the objectives was essential to ensure that the topic's contents aligned with the intended purpose of teaching and learning. Students will have a joint knowledge foundation in presenting a basic introduction to Islam, including its core beliefs. Through textbooks, students should understand what Islam stands for and the values associated with the religion. In the textbooks, the concept of '*fitrah*' is given priority as an essential topic to be highlighted in explaining the faith. The '*fitrah*' describes how humans need God to worship and religion to stand for, which are related to a personal relationship with Allah. This concept of '*fitrah*' is considered the fundamental part of Islam and is necessary to understand the religion.

The existence of Allah SWT is among the most critical topics to be taught in Islam (Fauzi et al., 2019). So, this topic is considered very relevant to support the learning process. Islam as a religion of *fitrah* is an essential topic for Muslim students to learn. This is because information on *fitrah*, innate composition to firm yourself as a Muslim, and finding Islam relevant is needed.

The title for the *Aqidah* section, "*Islam Agama Fitrah*," is in a simple sentence. This title could develop greatness, thankfulness, and awareness of The Creator, Allah, who gives benefits to humanity. In this chapter, students will also understand the innate composition (*fitrah*) to realize the existence of Allah. In this way, there is a scope for nurturing the personal growth of human beings, and the importance of religion; Islam is the true religion, and Islam as the only religion accepted by Allah urges students to observe themselves to prove the existence of Allah. *Fitrah* is a Quranic term used in the Quran. Al-Qur'ān addresses the idea of *fitrah* many times with a *lafaz al-mushtarak*, and linguistic studies have provided even more possible originating terms such as *Fāir* and *fitrah*, meaning "Creator" or "He who makes" (Ali, 2016). The teacher can explain the definition of *fitrah* from the Quran and Sunnah. In addition, teachers should encourage students to study the Quran because it is the ultimate source for Muslims.

Besides, no vocabulary section explains the meaning of a single term like *fitrah*. The vocabulary section is supplementary content. It is not available in this chapter, but it will be better if it is provided as students might read the textbook themselves. Vocabulary can help students understand Islamic concepts by referring to them, making it easier for them to use the textbook even without the presence of a teacher.

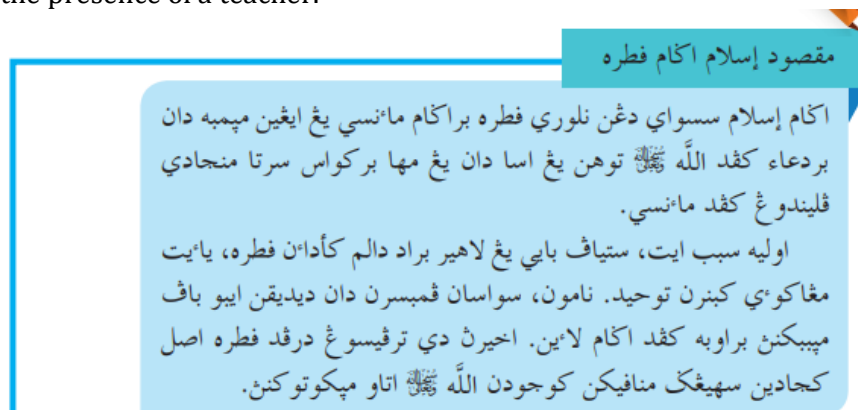


Figure 3: - Meaning "*Islam Agama Fitrah*". Rijaluddin Yahya et.al. (2016).

This subtopic has the scope of understanding Islam in a context. It is deemed to be a fruitful topic. However, a notable deficiency lies in the absence of a precise word-by-word definition, especially for the term "*fitrah*" (Figure 3). This is crucial because "*fitrah*" is an Islamic concept rooted in Quranic verses which require comprehensive explanation, and no word can adequately replace for this term.

In addition, the first sentence was found to be confusing. The author combined all points in one sentence, making it confusing and thus need to be read repeatedly to comprehend. This subtopic mentioned the relationship between Islam and human *fitrah* that need religion and God. Therefore,

the sentence started with a suitability of Islam with the need for faith. Then, examples of how a child was born with *fitrah* and how their parents shaped them into becoming believers or not were mentioned. The reading-through session must be done at least twice or more to understand the whole context comprehensively. The way the author fits all the information in one sentence makes it difficult for students to understand in the first reading. It is a long and complex sentence followed by traditional typical blocks of information advocating straightforward language but is too informative and packed.

Then, the text continues with the definition of the main topics related to the affirmation of the oneness of Allah (Figure 4). However, the text is still confusing and unclear for the students. In this context, the teacher plays a critical role in delivering comprehensive knowledge and explaining its underlying meanings in the most accessible manner possible.

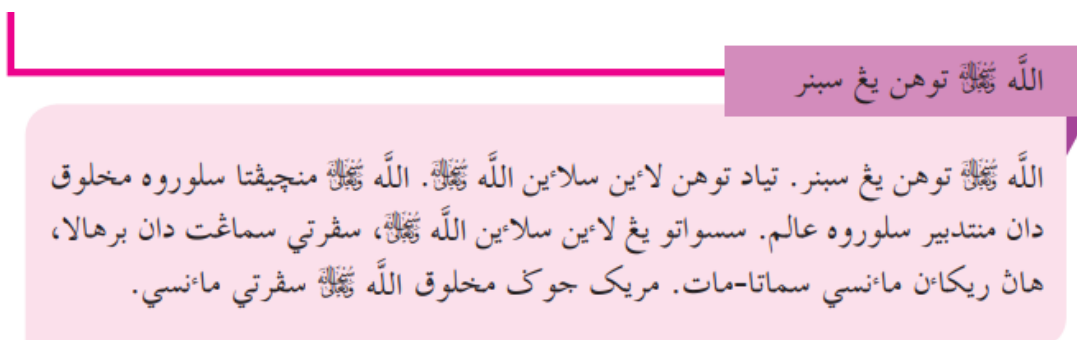


Figure 4: Affirmation of the oneness of Allah. Rijaluddin Yahya et.al. (2016).

The author arranged the materials sequentially and linked them to previous texts. Each reading text is well connected to the previous one and the ones after. The subtopics discussed under the topic are as follows:

1. Definition of Islam: a religion of *fitrah*.
2. The need for religion.
3. Allah is the only God.
4. Islam is the true religion and suitable with *fitrah*.
5. Quranic verse on *fitrah*.
6. The only religion accepted by Allah.
7. Characteristics of Islam as a religion of *fitrah*.

This topic is well organized and linked to each other thus make it easier for students to comprehend the information given.

The stimulus page displays the *Aqidah* (Faith) segment, displaying a picture of Muslims praying congregationally inside a mosque. It shows that the main aim of human life is to believe in God and to prove how vital God is in the lives of Muslims. The idea concerns religion, the spiritual dimension of life, and how it influences the human creed. A Quranic verse, Surah Al-'Araf verse 180 highlights the concept of *uluhiyyat* was also written.

3. Physical appearance

Textbook analysis starts with the physical appearance or the layout of the textbook. It is a crucial factor to be considered in designing every textbook as students develop first impression based on its physical appearance, regardless of its content. The layout is clear, colorful, and well-organized. The topic of each unit is written in bold. All letters are not in black color only. The title is in different fonts and colours, attracting students' attention. The colour, size, and fonts made the book attractive and motivated learners to read. However, crowded textbooks with complex layouts and small fonts can demotivate students.

At times, it has been observed that poor appearance of a book has caused readers not even to look at a single page of it. Nevertheless, the size and type of the fonts used in this textbook undoubtedly guarantee the smooth readability of the texts. The textbook is well-organized in terms of practical considerations. Therefore, this textbook is visually attractive, motivating, and relevant

for the learners. This current textbook uses colors that are pleasant for the eyes. It can be an advantage if a picture is added as it provides meaningful context for each piece of information, thus helps students understand the materials better.

F. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the textbook needs to be improved in some areas. The suggestions are visualized in the following Figure 5:

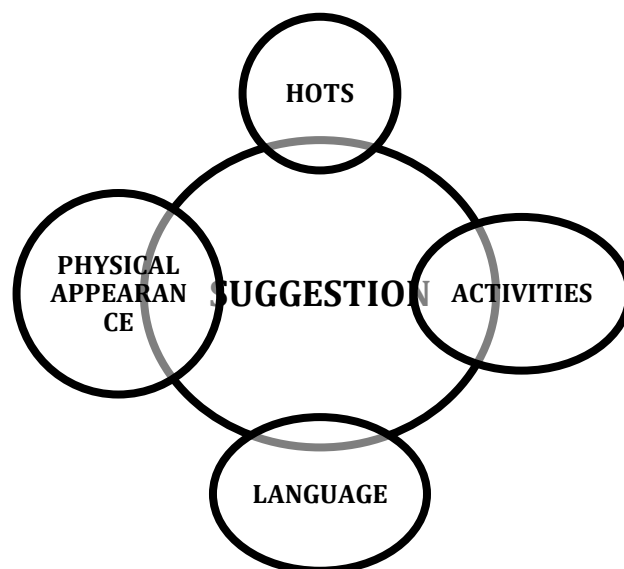


Figure 5: Suggestions on Islamic Education Textbook to inculcate students' Aqidah

Islamic education textbooks should focus on developing the best and most informative content and consider simple language suitable for the learners. The content analysis shows no pictures, dictionaries, vocabulary for Islamic terms, essential messages, or notes to make the book more exciting and motivating. Specific terms originated from Arabic that cannot be translated into English. For example, *fitrah*, *wudu'*, *zakat*, and *hajj* were maintained in Arabic and were not translated. Translating *wudu'* into *ablution*, *zakat* into *a gift*, and *hajj* into *pilgrimage* does not give the real meaning of the word as conceptualized in Islam. Hence, these words should be maintained and written as they are in Arabic.

Spiritual aspects, critical thinking, moral values, and ethics cannot be achieved only by reading the text. There must be practical work, activities, or additional information provided. This is important because, with appropriate actions, teachers can holistically teach students to understand the Aqidah. In addition, textbooks should include higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) questions to develop inquiry skills and encourage students to act and reflect on their roles as the vicegerent of Allah. HOTS help students to become creative and critical in their evaluation, especially regarding faith.

In terms of physical appearance, no pictures accompanied the content. The need to use illustrations and photographs, either cartoon or real, is encouraged to make understanding the content more accessible. If reading is provided with a related picture, students can easily comprehend the meaning of the text. In addition, bringing real photos to highlight the Islamic concept might help students assimilate the situation successfully. This study proposes that incorporating more visuals in the textbook can enhance the realism of the content, while vocabulary can help students better comprehend the context.

It can be concluded that people need Islam to recognize their Creator and seek guidance in navigating the realities of life. Textbooks play a significant role as a medium for teaching and learning, especially in Aqidah. Supposed that the textbook is presented in an exciting and effective form, it will help teachers to facilitate teaching sessions and, at the same time, increase students' understanding and appreciation of Aqidah. This will make them be the best believers as desired in the teaching of Islamic Education.

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