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The Role of Contemporary Teacher Education Institutions in Preparing Future Religious Teachers

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
	Malaysia is well-known for its diversity of ethnicity, cultures and religions, with Islam as the official religion at the federal level. In the context of Malaysia *MADANI*, education plays a crucial role, especially in maintaining the harmony of the country's pluralistic society. Therefore, education continues to be empowered through modern teacher education institutes that train those in the teaching profession to produce individuals as agents to further the educational process. Educational institutions have existed for a long time and have developed through various institutions. Therefore, this writing aims to highlight the role played by the Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya (APIUM) as a contemporary teacher education institution preparing prospective religious teachers who will lead education in this country. This study uses the literature review method involving content analysis of written materials such as academic journals, theses, books and so on. The results of the study prove that APIUM plays a significant role in providing quality future religious teachers and helping shape them as civic educators who will spread devotion and realize the aspirations of Malaysia *MADANI*. **Keywords:** Academy of Islamic Studies, Islamic Education Programme, Religious Teachers, Teacher Education, Universiti Malaya

1. INTRODUCTION

In general, teacher education institutions provide training to prospective teachers by teaching them based on real situations and developing them into professional teachers (Muhamad Azian Saad & Mohamed Ali Haniffa, 2019; Siti Aisyah Abdullah, 2018). This means that teaching institutions play a significant role in the development of teaching professionalism and the provision of quality teaching staff. Their primary function is to provide a comprehensive teacher training program which offers prospective teachers pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills, as well as an understanding of psychological aspects and student development. Malaysia has empowered teacher education through the establishment of numerous teacher education institutions, including 27 Institutes of Teacher Education (*Institut Pendidikan Guru* or IPG) campuses across the country (Ministry Of Education Malaysia, 2024; Muhamad Azian Saad & Mohamed Ali Haniffa, 2019) and several Public Higher Education Institutions (*Institut Pengajian Tinggi Awam* or IPTA*)* which offers teacher education programs (Malaysian Agency Qualification, 2024). The following is a list of relevant institutions:

Table 1: Teacher Training Institutes in Malaysia

Malaysian Institutes of Teacher Education (IPGM)	Public Higher Education Institutions Offering Teacher Education Programs
IPGK Perlis, Perlis	Universiti Malaya (UM)
IPGK Darul Aman, Kedah	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)

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IPGK Sultan Abdul Halim, Kedah	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
IPGK Tuanku Bainun, Pulau Pinang	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)
IPGK Pulau Pinang	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
IPGK Ipoh, Perak	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)
IPGK Bahasa Antarabangsa, Kuala Lumpur	Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
IPGK Bahasa Melayu, Kuala Lumpur	Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM)
IPGK Ilmu Khas, Kuala Lumpur	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)
IPGK Pendidikan Islam, Selangor	Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)
IPGK Perempuan Melayu, Melaka	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)
IPGK Tun Hussein Onn, Johor	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)
IPGK Temenggong Ibrahim, Johor	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)
IPGK Kota Bharu, Kelantan	
IPGK Sultan Mizan, Terengganu	
IPGK Dato' Razali Ismail, Terengganu	
IPGK Tengku Ampuan Afzan, Pahang	
IPGK Pendidikan Teknik, Negeri Sembilan	
IPGK Raja Melewar, Negeri Sembilan	
IPGK Batu Lintang, Sarawak	
IPGK Tun Abdul Razak, Sarawak	
IPGK Rajang, Sarawak	
IPGK Sarawak	
IPGK Gaya, Sabah	
IPGK Kent, Sabah	
IPGK Keningau, Sabah	
IPGK Tawau, Sabah	

Malaysia located in Southeast Asia, comprises 13 states and three federal territories. The total population is estimated to be approximately 32.5 million. The country's ethnic composition reflects its societal diversity, with Bumiputera accounting for 69.4%, Chinese 23.2%, Indian 6.7%, and other groups comprising 0.7%. Regarding religion, most Malaysians adhere to Islam (63.5%). Other religions practiced include Buddhism (18.7%), Christianity (9.1%), Hinduism (6.1%), other religions (0.9%), and those with no religious affiliation (1.8%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). This rich diversity underscores the critical importance of fostering future generations that are united and capable of maintaining harmony within the community

The Malaysia *MADANI* policy established by the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim, reflects a concerted and comprehensive effort to develop policies and implementation in Malaysia with a more humane approach. The six values that are applied as the core of this concept, namely Sustainability, Well-being, Creativity, Respect, Confidence, and Courtesy, demonstrate the country's holistic approach (Anwar Ibrahim, 2022). These values form the basis for achieving development based on humanity and universal values in Malaysia. Therefore, education plays its own role in realizing and preserving this policy through the role of teacher education institutions in producing "religious teachers" as agents who are moral, ethical, creative individuals and who further contribute to the development of a sustainable and harmonious society.

Therefore, as an educational institute with a background as a centre of academic excellence that not only emphasizes science but also religion, the Academy of Islamic Studies Universiti Malaya (APIUM) is expected to be an important pillar that will strengthen the landscape of Islamic education in this country, especially in preparing future competent and upstanding religious teachers. Tracing APIUM's long history, this institute has produced thousands of graduates in various fields of Islamic studies, including education, through its holistic and relevant study process (Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil & Muhamad Sayuti Mansor, 2021). In this context, APIUM serves as a contemporary teacher education institute, preparing prospective religious educators through its Bachelor of Islamic Education Program (BIE), which is offered under the Islamic Education Program. All in all, APIUM plays a significant role in shaping future religious teachers to achieve the aspirations of Malaysia *MADANI*.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, selected in alignment with the study's context. The authors conducted a comprehensive analysis of documents related to the teacher education institution for Islamic education at Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. The document analysis involved a detailed examination of curricular frameworks, institutional policies, and academic records to ensure a thorough understanding of the educational practices and standards. Additionally, the primary data derived from document analysis are complemented by contextual insights drawn from the authors' extensive experience. To illustrate these findings, a case study was conducted focusing on a specific program within the institution, examining its implementation, challenges, and outcomes. The authors include deputy deans of the undergraduate division, two senior lecturers, and one postgraduate student in the Islamic Education Programme at the Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya. Their diverse academic backgrounds and professional roles provided a multifaceted perspective, enriching the study's findings and contributing to a holistic view of the educational landscape.

3. ACADEMY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES UNIVERSITI MALAYA (APIUM) AS A CONTEMPORARY TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Universiti Malaya (UM) was the first higher education institution in Malaysia, having been established on 8 October 1949 as a result of the merger of King Edward VII College of Medicine (1905) and Raffles College (1928) (Universiti Malaya, 2023). Since its establishment, UM has played an important role as a driver for the progress of higher education in Malaysia and has made a name for itself at the national and global level in various fields. UM has continued to grow and is considered the best university in Malaysia, having ranked among the top 100 in the world (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi, 2022). As the country's leading university, UM is not only committed to improving its progress and development in teaching and learning, but also to publishing, research and innovation, having been named one of the five research universities of Malaysia (Faisal @ Ahmad Faisal Abdul Hamid & Saudah Hassan, 2015).

This university is also a leader in the education of religious teachers through its two faculties that function as a contemporary teacher education institute, namely the Faculty of Education and the Academy of Islamic Studies. In brief, the Faculty of Education has departments that include various fields such as the Department of Basic Education and Humanities; the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling; the Department of Management, Planning and Education Policy; the Department of Language and Literacy Education; the Department of Mathematics and Science Education; and the Department of Curriculum and Technology Teaching (Faculty of Education Universiti Malaya, 2024). To date, the faculty has produced nearly 20,000 graduates from various levels of study such as diploma, bachelor, master, and doctoral. Additionally, the Academy of Islamic Studies Universiti Malaya (APIUM) also made an important contribution as a teacher education institute under the Islamic Education Program (IEP).

Tracing the history of the establishment of APIUM, the institute is the result of a merger between the Department of Islamic Studies and the Islamic Academy of Universiti Malaya. Previously, the two institutions were separate entities within Universiti Malaya. In 1959, the Department of Islamic Studies was established through collaboration and a formal relationship between the Islamic College of Malaya and Universiti Malaya. Since then, the Malayan Islamic College Council acted as the executive body for the department, while the Universiti Malaya Senate oversaw all related academic matters. When the Malayan Islamic College Council was dissolved in 1970, the Department of Islamic Studies was placed under the authority of the Universiti Malaya Council and Senate. During that period, until it merged with the Academy of Islamic Studies in April 1996, the department was under the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Universiti Malaya (Academy of Islamic Studies Universiti Malaya, 2023).

The Islamic Academy was established in 1981, after the acquisition of the Kelantan Islamic Higher Education Foundation (YPTIK), which was established in 1965. During the particular time, this academy consists of two faculties, one Islamic education program and one foundation program (Akademi Islam Universiti Malaya, 1988). According to Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil and Muhamad Sayuti Mansor (2021), at the opening ceremony of the 40th anniversary of the Academy of Islamic Studies that year, 1981 was designated as the official year of APIUM's establishment. The management of APIUM is carried out in two different locations, namely at the main campus of the Universiti Malaya Kuala Lumpur, and at the Universiti Malaya campus in Nilam Puri, Kota Bharu, Kelantan (now known as Universiti Malaya Education Centre (UMEC), Bachok, Kelantan). In the main campus, APIUM administration is carried out through three main components that play an important role in managing all academic affairs, namely the Postgraduate Division, Undergraduate Division and Research and Development Division. Meanwhile, at the branch campus at the Universiti Malaya Education Centre, Bachok Kelantan, full attention is given to the management and development of foundation programs that aim to form a strong base for students before they join the bachelor's degree program at APIUM.

The Academy of Islamic Studies of the Universiti Malaya (APIUM) offers a variety of academic programs that cover various fields and disciplines. These programs are specially designed to provide students with in-depth knowledge and practical skills in specific fields, preparing them for careers in various sectors, including the academic, professional, and research fields. There are also study programs that integrate religious studies with science or technology, giving students the opportunity to explore the relationship between religion and modern science. These programs play an important role in supporting the academic, intellectual, and professional development of students, as well as adding value to higher education and Islamic studies at the university level. The following is a list of study programs offered at this academy (Academy of Islamic Studies Universiti Malaya, 2023):

Table 2: List of Study Programs at APIUM

FOUNDATIONAL PROGRAMS
Islamic Studies Foundation
Islamic Studies and Science Foundation
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS
Bachelor of Shariah
Bachelor of Muamalat Management
Bachelor of Al-Quran and Al-Hadith
Bachelor of Usuluddin
Bachelor of Shariah and Law
Bachelor of Islamic Education (Islamic Studies)
Bachelor of Islamic Education (Quranic Studies)
Bachelor of Islamic Studies and Science
POSGRADUATE PROGAMS
Research Mode
Master of Islamic Studies
Master of Usuluddin
Master of Shariah
Mixed Mode
Master of Shariah (Contemporary Studies)
Master of Usuluddin (Islamic Thought and Civilization)
Master of Usuluddin (al-Quran and al-Hadith)
Coursework Mode
Master of Dakwah Development
Master of Islamic Management and Finance
Master of Halal Management
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM (PhD)

3.1. Bachelor's Degree Programs in Islamic Education (BIE) at APIUM

The Bachelor of Islamic Education (BIE) is one of the programs under APIUM which is the Islamic Education Program (IEP). Currently, this program offers two programs at the undergraduate level, namely the bachelor's degree in Islamic education (Islamic Studies) and the bachelor's degree in Islamic education (Quranic Studies). This program has been recognized for the quality and excellence of its comprehensive and up-to-date curriculum. The curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that prospective religious teachers acquire a comprehensive understanding of Islamic education, developing the practical skills needed to become educators in this era.

The goal of the establishment of this program is also to produce prospective religious teachers who not only have in-depth knowledge in the field of education but are also able to apply that knowledge effectively and practice moral values when they become teachers in schools. This is consistent with the characteristics of effective trainee teachers, which are to appreciate and practice concepts, principles, theories, skills and values as professional teachers with good character (Ab. Hamid Ali et al., 2017). Therefore, the BIE program, through a holistic teaching and learning process, focuses on the development of critical and creative thinking skills among students and emphasizes a deep understanding of professional and social responsibility in imparting knowledge to the community. Thus, these future religious teachers are expected not only to be competent educators, but also individuals who are sensitive and responsible for the development of society and the country.

3.1.1. BIE Program Curriculum

The curriculum is the 'heart' which will determine program quality and steer the education process towards a better direction (Zulfikar Ali, 2014). This program has set components in its syllabus to ensure the formation of quality graduates and contribute to the development of the country. Overall, the curriculum in the BIE program is divided into five components, namely University Courses, Faculty Core Courses, Program Core Courses, Program Elective Courses and Faculty Elective Courses (Academy of Islamic Studies Universiti Malaya, 2023). Each student is required to complete 146 credits over 8 semesters of study, based on the program structure established, including the five components of the course. This ensures that students complete courses tailored to their needs, equipping them to become well-rounded and high-quality religious teachers.

In summary, through the University Course component, students are exposed to basic subjects to build skills and knowledge in terms of understanding information through the subject of Information Literacy; foster ethical and moral values through the subject of Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization; and gain communication skills in English as well as entrepreneurial and innovation skills from the subject of Entrepreneurship. In addition, this component emphasizes the holistic development of students through core curriculum subjects and elective subjects offered outside of the faculty. All subjects and syllabus in this component help to form prospective religious teachers who have the necessary soft skills and are prepared to face the challenges of the contemporary era.

In addition, this program also develops future religious teachers by providing courses under the Core Faculty, such as Arabic; Introduction to *Shariah* Studies; Introduction to *Usuluddin* Studies; Recitation and Recitation; and Islamic Research Methodology. The courses that are emphasized, especially the use of the Arabic language, demonstrate the importance of mastering the language, which is the key to deepening insight into Islamic knowledge (Md Noor Hussin, 2021). Courses such as *Introduction to Shariah Studies* and *Introduction to Usuluddin Studies* build a strong foundation of Islamic knowledge, while *Recitation and Memorization* strengthen skills in aspects of reading and memorizing the Al-Quran. Lastly, the *Research Methodology Course* provides students with important research skills to contribute to the development of knowledge, especially in the field of Islamic education. Ultimately, the courses under the core of this faculty provide the opportunity for prospective religious teachers to familiarize themselves with the basic sciences in Islam before delving into other branches of knowledge.

The Core Program component of BIE program reflects APIUM's commitment to forming quality prospective religious teachers in several aspects. This course involves a deep understanding of Islamic law, *aqidah*, and moral values through the *Nazariyyah al-Hukm, Fiqh al-Ibadat, al-Aqa'id al-Islamiyyah,* and *al-Akhlak wa al-Tasawwuf* courses. The *'Ulum al-Hadith* and *'Ulum al-Quran* courses serve to deepen and strengthen students' knowledge of the *Hadith* and the *Quran.*

The *History of Islamic Education* and *History of Education in Malaysia* courses offer insights into the history and development of Islamic education, inspiring enthusiasm and providing a strong foundation for students before they engage in the field of Islamic education. Arabic language teaching skills are emphasized through the *Nahu Wazifi course in Arabic Language Education* and *Arabic Language Teaching Methods.* This component also addresses psychological and sociological aspects of education through courses such as *Educational Psychology* and *Educational Sociology* and provides opportunities for prospective religious teachers to understand *the basics of Physical Education and Health* as an added value for educator in this era.

The next component of the program is the Elective Program, which prepares prospective religious teachers with important subjects relevant to today's education. Among them is the subject of *Tajwid*, which provides a deep understanding of how to read the Quran correctly, and the subject of *Figures of Quranic Education*, which provides knowledge about important figures in the history of Quranic education and provides inspiration from each of these great figures. In addition, the *Teaching Methodology of Morals, Creed, and Fiqh in Islamic Education* provides guidance to prospective religious teachers in conveying moral values, beliefs, and Islamic law. *Educational Psychology from an Islamic Perspective* provides an Islamic perspective on the understanding of learning and student development. *Assessment in Islamic Education* provides prospective teachers with the skills to assess students' understanding and performance. A course on *Islamic Education Thought* provides a conceptual foundation for curriculum development and teaching, while *Micro Teaching (Islamic Education)* guides prospective teachers in the practical application of Islamic education concepts in the classroom. *Technology in Islamic Education* provides knowledge about the use of technology in teaching. *Fundamentals of Islamic Research* develop the research skills necessary for the development of knowledge. Finally, *Guidance and Counselling Skills in Islamic Education* help prospective teachers in providing holistic guidance and support to their students. These subjects play a crucial role in shaping future religious educators who are well-prepared to address the challenges of the modern world.

Finally, the program offers prospective religious teachers the opportunity to select subjects from the Faculty Elective component, allowing them to gain additional knowledge and enhance their value as educators. Among the subjects available are *Parenting Education, Fatwa in Malaysia, Health Sciences According to the al-Quran and al-Hadith, Da'wah in Malaysia, Islamic Art*, and many more. This diverse selection reflects APIUM's commitment to equipping prospective religious teachers with broad and interdisciplinary knowledge across various fields. In conclusion, the five components described here exemplify APIUM's role

as a comprehensive and dedicated teacher education institution, committed to preparing future religious educators to drive education, particularly in the context of religion, in Malaysia. The following provides an overview of the program components, illustrating how their integration culminates in the development of high-quality religious educators.
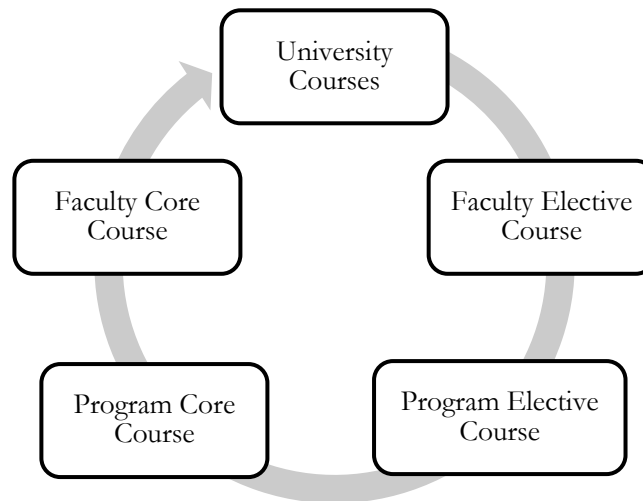

Figure 1: BIE Course Components (Quranic Studies/Islamic Studies)

3.1.2. BIE Teaching and Learning Practices

Teaching and learning practices play a crucial role in shaping students' educational experiences by ensuring that the knowledge imparted is effectively received (Moharam et al., 2021). These practices encompass a variety of methods and strategies designed to enhance student comprehension and performance. Within this framework, the Bachelor of Islamic Education (BIE) program emphasizes interactive teaching and learning practices, as outlined by APIUM (Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil & Muhamad Sayuti Mansor, 2021). This approach adopts a two-way, student-centered model that aligns with advancements and improvements in contemporary education practices (Nurulhidayah Ariff & Norasykin Mohd Zaid, 2020). It fosters active student engagement in the learning process through dynamic discussions, opportunities to express opinions to develop creative and critical thinking skills, and the cultivation of virtues such as valuing diverse perspectives and promoting mutual respect.

Aligned with the government's policy to foster a civilized generation, the Bachelor of Islamic Education (BIE) program adopts a 21st-century teaching and learning approach. This approach emphasizes the cultivation of critical skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and teamwork among students (Henry & Zamri Mahamod, 2021). One of the key activities implemented is collaborative learning, where students engage in discussions and work collectively to solve educational problems, subsequently presenting their findings through innovative methods. The integration of these skills not only enhances the confidence of prospective religious teachers in navigating the complexities of globalization but also contributes to the development of high-quality human capital poised to lead the nation (Nor Shela Saleh & Mohd Shafie Rosli, 2019; Ainun Rahmah Iberahim et al., 2017).

The integration of technology into the teaching practices of this program has been expanded to enhance engagement and stimulate students' creative thinking. Notable examples include assignments that require proficiency in utilizing advanced applications such as Google Classroom, Kahoot, Nearpod, Canva, Padlet, and more. This exposure to modern technological tools equips prospective religious teachers with additional skills, adding value as they prepare to navigate the evolving landscape of education. Furthermore, lecturers serve as facilitators, providing guidance to ensure that discussions are conducted effectively and remain focused on achieving learning objectives. This structured approach enhances the planning and execution of learning activities, ensuring their success. Ultimately, this experience fosters long-term benefits, as future religious educators will be equipped to implement similar strategies in their own teaching practices.

This program incorporates an authentic approach to assessments, a method designed to evaluate students across a range of dimensions, including knowledge, deep understanding, problem-solving abilities, social skills, attitudes toward the environment, and real-life application (Nor Azizah Atan et al., 2020). Rather than solely emphasizing performance in final examinations, this approach focuses on the students' capacity to apply the knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-world contexts. Examples of activities based on this approach include project-based coursework, such as translating the philosophy of Islamic education into a dramatic performance, evaluating the outputs of peer groups, reflecting on learning outcomes or assignments, and more. These activities enable students to develop critical thinking skills, ultimately preparing them to become competitive and competent religious educators in today's dynamic world.

3.2. The Role of Teacher Education Institutions in Preparing Future Religious Teachers

Recognizing its pivotal role as a teacher education institution in preparing students to become religious educators, APIUM has undertaken and continues to enhance various initiatives aimed at positively impacting the development of future religious teachers. These efforts include the integration of syllabi that encompass key areas such as Islamic education, Arabic language, and Quranic studies with contemporary pedagogical principles. This approach establishes a robust foundation for prospective religious teachers to effectively enter the field of education. Moreover, APIUM supports students' involvement in extracurricular activities, leadership and organizational initiatives, as well as outbound programs, fostering critical thinking and leadership skills among future educators. These efforts are designed to ensure that each prospective religious teacher is equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to Islamic education while aligning with the vision of Malaysia *MADANI* in today's context.

3.2.1. Integration of Islamic Education Syllabus and Courses with Modern Science Branches

The integration of Islamic studies with various branches of modern science at the higher education level has been a long-standing practice, aligning with the demands of globalization that call for holistic and balanced individuals (Khairul Azhar Meerangani et al., 2021). In this regard, APIUM, through its Islamic Education Program (IEP), adopts an integrative approach that combines Islamic education courses and syllabi with modern sciences such as psychology, technology, sociology, and other social sciences. Additionally, APIUM encourages students to take elective courses offered by other faculties (Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil & Muhamad Sayuti Mansor, 2021). This approach equips prospective religious teachers with a balanced foundation of knowledge and skills, enabling them to relate religious teachings to contemporary principles and apply them in real-life contexts, particularly as *MADANI* educators in the future.

Furthermore, this approach underscores the notion that modern sciences are not contradictory to Islamic teachings but rather can be harmonized with Islamic principles to contribute to a civilized society (Bin Jamil et al., 2024). In essence, it fosters a more inclusive and open teaching methodology that avoids marginalizing religious principles while embracing modern educational advancements. This equips prospective religious teachers with the capacity to implement this integrative perspective in their future teaching practices. It also serves as a catalyst for developing a progressive mindset and attitude among these teachers, in alignment with contemporary scientific and technological advancements. Ultimately, this integrative syllabus forms the foundation for developing holistic and balanced educators who are well-versed in both Islamic knowledge and modern disciplines.

3.2.2. Encouragement of Learning Outside the Lecture Room (Study of Turath Books)

In today's challenging era, religious teachers are expected to possess extensive knowledge to serve as key drivers of quality education (Nur Eliza Mohd Noor et al., 2021). As a contemporary teacher education institute, APIUM endeavors to equip prospective religious teachers with additional knowledge through extracurricular learning initiatives, complementing the formal courses and syllabus prescribed by the university. One such effort is the implementation of the study of *turath* works in *Tafaqquh* lectures. These lectures are conducted outside formal learning hours—during evenings, nights, and weekends—and are delivered by APIUM teaching staff and external experts. Using authoritative teaching materials, including classical *turath* texts, in disciplines such as *tasawwuf*, *fiqh*, and *aqidah*, this initiative provides significant value by fostering a deep understanding of religious laws and their application to contemporary societal issues (Syed Salim Syed Shamsuddin, 2018). APIUM's commitment to organizing scripture studies outside formal class settings positively contributes to shaping prospective religious teachers who are well-versed in religious knowledge.

Furthermore, the study of *turath* is vital not only for imparting profound religious knowledge but also for cultivating a comprehensive understanding of spiritual and ethical values. This holistic approach prepares students to become rational and reflective educators, capable of navigating life's challenges and obstacles (Nazneen Ismail et al., 2021). A deep engagement with these revered works facilitates critical reflection on the practical application of religious principles in daily life and equips students to integrate these values into their decisions and actions.

This approach aligns with the concept of contemporary teacher education, emphasizing that learning extends beyond academic knowledge to include character building and the inculcation of religious values. APIUM's dedication, demonstrated through the active role of its lecturers, underscores its commitment to ensuring that prospective religious teachers are well-prepared in both their mastery of religious knowledge and their spiritual development. This dual focus strengthens their readiness to contribute meaningfully to education and society.

3.2.3. Developing Outstanding Leadership through Organizational Activities

Leadership in the teaching profession is a crucial element that must be nurtured to ensure the education process remains effective and achieves its objectives (Ishar & Jabor, 2019). In this regard, APIUM prepares prospective religious teachers by instilling leadership values through various activities aimed at honing their leadership skills. These activities include participation in organizations such as *Lajnah Pendidikan Islam* (LPI), which is managed by BIE students. Through these initiatives, students gain practical leadership experience while fostering teamwork and collaboration within groups. This provides a broad platform for prospective religious teachers to enhance their leadership competencies and values through organizational management and socially oriented programs.

Moreover, this approach underscores the importance of responsibility among prospective religious teachers, as leadership is an integral aspect of the teaching profession. Educators are often called upon to serve as leaders, whether as team coordinators, department heads, curriculum developers, or other roles (Azhar Harun et al., 2018). By actively participating in campus organizational activities and programs, students develop the ability to manage and lead projects, implement effective communication strategies, and adopt proactive leadership approaches that can be applied in their future roles as educational leaders. Through this emphasis and support, APIUM ensures that prospective religious teachers are not only academically proficient but also possess strong leadership qualities. These attributes enable them to influence and positively impact the field of education, aligning with the aspirations of the *MADANI* era.

3.2.4. Strengthening Aspects of Self-Development Through International Exchange Programs

In this era of rapid globalization, APIUM, as a teacher education institution, emphasizes the self-development aspect of prospective religious teachers through experience and knowledge at the international level, which is the international exchange program. This program is in line with UM's vision to become a global-class university that impacts the world and produces graduates with a global mindset and perspective. This exchange program also supports the internationalization agenda of higher education, which forms part of the efforts to improve the quality of education and research and benefit students (Seman et al., 2022) .Through APIUM's cooperation and relationships with several leading universities in several countries, students are given the opportunity to participate in student exchange programs, either in the short or long term. Through these experiences, students not only strengthen their knowledge and experience in Islamic education from a global perspective but also understand the culture of diverse communities abroad.

For example, almost every session of BIE students will participate in an exchange program with one of the universities that have a collaboration with APIUM, namely Universiti Muhammadiyyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This program is a short-term mobility program that aims to give exposure to prospective religious teachers about the culture and education system practiced by the country of Indonesia, including the teaching and learning practices used in that country. This offers added value to potential religious teachers, who can apply what they learn in the field when they become educators. The interesting activities carried out throughout this program include the students participating in teaching practice at one of the selected schools in the nearby area. Through the experience, students gain the opportunity to directly involve themselves in the practice of teaching and learning abroad and further provides new values for each trainee teacher. Ultimately, this mobility program, which is fully supported by APIUM, illustrates the importance of wider knowledge and experience among potential religious teachers in the international context.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as a national teacher education institution, APIUM has an important role in developing and preserving national education, especially Islamic education. In this context, APIUM proved to show a strong commitment as a teacher education institution that prepares prospective religious teachers through various comprehensive and holistic initiatives. By focusing on the preparation of a comprehensive curriculum, APIUM develops prospective religious teachers who are not only skilled in the field of religion but also understand social and moral responsibility in conveying religious teachings to the community in line with the principles of Malaysia *MADANI*. In addition, a modern and holistic approach to teaching and learning is emphasized by APIUM to provide an interesting and effective learning experience to prospective religious teachers so that they can more deeply enliven learning and then turn it into a guide when serving as a true teacher later.

Through a careful emphasis on professional development and leadership development, APIUM is also committed to forming a generation of dai'e educators who are knowledgeable, highly ethical, and competent. This is realized by encouraging students to be actively involved in organizational activities and internationalization programs. This is because the program and side activities other than learning in the lecture room will be a valuable experience and added value for students to become a quality and competitive educator. Ultimately, APIUM's role is not only in in empowering Islamic education at the national level but also making a significant contribution to the development of education and the progress of Malaysia as a whole.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

Contribution rates of authors to the article

Acknowledgement

Statement of interests

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