

New Media and Islamic Knowledge Acquisition of Muslim

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ABSTRACT: The Islamic knowledge acquisition of Muslims is the most important issue for them in maintaining their Muslim identity. However, new media development in the 21st century has provided alternative channels for knowledge acquisition, especially Muslim minority groups. This review paper investigates the relationship between new media and knowledge acquisition, and particularly, new media and Islamic knowledge acquisition. Based on the literature review, the researcher also proposed a research agenda for future studies.

KEYWORDS: Islamic knowledge acquisition, new media, Muslim.

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology reshaped the global learning landscape in the 21st century, especially of knowledge acquisition from the learner perspective (Punyatoya, 2011). A number of ICT-based tools and services such as internet-based new media are now available for use to enable and enhance knowledge acquisition. However, studies on Islamic knowledge acquisition and new media are very scarce (Horsfield, 2007; Hatab, 2016). New media has become the most convenient and economical channel for knowledge acquisition, especially for those people or groups who have difficulty acquiring knowledge through other channels. In this review article, the researcher evaluated the available research on knowledge acquisition through new media.

METHODOLOGY

In this review, the researcher discussed published journal articles and online sources which explore knowledge acquisition through new media and the ICT tools involved in knowledge acquisition. Through this method, we get to know the current

trends in knowledge acquisition. The search strategy for this review included two steps. The first step involved searching academic databases, especially the Jstor database, for literature using specific keywords. The key words; “knowledge acquisition” and “Islamic knowledge” were used most often. The second step entailed double-checking by Google Scholar.

A background to Islamic knowledge acquisition

Islamic knowledge acquisition has always been a major issue in maintaining Muslim identity in modern society, especially the Muslim minority communities in environments which are overwhelmingly non-Muslim (Allès, 2006). The 21st century heralded the advent of technological development, which birthed the information age. In the information age, information and communication technology (ICT) development has contributed amply to knowledge acquisition, not only in formal education but also in lifelong informal education (Haddad & Draxler, 2002; Tondeur, Aesaert, Pynoo, Braak, Fraeyman & Erstad, 2015; Englund, Olofsson & Price, 2016; Pérez-Sanagustín, Nussbaum, Hilliger, Alario-Hoyos, Heller, Twining & Tsai, 2016; Patel &

Patel, 2017). Religious knowledge acquisition has however faced many challenges in the information age. As such, this study intends to understand Islamic knowledge acquisition through new media.

The traditional Islamic knowledge acquisition system has specific teaching content. The knowledge base would usually have been decided before the students start their learning process, and contents of the teaching plans and syllable in Arabic language schools are usually written Islamic sources. In this system, the student can only acquire Islamic knowledge through formal education by pre-decided content. In addition, in this knowledge acquisition system, the students acquire the Islamic knowledge from educated Muslims who have confirmed credibility. Irrespective of the Mosque education or Arabic language school education type, students learn from Imams, Sheikhs or educated teachers and lecturers.

However, new media provide all kinds of information, and have made Islamic literature much more accessible (Salman, 2011). The Internet has also created a new media ecology in which various Islamic, interpretive and decentralized authorities are available (Mandaville, 2007) for audiences.

Knowledge acquisition through diverse new media channels

New media and Islamic knowledge acquisition

The definition of new media changes rapidly. On the one hand, the technology is still ongoing and developing, and on the other hand, the interactions between the new technological possibilities and established media forms are in a complicated situation. However, the term “new media” can still be applied in a non-problematic manner, because the new media are thought to heavily influence epoch-making, deeply changing societies all over the world. In addition, the term “new media” is thought of as a portmanteau term (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelly, 2009), and is widely used.

New media are widely used to aid the education drive of developing countries to combat many challenges (The World Bank Group, 2002).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-involved education plays a vital role in overcoming the educational problems faced by such countries (Patel & Patel, 2017). While ICTs have been used to aid education and knowledge acquisition, they still face many challenges.

However, most research into ICT-involved education are more focused on the teaching perspective (Hu & Webb, 2009; Englund, Olofsson & Price, 2016)), and pay less attention to knowledge acquisition from the active learner perspective. However, as the development of ICTs and new media forms, especially mobile usage, becomes widely accepted, learners can acquire the information they need from any available channel at any time and any place.

New media channels and knowledge acquisition

Several research efforts have investigated a number of specific new media forms involved in education. New media are accepted and used for many reasons. Liu (2010) concluded that three social media - Facebook, Wiki, and YouTube - are the most widely used social media among the sixteen social media tools used for collaborative learning, access to learning resources and knowledge sharing in America. As such, in the course of education, the instructor has the responsibility to guide and train the students to use social media appropriately.

Comparatively speaking, among diverse the social media involved in knowledge acquisition (Selwyn, 2007; Churchill, 2009; Gikas & Grant, 2013), Facebook is the most widely used globally. Facebook also helps learners connect to each other and create a collaborative learning community (Selwyn, 2007; Liu, 2010). In addition, Facebook and other new media forms which are available for mobile usage help to promote new media usage for knowledge acquisition.

New media forms are not only widely accepted among students, but also widely used in the teaching process by educators. Moran, Seaman and Tinti-Kane (2011) examined the social media usage of higher education teaching faculty in United States of America and found that more

than 90 percent of all faculty are using social media in course teaching.

Jackson (2010) pointed out that, given that the media is educational and diverse new media platforms have become strong sources of information and knowledge, the educator should critically think about the media and provide critical media literacy education to students. New media forms are available for all to use for different purposes, and they provide a huge amount of information which include the good and the bad. As such, critical thinking is of high value in knowledge acquisition.

The internet and internet-based new media offer an increasing number and range of opportunities for accessing information, acquiring and exchanging knowledge and realizing personal learning goals. For example, on the average, 51 per cent of European citizens aged between 16 and 74 use the Internet for finding information, 31 per cent of the population use the Internet for seeking information with the purpose of learning, and 5 per cent use the Internet for doing an online course (Redecker, Ala-Mutka & Punie, 2010). As such, new media have contributed amply to enhancing teaching and learning opportunities in Europe.

Within formal education and training circles across Europe, the new media have been used by education and training institutions for different purposes. These include facilitating the distribution of educational materials to ensure easy access by students; linking researchers and experts in different fields of study to integrate learning into a wider community; providing alternative channels for acquiring knowledge; supporting the exchange of knowledge and materials to engender collaboration among students; enhancing student engagement of learning tools and environments; and improving learning processes by implementing pedagogical strategies (Redecker, Ala-Mutka & Punie, 2010). New media provide fast, easy and efficient channels to acquire knowledge in diverse fields.

McLoughlin and Lee (2010) hold that the learner's informed educational decisions, different forms of skills and knowledge, diverse

learning environments and varied forms of feedback and assessment are the main factors which influence knowledge acquisition through new media. On these new media platforms, through social connections, the students, classmates, teachers, past and future student cohorts and other professionals and experts come together to construct the learning community, and even produce the learning content by the learners themselves. The new educational platforms produced as a result have accrued great benefits for educators, such as adoption of new media, improved experience in new media usage, increased value of learners' pre-existing skills, devolution of appropriate teaching approaches, and global peer networking (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). From new media, the learner not only acquires knowledge, but also produces content for learning.

New media has substantial impact on teaching and learning within education circles, especially informal learners of all ages who need to acquire the knowledge they need. New media forms not only help the learners to acquire the knowledge they need, they also facilitate and help the learner to participate in knowledge generation and share the results of the learning. There are many aspects involved in new media-based education, and new media learning is more efficient when learner engagement ensues in a formal or informal setting. The learner's motivation or the drive to attain goals will positively affect the new media-involved education (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2011). It was also emphasized that the learner needs to be guided by pedagogical models and approaches, while personal knowledge management skill training is needed as well for new media-involved education deployed for the purpose of knowledge acquisition.

Generally speaking, the new media advantage is beneficial to education in four different dimensions: firstly, the accessibility to a vast variety of learning content for learners' personal and professional development, especially for lifelong learning, and the provision of more equitable educational opportunities for the common people. Secondly, the possibility of a huge resource of user-generated content from which learners and teachers can mutually benefit.

Thirdly, social connections allow the learners to acquire highly specific and targeted knowledge in certain fields. Fourthly, collaboration between teachers and learners can increase efficiency of knowledge acquisition (Redecker, Ala-Mutka & Punie, 2010). Diverse new media forms can also facilitate education in many different ways.

New media and Islamic religious knowledge acquisition

Many different new media forms have been developed in the course of the evolution of Information and Communication Technology. These diverse new media forms support knowledge acquisition at increasingly deeper levels and from different perspectives. However, the research on new media and Islamic religious knowledge acquisition has not been fully conducted, and it still focuses more on the traditional educator perspective.

Modernization has influenced many indigenous cultures, and influenced the meanings made of Islam in the new era. However, the Muslim society exhibited a slower and ambivalent response to scientific development, which started from Western society since the early times (Livingston, 1996). Modernization has also created a diverse society all over the world, and far from being monolithic, almost all the countries have become multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multicultural. These international contexts have also shaped Islamic education in developing countries, such as some internationally funded programs to improve the quality of education in which more values of democracy and tolerance are taught in Islamic schools in Indonesia (Pohl, 2011). Islamic education has thus been influenced by many factors at home and abroad.

The Muslim educational system of the minority Muslim groups has different functions: such as shaping the Muslim identity and the role of complex spaces for new forms of meaning making (Fataar, 2005). However, these functions are influenced by new concepts which originated in Europe, such as democracy, civil society and others. In this context, some issues related to Islamic education also captured the researcher's

interest, such as gender equality (Mehran, 2003), modernization and globalization, which are involved in Islamic education and higher education (LUKENS-BULL, 2001; Waghid & Smeyers, 2014). Some public figures also influence Western science education in Muslim societies (Tibenderana, 1983), and internal conflicts between the Muslim minorities and non-Muslim majorities have shaped the education of Muslim minorities (Milligan, 2003). Traditional Islamic education in the Muslim world has also faced many challenges due to the rapid change in global trends.

Based on his empirical study in Egypt, Cook (2001) concluded that a substantial majority of his respondents require more Islamic education and subject teaching from the Islamic perspective. They want an educational system that can preserve the Islamic integrity and make them feel confident of their Islamic religion. In the Islamic education system in Indonesia, participation by teachers in Madrasahs is increasing, but the participation by parents is still low. This shows that the Islamic schools in Indonesia which adopted the new school-based management system are far from being successful (Parker & Raihani, 2011). These two cases represent the Islamic education system in traditional Muslim countries in modern times; on the one hand, the common people look forward to the proper Islamic education, on the other hand the Islamic education system seeks for the ideal educational methods in modern times.

As the main Islamic knowledge acquisition method, traditional Islamic education has been influenced by technological development from the very early times. As Robinson (1993) emphasized, the impact of the technology revolution triggered by Gutenberg's invention of the movable type printing press had a profound influence on the Islamic education system of South Asia. The printing press changed the systems for knowledge transmission, shook the status of the Ulama, and moreover the second revolutionary technology - electronic technology - began to impact on the Muslim religious experience. Robinson was unable to foresee the third revolutionary technology - internet and internet-based information technology - and its

impact on Islamic education in contemporary society.

The interplay between media and religious knowledge acquisition need to be researched deeply, both theoretically and practically. For a long time, religion was overlooked in media research, and was considered to play only a private role in society, while having no role in public national life. In spite of this, in the 21st century, religion has not only played a significant role in the formation of social identities and the modern public sphere, it has also become highly involved in international and regional affairs. Religious awakening has become profound, and the young generation brought up with no tradition of faith are actively seeking or creating their own religion or spirituality.

Through a process of profound religious revival, religion has become a significant element in post-colonial national rebuilding in a range of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. In today's globalized world, religion plays an increasingly important role in the economic, political, and cultural development of developing countries and developed countries as well (Horsfield, 2007). This situation has become more complicated since the advent of new media and its deep involvement in religious development.

Since the end of the 20th century, the media industry has become independent largely independent in society. They now not only present or report on religious issues, but also challenge the authority of religious institutions. In addition, in situations of national catastrophe, such as 9/11 and the Asian Tsunami in 2004, the media not only provide information but also a kind of psychological assistance to their audiences.

Given that the US media has disseminated distorted images of Islam and Muslims since 9/11, Hatab (2016) highlighted that the new media has helped to challenge the classical aura of male religious scholars who traditionally controlled the interpretation and production of

religious knowledge. At the same time, he called for more research into the global Muslim community in different languages and on many global topics.

A research agenda for Islamic knowledge acquisition through new media

Islamic knowledge acquisition has always been a major issue in maintaining the Muslim communities in an environment which is overwhelmingly non-Muslim (Allès, 2003). Based on the analysis of the literature, the researcher formulated a number of points for further research.

There are many research foci on Islamic knowledge acquisition from the traditional education perspective. It is unclear how Muslims use the internet-based new media for the purpose of Islamic knowledge acquisition. The purpose, the methods, the channels, and the satisfaction derived from new media usage, among many other perspectives need to be explored.

The existing research has highlighted the factors which influence new media usage only for the Western society, but only very limited research related to the factors which influence new media usage in Islamic knowledge acquisition.

There is a clear need for studies on scopes of the online Islamic knowledge content which provided by multi sources.

CONCLUSION

There are many issues around Islamic knowledge acquisition of Muslims in modern society which are of investigative value, such as how the media ecology and censorship culture influence the Islamic knowledge acquisition of Muslims. The new media provide new opportunities for Islamic knowledge acquisition of Muslims in modern society. As such, this paper highlights a number of future avenues for research on Islamic knowledge acquisition of Muslims in contemporary.

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