

H I G H E R E D U C A T I O N H O R I Z O N S

Publishing Higher Degree Research

**Making the Transition from
Student to Researcher**

Janice Orrell and David D. Curtis (Eds.)



Sense Publishers

HIGHER EDUCATION HORIZONS

Volume 1

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Making the Transition from Student to Researcher

Edited by

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SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6300-670-5 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-94-6300-671-2 (hardback)

ISBN: 978-94-6300-672-9 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
<https://www.sensepublishers.com/>

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

Printed on acid-free paper

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Series introduction: Higher Education Horizons	vii
<i>Joy Higgs</i>	
Preface	ix
<i>Janice Orrell and David D. Curtis</i>	
Acknowledgements	xi
<i>Janice Orrell and David D. Curtis</i>	
Section 1: Publishing Higher Degree Research	
1. Research training and publishing: A partnership approach to liberating scholarship.....	3
<i>Joy Higgs</i>	
2. Transforming identities: From students and reformers to researchers	13
<i>Janice Orrell and David D. Curtis</i>	
Section 2: Learning with Technology	
3. Mobile learning congruencies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural philosophies	25
<i>Philip Townsend, R. John Halsey and John Guenther</i>	
4. Interactive whiteboard use and student engagement	33
<i>Carol Le Lant and Michael J. Lawson</i>	
5. Learning with iPads in early childhood education	43
<i>Emily Tam and Trudy-Ann Sweeney</i>	
Section 3: Professional Learning and Practice	
6. Communicating real-life classroom innovations as research	55
<i>Peter Nielsen and Bernard Mageean</i>	
7. Enhancing educational quality in an Indonesian Islamic university	65
<i>Muhammad Nur Akbar Rasyid, Janice Orrell and Robert Conway</i>	
8. Beyond the trade qualification: Seeking higher-order cognitive skills	75
<i>Anthony Arrowsmith, David D. Curtis and John Guenther</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

9. Preparing teachers for rural secondary schools in Lesotho 85
Marethabile Mapitso Ignatia Masakale, Michael Bell and R. John Halsey

Section 4: Student Learning

10. Language learning strategy use by prospective English language
teachers in Indonesia 95
Alfian, Mirella Wyras and Marietta Rossetto
11. Recognising intimation: An affective reality in the act of creation 105
David Jeffries and Carol R. Aldous
12. Promoting powerful positive affect 115
Shaileigh Page and Trudy-Ann Sweeney

Section 5: Curriculum Change

13. Teaching mathematics and science in English at a university in
Indonesia: Lecturers' and students' attitudes to the initiative 127
Soni Mirizon, Ben Wadham and David D. Curtis
14. Enabling innovation in Acehese schools 137
Anwar Amin and Michael Bell
15. Integrating graduate attributes into Islamic higher education curricula in
Aceh, Indonesia 145
Habiburrahim, Janice Orrell and Robert Conway
16. Rwanda's new competence-based school curriculum: New approaches to
assessing student learning needed 155
Ernest Ngendahayo and Helen Askeel-Williams
- Contributors..... 167

JOY HIGGS

SERIES INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Horizons

This series explores the current volatile context of higher education and examines ways that the higher education sector is responding to and driving these changes. The books in this series tackle challenges facing the sector and question the goals and strategies that researchers, educators and theorists are creating to address these challenges. They explore trends in stakeholder expectations, and evolving pedagogies and different horizons existing and emerging in higher education. The authors in this series bring a wealth of academic practice wisdom and experience to examine these issues. They share their practice knowledge, report research into strategies that address these challenges, and raise yet more questions. Through the conversations in this book readers can enter into the debates, visions and experiences of the agents of higher education.

Joy Higgs

The Education For Practice Institute

PREFACE

This book is the product of research in a School of Education that has well over 100 higher degree research students with highly diverse ethnic and cultural origins. The research found that graduates are catalysts for further students from their region to join the School to take up higher degree research, and that despite participating in interpersonal and intellectual engagement in regular seminars with other students and academic staff, many international students returned home never to publish their work. Each new wave of students often posed research questions similar to those already addressed by previous students, with little opportunity to build on this prior research merely because it had not been published beyond the thesis.

In recognition of this gap in practice, all recent graduates and current higher degree students were invited to submit a chapter on some aspect of their higher degree research, with their supervisors as co-authors. At the same time, they were invited to reflect on the process of becoming a published researcher and what it meant for them. A core sentiment is captured at the beginning of each chapter and the students' extended reflections form the basis of an exploration of the transition from student to researcher through publication of their chapter.

This book serves two distinct purposes. First, it gives higher degree research students and graduates an opportunity to present their research as a succinct chapter – a form quite different from the thesis they have written or are writing. It gives them an audience and presents their work to that audience in a more readily accessible form. The act of publication poses new challenges for the authors. Yet again, they must interact with their supervisors as mentors and co-authors, and make decisions about aspects of their research that warrant attention. Inevitably, this means omitting issues that have been important aspects of their thinking – yet another phase of challenge in their emergence as researchers. Second, the book gives editors and readers an opportunity to reflect on the transition from higher degree research student to researcher, and examine the pedagogy of higher degree research supervision. By exploring the transition, we reflect on the “product” – the accomplished graduate – as well as the process, and ask what we can do to facilitate the transition, and how we can do that most effectively and efficiently.

The first two chapters argue that adopting the notion of higher degrees as research training requires a new pedagogy of higher degree supervision. They seek to locate publication by higher degree students within the program to ensure that higher degree research, in addition to generating new knowledge and new insights, develops a wide range of high-level skills that graduates subsequently apply in the roles they pursue after graduation. Joy Higgs draws attention to the critical role of writing as an act of exploration and the vehicle through which findings are shared with a community of scholars for information and critique. She locates higher degree research as research training designed to prepare graduates for “...future complex and unpredictable situations”. This preparation requires a model of mentoring that “liberates” students in their journeys from novice and dependent to accomplished and independent researchers.

PREFACE

The transition from graduate student to independent researcher entails change along several dimensions, which Orrell and Curtis track through an analysis of higher degree research students' and graduates' reflections on their research journeys; journeys that challenge individuals' self-concepts and identities. New identities and new conceptions of self emerge. A common experience is commencement of a higher degree research program with a clear objective driven by a strong personal commitment to improvement and an expectation of pursuing a particular line of investigation. Challenges arise as students interact with their supervisors and the literature of their chosen fields. They are encouraged to reconceptualise the issue they have chosen to investigate; a process requiring self-reflection and evaluation, and taking a critical stance in relation to the literature and their own conceptions of their chosen area of research.

These two introductory chapters provide an understanding of the context for the production of the next 14 chapters, which are testament to the students' transition process. Chapters 3-5, which explore "Learning with technology", locate different technologies in the values and requirements of the groups with which they are used rather than with their characteristics. Chapters 6-9, addressing "Professional learning and practice", illustrate that despite research contexts as diverse as rural teaching in Lesotho and skills development for mining technicians, professional learning has common drivers. Dialogue features prominently, as do commitment to learning and the impact of policy on formal training. In chapters 10-12, which explore "Student learning", the variety of different perspectives about what factors influence learning – from language learning strategies to problem solving theories to the affective dimensions of learning – emphasise the individuality of the learning process. The final section, "Curriculum change", demonstrates innovation as a characteristic of developing education systems. Chapters 13-16 explore attempts to improve curricula in diverse settings in Indonesia and Rwanda. An initiative to improve prospective teachers' English language skills as a way of improving the quality of teaching Mathematics and Science in English is investigated. The importance of generic skills and competence, balanced with local requirements, is discussed in terms of educational quality improvement, while working with, and around, government-decreed curriculum innovation is also examined.

We commend the contributions of the authors to future researchers in the expectation that future research will build on the findings reported here. The breadth of the research represents the diverse concerns of researchers who have embarked on a higher degree research journey with the aim of improving education delivery and outcomes through investigating and understanding everyday practice issues.

Janice Orrell and David D. Curtis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank those who provided considerable support in compiling this volume and bringing it to completion. We express our appreciation for the support provided by Associate Professor Helen Askill-Williams as the Head of Flinders Educational Futures Research Institute (FEFRI) in securing Faculty funding to assist with this venture, and Marja van Breda, the Institute's Research Administration Officer, for her ongoing project management. We are deeply indebted to Professor Joy Higgs, Series Editor and Co-Director, Strategic Development, The Education For Practice Institute (EFPI) at Charles Sturt University, for including this volume in her series. We also greatly appreciate her encouragement and wise counsel. We thank Ros Allum, Project Officer at EFPI, for her ongoing advice and willingness to share her expert opinion on the publication process. We pay our respect and thanks to our colleagues, Flinders University, and School of Education academics and higher degree scholars who have collaborated to contribute to this volume. We especially commend the higher degree candidates and graduates for their willingness to share their work and their personal reflections regarding the higher degree research journey. We also wish to express our gratitude to Margaret Bowden, our editorial assistant, who is indeed an editor's editor, without whose diligence and commitment to attending to detail this publication would not have been possible.

Thank you to Matthew Kearney for permission to use one of his diagrams from Kearney, Schuck, Burden and Aubusson, (2012) and to Doris Bergen and Routledge Publishers for permission to use her *Schema for play and learning* and five play types (Bergen, 1998, 2006).

Finally, we are deeply appreciative of the support provided by the chapter reviewers for their critical reflections and constructive suggestions for each chapter. The reviewers were Helen Askill-Williams, Michael Bell, Denise Chalmers, David D. Curtis, Kym Fraser, Deanne Gannaway, David Green, R. John Halsey, Joy Higgs, Dianne Korare, Mike Lawson, Betty Leask, Bernard Mageean, Janice Orrell, Lee Partridge, Beverly Rogers, Robin Ryan, Katharine Swain, Trudy-Ann Sweeney, Faith Trent, Mirella Wyra, Gerald White, Peter Willis and Penny Van Deur.

Janice Orrell and David D. Curtis

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HABIBURRAHIM, JANICE ORRELL AND ROBERT CONWAY

15. INTEGRATING GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES INTO ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULA IN ACEH, INDONESIA

I am aware that this PhD terrain has shaped my academic competence, elevating my research skills and self-esteem. It has challenged me to work more independently to build up my competency and confidence to be an independent researcher and a prospective knowledge creator. I can now be a motivator whose experiences and reflections motivate other young lecturers to be potential researchers and knowledge creators like my own supervisors have done for me. (Habiburrahim)

One of the most significant current discussions in higher education is refining the concept of graduate attributes or generic skills in undergraduate student curricula. In most universities in Australia and the UK, there is an established set of graduate attributes that undergraduate students are expected to acquire as a result of their course of studies (Barrie, 2007; Chalmers & Partridge, 2013). However, in the context of Islamic higher education, especially in Aceh, Indonesia, graduate attributes are often a novel concept. What have been referred to as graduate attributes in Australian and UK universities are largely not identified within curriculum intentions in Islamic universities in Aceh. This chapter is motivated by the implementation of new policy developments in Indonesia for higher education in Aceh that call for greater integration of Islamic values, general education and attention to local community needs. In coming to some practical solutions regarding the integration of graduate attributes into the curriculum, this paper draws upon a study that sought the views and lived educational experiences of students and teachers in an English Education Department in an Islamic university in Aceh.

GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

The focus for integrating core educational values in the form of graduate attributes lies in curriculum design and development. Curriculum is a means by which to delineate a specific educational program's philosophy, goals, objectives, learning experiences, instructional resources and assessment. It is through the curriculum that an educational institution formulates the skills and experiences its students will master after accomplishing a certain study program. Barnett (1994) urges those designing curriculum in higher education to focus not only on curriculum knowledge (knowing-that), but also on operational competence (knowing-how).

Generic graduate capabilities are the complementary knowledge, skills and experiences students can master besides the core discipline knowledge. In the context of the UIN Ar-Raniry Islamic University, generic graduate capabilities are viewed as the general skills students can master to synergise with local and national academic and workforce requirements. Barrie (2006), Hess (2010), Karseth (2004), Laird and Garver (2010), Oliver (2010) and others argue that providing significant generic skills may assist students to survive in today's highly competitive job market. Barrie (2005) also cited Bowden et al. (2000) in acknowledging that generic skills go beyond the disciplinary knowledge, expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed core courses to encompass the qualities that prepare graduates to become competent citizens in an unknown future. According to Barnett (2004), learning for the unknown future focuses not only on particular skills but also on empowering human dispositions. "Learning for an unknown future has to be a learning understood neither in terms of knowledge nor skills but of human qualities and dispositions" (Barnett, 2004, p. 247). Supporting Barrie's ideas, Hess (2010) emphasises that education has two paramount objectives at the fundamental level: a "private" objective and a "public" purpose. As a private objective, education serves as a private good in which every individual benefits from the skills and training offered by the education process. As a public good, in addition, education trains and prepares every individual in particular skills, dispositions or values to become a better citizen and neighbour. As a result, these dual education functions require higher education institutions to better equip students to develop the basic capacity to gain employment and become better community members. This aspiration for educational development reflects the foundations of the UIN Ar-Raniry as an Islamic university that has a pivotal role in producing graduates who master both Islamic education, and general education and skills (Nurdin et. al., 2010).

Academics, after close scrutiny of generic graduate attributes, have a different understanding of such outcomes (Barrie, 2005, 2006, 2007). Barrie (2007, p. 440) notes the distinctive differences held by academics, some of whom conceive these attributes to be:

... basic precursor abilities, which provide a foundation, to which can be added the discipline knowledge of a university education while other academics' understanding of generic attributes go beyond the conception to encompass university learned, general functional abilities and personal skills that can usefully complement the discipline-specific learning outcomes of a university education.

Other academics understand generic attributes to be more than useful additional general skills. Rather, they are specialised variants of such general skills that are essential in the application of discipline knowledge and the translation of university learning to unfamiliar settings, thus usefully transforming the products of university learning. This implies that graduate attributes are still debatable issues in academia. However, the most commonly agreed generic skills to be mastered by university graduates encompass additional skills and competences that enable

INTEGRATING GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

individuals to apply studied knowledge in their real life, both at workplaces and in the community (Gow & McDonald, 2000). Gow and McDonald cited the Mayer Committee (1992, p. 378) in elaborating seven key competence domains that constitute significant graduate attributes: "...collecting, analysing, and organising information; communicating ideas and information; planning and organising activities; working with others and in teams; using mathematical ideas and techniques; problem solving; and using technology". They also suggested that with insecure and scarce employment, entrepreneurial ability could be seen as a promising additional graduate skill worth mastering (Gow & McDonald, 2000). Graduates possessing entrepreneurial ability have the potential to know how to create new business opportunities (Defillippi & Arthur, 2006; Gow & Wood, 1996).

A central issue in the integration of graduate attributes into higher education is that both teacher educators and faculty members are responsible for assigned tasks that will be the catalysts for students to develop the desired capabilities and dispositions. Teacher educators must understand, and are responsible for, teaching particular core courses that include these additional generic skills. Curriculum developers at the faculty level are responsible for ensuring that the curriculum integrates the faculty's required generic skills. In addition, Gow and McDonald (2000) conclude that it is equally essential for accreditation boards to ensure that the program's stated learning objectives are met.

In summary, generic graduate capabilities are viewed as the skills students should have mastered on completion of their undergraduate education. Those skills and competences include the capacity to manage general issues in a workplace, which involves planning, analysing, problem solving, using technology and communicating ideas to support the growth of the institution in which they work. In the context of social life, generic attributes may also encompass the skills to enable socialising with neighbours or the community, and the capacity to value others and abide by the law. Understanding these social values may lead students to become better citizens.

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF ACEH

Aceh is an autonomous province in Indonesia, with its own governmental law called UUPA (Law on the Governance of Aceh). UUPA is stipulated in national regulation number 11/2006, which affirms that Aceh is self-governing, enabling the provincial government to develop and manage its own policies. This relatively recent regulation includes provisions concerning rule of law, human rights, political issues, educational systems and economic matters (Aspinall, 2005). The Acehese people's local political demands to be independent of the central Indonesian Government were the basis of armed conflict from 1989 to 1998 (Aspinall, 2005). Some politicians believe that regulation 11/2006 is the result of an emerging political will from the central government in Jakarta to respond to the Acehese people's wishes in order to maintain peace.

Acehnese view education primarily from an Islamic perspective because the Aceh region is inhabited by a 99% Muslim population. The Islamic view of education is that it constitutes a form of worship (Qanun No. 23, 2002) and means:

... a lifelong process of preparing individuals to actualise their role as a Khalifah (vicegerent) of Allah on earth and thereby contribute fully to the reconstruction and development of their society in order to achieve well-being in this world and hereafter (Hashim & Langgulong, 2008, p. 1).

From an Acehne cultural perspective, the purpose of education is to empower students' holistic development and, in the process, contribute to forming an Acehne society at large that is civilised and has dignity (Qanun No. 5, 2008). Education should be an active social vehicle for translating religious and scientific values into improved community lives. Therefore, higher education is expected to nurture students' growth, not only in scientific knowledge and understanding but also, more importantly, in moral principles. The UUPA regulations articulate the expectation that universities should play more visible roles in local communities' educational, social and economic wellbeing (Jongbloed et al., 2008).

Strategic planning of Aceh education aspires for all secondary and higher education graduates to function effectively in increasingly competitive global, regional, national and local labour markets. Aceh's long term strategic plan seeks to have university graduates who are well prepared to contribute to the development of Aceh's social, economic, political and community life (Aceh strategic planning 2012–2017). Teachers, for instance, as a result of their education, should be able to teach students appropriately, meaning they should demonstrate skilfulness in their field of disciplinary study as well as being exemplary social models who abide by the law and exhibit tolerance, care towards others, honesty, generosity and trustworthiness.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA

Indonesia has an education system that is managed by two educational ministries: the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). Previously, when developing curricula, Indonesian higher education institutions were required to refer to the MoNE Decree number 045/U/2002 regarding the core curriculum. Higher education institutions were expected to adopt a competency-based curriculum that emphasised the acquisition of particular disciplinary skills. Students studying teacher education, for example, were expected to acquire sufficient pedagogical skills (Ministry of National Education Decree No. 045/U/2002).

This regulation, while authorising higher education institutions throughout Indonesia to design and develop their curriculum in line with their mission and the disciplinary focus of the programs they offer, also expects the curriculum to address local needs, paying attention to particular local conditions and geographic circumstances. It identifies particular competences, including: attitude formation; acquisition of knowledge and skills; mastery and application of knowledge and

skills; and knowledge of community social lives. In the case of an English Education Department, for example, students are expected to learn particular English courses as their core competence. Core courses consist of four English language skills: listening; speaking; reading; and writing. In addition, as teaching students, they are expected to learn certain pedagogical courses – teaching methodology, teaching evaluation and curriculum analysis – to support their competence as graduate teachers. Other additional competences emphasise local values and traditions as well as the institution's visions and missions. To this end, the UIN Ar-Raniry offers Islamic courses ranging from Islamic law to Quranic interpretation and recitation that students can elect to study.

As stated in Indonesia's national strategic planning policies, the focus of national educational empowerment relies on three conceptual frameworks: affective; cognitive; and psychomotor (National Educational Ministry Regulation, 2010). The regulation affirms that the affective domain should nurture learners' spiritual values, noble *akhlak* (morals) and other aesthetic values. The cognitive domain, on the other hand, should sharpen the learners' competences in empowering intellectual functioning to master, develop, and apply specific knowledge and technology. Finally, the psychomotor domain stresses learners' ability in terms of specific technical skills acquisition and kinaesthetic competency. Regulation No. 22/1999 and the *KKNI* oriented curricula in principle provide the opportunity for all educational institutions throughout Indonesia to accommodate the needs, heritage and culture of their own schools, people and community without facing significant interference.

Article 216, Point 1 of UUPA confirms that education in Aceh is to be developed in accordance with current technological and educational advances. The regulation stipulates that technology – the key skills students should master to succeed in future life – is a critical element of educational development. This regulation acknowledges the critical role of technology in empowering Acehnese human resources. As such, Acehnese students as well as the general Acehnese population must master adequate technological competences to empower themselves in seeking a better life in this world and the hereafter: "Every Aceh community deserves to have a quality and an Islamic education in accordance with the advancement of knowledge and technology" (UUPA, 2006).

Point 2 of article 216 signifies the importance of an education system in Aceh that honours human dignity, includes human rights, and provides quality education as well as emphasising local acculturation embedded in Islamic principles. In the national context, Point 2 of the article also indicates that the educational approach in Aceh needs to consider the heterogeneous community living in this region. Some members of the community are non-Muslim, as indicated in the following statement: "The education mentioned in article 216 Point 1 is implemented based on democratic principles and welfare by highly honouring the human rights, Islamic values, culture, and the pluralistic nation" (UUPA, 2006).

Education in Aceh needs to be developed in line with contemporary knowledge and technology. In doing so, Aceh can adopt and adapt innovative educational curriculum frameworks from any country throughout the world. However, it must

be aligned with the Acehese context. Since Aceh does not have an educational conceptual framework to accommodate graduate attribute components into Islamic higher education institution curricula, this province has the opportunity to refer to western educational institutions, such as those in Australia, the UK and the USA, which have systematically introduced generic skills as expected outcomes of undergraduate programs. The application of generic skills to curriculum development at Islamic universities in Aceh does not mean that this reforms the traditional educational purview. Rather, it puts a new emphasis upon skills and competence in the curriculum, inviting experiential and problem-based forms of learning (Nicholls, 1995). Importantly, there are few mechanisms in place or guidelines to ensure that these significant, newly articulated intentions and regulations will be embedded in enhanced curriculum design, implementation and evaluation.

INTEGRATION AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION

According to Lubis et al. (2009), the philosophy of integrated Islamic education intends to train students' minds, bodies and souls based on Islamic values and divine revelation (Lubis et al., 2009). In Figure 15.1, they illustrate the concept of integrated Islamic education as a distinct equilibrium between *akhlak* (ethical moral) or spiritual development and personal achievement in life through the development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. In their opinion, the integration of Islamic education requires four substantial elements: knowledge-based; physiological; civic; and spiritual.

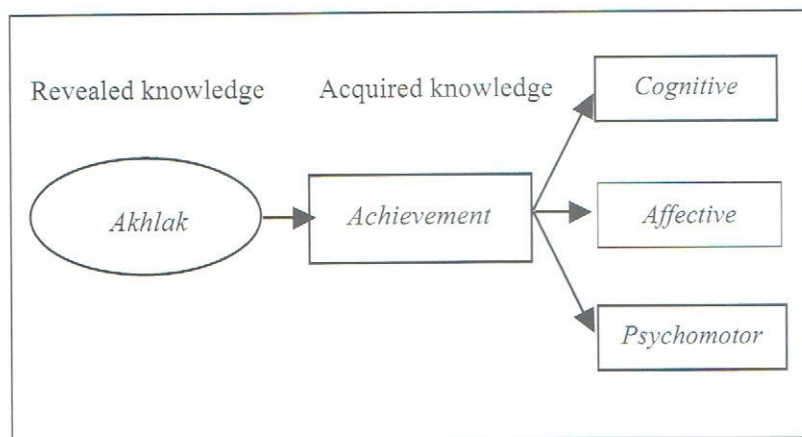


Figure 15.1. The relationship between the components in the objective of an integrated Islamic education (Lubis et al., 2009, p. 53)

The Lubis et al. proposal regarding an integrated Islamic education is central to the findings of a study that is the basis of this chapter, in which the views of students

INTEGRATING GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

and teachers regarding their lived experience of Islamic teacher education in an English Department were captured through interviews, discussions and a survey. The study's findings were examined closely in relation to the UUPA policies. For students in particular, the distinctive foundation of education in Aceh relies on the development of *akhlak*, or the spiritual component, as the core values empowering this Islamic community. However, students reported that they were open to diverse approaches to the integration of general and disciplinary knowledge with Islamic education, and believed that UIN Ar-Raniry graduates expect to master broader skills, including life skills, to survive in the competitive employment arena in the future. They were aware that "being 'smart' in English is not enough to get a job. We need to have other competences such as leadership and management, and communication and computer skills" (S.3:5).

Students suggested that Islamic teaching materials could be delivered by a submersion approach in the curriculum that sought to teach English language skills. Such an approach would enable them to acquire English comprehension while at the same time gaining an understanding of Islamic teachings. They also proposed integration of Islamic values into the department's curriculum "as the local legacy". They pointed out that the department needs to explicitly integrate all three significant elements – local culture, Islamic values and English skills – into its curriculum, along with a career focus:

... it is important provide more flexible strategies in teaching and to let students think about their future by providing a subject about future career overview, and also to integrate Islamic subjects with other subjects – they shouldn't be taught separately – in an ideal future department curriculum.

The English Education Department teachers also advocated for Islamisation of English Education:

The teaching and learning materials for students need to be modified, for example the given materials are not solely adopted from general knowledge and information, but they should be taken from Islamic reading resources; namely the resources that elaborate the Islamic religious values. When we teach English, we do not only teach or ask students what English is. Yet, when we teach English, we can simply teach them ample noble Islamic values by distributing Islamic reading materials which are written in English by Islamic scholars throughout the globe.

The above comments exemplify that integrating general and disciplinary education with Islamic education can be implemented through Islamisation of English language teaching as an immersion program. However, to ensure academics' and students' acceptance of this Islamisation of English language teaching, the Institutional and Departmental leadership must officially endorse it in the English Education Department curriculum.

Other suggestions were that the integration of education could be carried out by implementing an interdisciplinary curriculum. Ausberg (2006) refers to interdisciplinary curriculum and learning as an approach that consciously applies

methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic or experience. Most literature identifies that at the heart of an interdisciplinary teaching approach lies a developed knowledge that students want to persevere to enrich their intellectual capacity and to ensure that their knowledge is linked with the real world (Tchudi & Lafer, 1996). Repko (2012) takes this idea further, arguing that integration is the key characteristic of interdisciplinary learning. Students want to be taught English and education as disciplines as well as other generic capabilities, but at the same time they want these courses connected with religious values as a specific activity and focus (Lonning, 1998). Aina (1979, cited in Al Hassan, 2012) points out that knowledge integration can be applied within and across disciplines. In the English language discipline at the UIN Ar-Raniry English Education Department, integration need not be confined to Islamic values and English language skills and pedagogy. Currently, the five English language skills – grammar, reading, writing, speaking and listening – are also taught separately. They can be integrated in the future. Likewise, integration within the religious knowledge disciplines is possible. Quranic interpretation can be integrated into Ulumul Quran and ilm al-hadīth into Hadīth.

It is clear from this study that the context now needs, and is ideally placed, to engage in a radical review of the curriculum design and delivery processes utilising the concept of integration as its core, with a central goal to enrich students' competence in generic skills not limited to language learning and pedagogical skills. In order for integration to happen, however, the institution needs clear policy statements, guidelines and support to empower its leaders to engage in such radical change. The changes needed are not intuitive. There is a need for substantial supporting professional learning aligned with the policy changes to assist academic teachers to make the necessary changes to their curriculum design and their instructional strategies.

CONCLUSION

Curriculum design and delivery plays a pivotal role in setting a deliberate agenda to assist students to attain critical competences that will equip them to succeed in their personal life, engage in the competitive labour market, and become moral and contributing citizens after studying at an educational institution. Curriculum designers are challenged to engender wider generic transferable skills and competences to provide a pathway for students to attain the mastery needed to achieve these goals. Within the context of education in, and for, Aceh, Indonesia, the integration of Islamic values and generalist learning into a curriculum that has other professional and general education goals is imperative. Islam does not segregate worldly and Islamic education. Both educational purviews are expected to support each other to ensure the Islamic community has balanced educational development. Religious education is regarded as the pathway to purifying humans' *akhlak*, and general education is conceived as the vehicle for understanding worldly issues. It is understood that by mastering general education, members of the Islamic community have the capacity to become critical Islamic thinkers, with

the ability to interpret, analyse and weigh up information to make prudent decisions. Hence, the integration of these two educational spheres will allow the Islamic community to obtain both Islamic and general education together.

The term integration is used liberally within the Islamic education community, but as a curriculum concept it needs more detailed examination as to what it means in curriculum implementation. The same is true in developing commonly agreed notions of Islamic education graduate attributes. Institutions need to establish curriculum review systems to oversee the implementation of the integration of Islamisation of disciplines and graduate capabilities. Infrastructure, such as systematic professional learning for academic teachers to better understand what is required of them in designing their courses and instructional approaches, is also essential. Finally, there is scope for practice-based research to develop these ideas for the advancement of a modern concept of Islamic higher education.

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HABIBURRAHIM ET AL.

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