

## Ulul Albab Generation: Roles of Ulul Albab Teachers in Malaysian Selected School

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### Abstract

Since Ulul Albab program has been introduced in several government schools few years ago, it has become a craze among the society and the demand is increasing because of its uniqueness features and the goals it promotes. After analysing the concept of Ulul Albab and its characteristics, however, a huge task on the shoulders of the teachers is needed to carry out the programme. Ulul Albab as defined by many scholars is a term given to gifted individuals who possess wisdom, intelligence and knowledge based on belief and devotion to Allah (SWT) and this is not an ordinary term. The Ulul Albab program is established by taking Ulul Albab in the Al-Quran as the basis for the curriculum, therefore, it requires factors that may contribute to the achievement of an Ulul Albab generation to be analysed and examined continuously. Teachers as the key implementer of the program are seen to have a big role and responsibility towards achieving the goals and objectives. Various studies have shown that there exists a significant relationship between teachers' effectiveness and students' achievement. Specifically, this special program requires special trained teachers to run the program effectively. It is not too much to say then that teachers act as the mediators of the Ulul Albab generation. By saying this, teachers' professional development programme for Ulul Albab pre-service and in-service teachers have become vital in order to enhance the quality of the Ulul Albab teachers in order to effectively run the programme. These quality teachers will then become an effective role-model for the Ulul Albab students.

**Keywords:** Ulul Albab Concept, Ulul Albab Generation, Teachers' Roles, Ulul Albab Teachers' Professional Development

### Introduction

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for Ulul Albab. Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire. [Quran, 3:190-191]. Very precise and firm verses which are referring

to the people who not only have brains, but are gifted in knowing how to put it to correct use. The term Ulul Albab is mentioned 16 times in various places in the Al-Quran. In Malaysia context, the term Ulul Albab is popularized to the general public when it has been transformed into a school program. Balanced individuals who have intellect and wisdom based on Quran and Sunnah is the aim of this program which is clearly stated in the objectives of the program as the following:

- Maternity generation al-Quran the believers, devoted, knowledgeable, noble, skilled, responsible and master the skills and academic and soft skill can devote to religion, nation and country.
- Maternity students who are backgrounder with Science and Tahfiz al-Quran who mastered the skills "soft skills" to be eligible for the study of professional and technical fields everywhere famous universities throughout the world.
- Maternity students who can memorize al-Quran 30 juzuk in 3-year period of study in MJSC system and foster scientific culture of al-Quran with ICT as a value added approach.

(cited from Mohd.Shahril & Sidek,  
2013)

However, in developing holistic and balanced students who are able to be harmonious based on belief and devotion to Allah s.w.t, students need to be guided, facilitated, and supervised according to Islamic guidance. Therefore, teachers' role is one of the most important element that need to be discussed in achieving those objectives.

### **Concept of Ulul Albab**

A concept is an abstract idea representing the fundamental characteristics of what it represents. It is a criterial attribute of object or an event. Ulul Albab's concept is a criterial attribute of ideal people according to the Al-Quran. It is a notion of thought developed from the main characteristics of 16 ayahs in the Al-Quran as vital reference model in every action (Wan Mariana & Mohd. Shafiee, 2012). Meaning, the term Ulul Albab that has been mentioned in the Al-Quran designates the specific criteria that attributes to Ulul Albab people. In order to understand the concept of Ulul Albab, it needs to examine the respective ayah accordingly. Among the ayah consisting the term Ulul Albab in Al-Quran are such as Surah Al-Baqarah (2:179), Understand, and piety and righteous (Taqwa); Surah Al-Baqarah (2:197) Do good deeds, take a provision and have Taqwa; Surah Al-Baqarah (2:269) Granted Hikmah (wisdom) from Allah and act upon it; Surah Ali Imran (3:7) Firmly grounded in knowledge; Surah Ali Imran (3:190-191) Contemplate, reflect and deeply thinking in the creation of the heaven and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day; Surah al-Maaidah (5:100) Always choose to be good and acknowledge the differences between good and evil ; Surah Yusof (12:111) Advert/ pay heed to the history of previous people; Surah Ar-Ra'd (13:19) Perceive and belief the truth of Quran,; Surah Ibrahim (14:52) Perceived Quran as a book of reminder and knowledge to acknowledge the greatness of Allah ; Surah Saad (38:29) Get a lesson from Allah's Signs and Verses and understand it well, (38:43) Granted mercy and mnemonic if be patient; Surah Az-Zumar (39:9) Perform *Qilamulail* as daily routine to get blessing from Allah, Surah Az-Zumar (39:18) Good listener and able to choose the best (Allah has guided), Surah Az-Zumar 39:32) Good observer and pay heed to the creation of the world;

Surah al-Ghafir (40:54) Granted *Hidayah* (guidance/cue) and reminder/sign; Surah al-Talaq (65:10) A true believer and fear of Allah's torment.

The concept of Ulul Albab, therefore, open to several definitions that lead to various interpretation. In fact, many *Mufasssirun* (commentators of Al-Quran), scholars and thinkers agreed that Ulul Albab refers to a group of people who have sound intellect and matured understanding which enable them to think perfectly. The intellect that is pure and uncontaminated, as in the minds of the Ulul Albab according to Mohd. Kamal Hassan (2010), is ever in need of consciousness of *taqwa* to Allah (SWT) the deep consciousness of the presence and sovereignty of Allah (SWT) such that the believer is always mindful lest any of his/her actions, thoughts or behaviour might incur His displeasure or wart. He added,

“Ulul Albab as the “possessors of sound intellect referring to the production and growth of more Islamic intellectuals, scholars, scientists, professionals, political leaders and educated classes who combine or unify scientific and worldly knowledge with religious values, thinking and contemplation (*fikr* and *tafakkur*) with spiritual remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah (SWT), worldly means with otherworldly ends, reason with Divine revelation, professionalism with *taqwa* (that deep ethical consciousness of the pleasure and displeasure of Allah), and are not afflicted with the diseases of the spiritual heart which al-Ghazali called *al-muhlish* (destructive elements)”.

They are the intellectuals who are given wisdom and knowledge and wisely use the ability they have to sustain the life for the will of Allah. Al-Qaradawi (1996) also stated that Ulul Albab refers to those who deserve to be given wisdom (“*Hikmah*) by Allah (SWT) because they know where to put things in their proper places and to give everything their rights (Mohd. Kamal, 2010; Danial, 2007). Accordingly, Quraish Shihab (2002) and A.Khudori Soleh (2009) also admitted that Ulul Albab is a specific term in Al-Quran that mentions about a group of intellectual people. An intellectual not only know how to generate idea but know how to make sense the idea for the benefits of all. Within Islamic society, Sabri (2009) had argued that, an intellectual person is not only able to develop analytic and normative ideas, even more, acknowledging the Islamic teaching by practicing the true Muslim life. As he said, Quran has described special characteristics of Ulul Albab generation which is beyond that specified definition.

As the concept of Ulul Albab, whereby, has been explained by various scholars from different fields, therefore, it is somehow interesting on how Zulkifli (2016) describes Ulul Albab based on the combination of four concepts of Ulul Albab that has been mentioned in surah Ali Imran verse 190-191 as the following;

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطِيلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

1. *Zikrullah*: remembrance of Allah
  - الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ
  - Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides
2. *Tafakkur*: contemplate-scientific thought
  - وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
  - and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth
3. *I'tiraf*: recognize the Almighty and the Greatness of Allah

- رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا
- Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly
- 4. *Ma'rifatullah*: praise Him as the only Creator of the universe-piety/fear of Allah
  - سُبْحَانَكَ قَوْلًا عَذَابَ النَّارِ
  - exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

The criteria given in the Al-Quran clearly showing that Ulul Albab generation is constructed on the combination of attribution of scientific rational thoughts (intellect) and spiritually beliefs and fear Allah which then, lead them to observe their moral conduct for the sake of getting blessings from Allah. This is clearly a sign of intellectual; a devotee of ideas, knowledge and values. Therefore, they are a generation that are in high regard for to our present society (Sabri, 2009), and this is the reason of introducing Ulul Abab program into the Malaysia system of education. Ulul Albab program is developed to accomplish the mission of producing an Ulul Albab generation.

#### **Ulul Albab Program in Malaysia Selected Schools**

To be considered as a new phenomenon in Malaysian educational system (Nor Hayati et al. 2015), somehow, Ulul Albab program has seen as a high-quality learning program which is based on holistic, balanced and integrated whereby to produce holistic and balanced individuals. According to Nor Hayati. Umi Kalthom, & Fathiyah (2015), there are four supported government schools in Terengganu known as Sekolah Menengah Imtiaz implement the program in 2005 which then followed by Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM) in 2009.

At first, the concept of Ulul Albab which has been assimilated into the Imtiaz Secondary School's learning curriculum, bring about an inviolable effort to deliver a group of intelligentsia who can memorize 30 components (juzuk) of the Al-Qur'an, understand its meaning, possess a wide spectrum of general knowledge, have the ability to cogitate and observe the creations of Allah SWT through the eyes, heart and incisive mind and to take cognizance from it (cited from Rohaizan et al., 2014). Mohd. Kamal Hassan (2010) stated that, a sincere and deep study of the Holy Book is more urgently needed today than ever before, especially by the Muslim elites and policy-makers in Muslim countries, Malaysia included.

Thus, Ulul Albab program which was projected by Dato' Seri Idris bin Jusoh on 31 Mei 1996 (Rohaizan et al., 2014) is an educational program that aims to procreate to Ulul Albab experts in various fields that well versed in the field of religion-based al-Quran and Sunnah. Gradually, there are four MARA Junior Science College (MRSM) schools fetching in the Ulul Albab program into their school system, namely MRSM Gemencheh, MRSM Kota Putra, MRSM Kepala Batas and MRSM Sungai Besar, and there are five more coming in the plan (Shahrulazli, 2017). In fact, Ulul Albab program is a special educational program which bases on the integration between the existing programs (Science streaming) and the religious school program including Tahfiz Al-Quran (Mohd.Sharil & Sidek, 2013) which was implemented since 2009 has produced 1,164 huffaz so far according to recent news in eWarta MARA (2017).

In addition, Arniyuzie (2015) reported that, there are three other secondary schools under Ministry of Malaysian Education (KPM) also fetching the Ulul Albab Tahfiz Model. *Bernama* report stated that the implementation of the Ulul Albab Tahfiz Model (TMUA) under the supervision of KPM is expected to produce 10,920 students who are able to memorize all 30 chapters of the Quran by 2021 (the Sundaily, 2014). In a nutshell, Ulul Albab program is purposely develop to generate Ulul Albab generation in the country.

### **The Role of Teachers of Ulul Albab Program**

To accomplish the mission of producing Ulul Albab generation, teachers' role is very important. One of the key elements that help in the building of students' characters and holistic development are their teachers. As according to Al-Ghazali, teachers are indispensable to society (as cited from Nabil, 2000). He proposed a professional code of ethics for teachers, who, he says, should practice what they preach, and be an example to their pupils and to people in general (ibid) community. Their role is not limited on teaching and coaching young generation in their studies and skills, but beyond that, they should act as role-model and cultivate Islamic moral values into their students (A. Ghafur & Ghulam, 1980). Meaning, although certified-qualification is a crucial element for a teacher to be recognized as professional, however, dedication toward responsibility, moral outstanding and good character are reliable to bring the greatest impact on students' holistic development. Fathiyah and Asmawati (2011), are emphasizing on the role of teachers as to develop excellent generation. Teachers' role is not limited to conveying knowledge and information but also to develop students holistically based on the belief and devotion to Allah s.w.t. In the context of Ulul Albab program, it is necessary to identify the roles of the teachers. Studies by Rohaizan et al. (2014), Muhammad Abdillah et al. (2014), Umi et al. (2014), Nor Hayati et al. (2015), and Mohd. Razi (2016) showed that the teachers play a crucial role in determining the success of the program.

One of the roles that teachers need to consider is, they have to understand clearly the concept of Ulul Albab. According to M. Abdillah et al. (2014) and Rohaizan et al. (2014) the main factor that contributed to the success of Ulul Albab program is when the teachers and the students deeply understand the application of Ulul Albab concept to the teaching and learning process. By understanding the concept, it helps the teachers to derive their teaching mission according to the vision of Ulul Albab program. Rohaizan et.al (2014) in their research on Imtiaz Schools found that:

“the students' and teachers' understanding and appreciation towards the school's mission and vision was clear... The process of assessing students, co-curriculum activities and involvement with the community has become the catalyst to the success and achievement of the targeted objectives”.

Besides that, teachers should possess the personality of Ulul Albab people. According to Azizah (2015) in order to be called as Ulul Albab, the elements of personality formation of Ulul Albab stated in Al-Qur'ân such as *tafakkur*, *tadabbur* and *tazakkur* should be within the individuals. Thus, the teachers of Ulul Albab program need to have this personality formation in helping them to facilitate and assist the students to possess this personality, too.

In other word, teachers should act as role models to their students. According to Nor Hayati et al. (2015), in order for students to understand the meaning of the al-Quran and apply it in

their life, it requires teachers who have the quality of being a role model for doing so. She suggests that, the teachers must undergo the holistic development themselves. Previous study done by Umi et al. (2014) in selected MRSU Ulul Albab shown that the students had personality crisis which one of the reasons is because there is no proper guidance from teachers, especially in term of holistic development and moral value. She added, a good teacher should not solely teach academic subjects but also to develop a knowledgeable person with high moral values. Thus, Nor Hayati et al. (2015), argues that only if the teachers fulfilled the standard (Ulul Albab quality), then they will be able to become role model and agents of change towards the achievement of the aims of Ulul Albab program. It could be saying that, Ulul Albab students' personality is the reflection of the Ulul Albab teachers' personality.

Next, the quality of Ulul Albab teacher need to be improve. Researches done by M. Abdullah et al. (2014) and Umi Kalthom et al. (2014) in separate MRSU Ulul Albab advocated that the quality of the teachers need to be improved and refined. First, in term of teaching skills by importing diverse knowledge within their teaching career. Nor Hayati et al. (2015) suggested that the teachers should be possessing extensive and diverse knowledge as well as able to think and observe Allah's creation through sharp mind and heart and eventually learn from it. Apart from that, they must also be the experts of their subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge in their field of study. Second, in term of commitment and passion. According to Radzi et.al (2016) in his study on Leadership Model of MRSU Ulul Albab, showed a strong positive correlation between teacher's commitment and student's achievement ( $r=0.64$ ). Supported by Umi Kalthom et al. (2014) in their finding showed that "teachers need to have empathy for their students and to be passionate in teaching and learning, and also committed to achievement of their students". Hence, by understanding the concept of Ulul Albab without proper guideline on how to make it happen will lead to uneven achievement.

Therefore, teachers are more important than just the title they possess. Their existence beyond merely as a teacher who shares knowledge, but if they successfully show significant role to their students, a huge impact will be seen through their students' achievement. According to Nor Hayati et al. (2015) teachers are among the key implementers whom the success of any curriculum/program depends on. Teachers of Ulul Albab program will surely need to acquire certain qualities. She further added, "those teachers must be able and willing to develop students holistically based on the belief and devotion to Allah s.w.t". Precisely, their manners should be in accordance to Islamic moral values in order for them to have a quality to be Ulul Albab teachers, as according to Nor Hayati (2002, 2005), those qualities will enable them to be a good role model of a well-balanced and harmonious person based on belief and devotion to Allah s.w.t.

According to Yusutria (2017), factors which contribute to the holistic and balanced development of human being will be the educational system which is based on Islam and Allah s.w.t, and focuses on the study of the Al-Quran and personality development. These can only be done if the teachers are trained according to the Al-Quran perspective and teachings. In other words, the system needs holistic and well-balanced teachers who are Islamic in all aspects. This will make them deliver the knowledge that makes students recognize and acknowledge the proper place of Allah s.w.t as compared to His other

creations (Ismail, 1998; Nor Hayati, 2002). Meaning, teachers of Ulul Albab should understand firstly the concept of Ulul Albab that has been describe in the Al-Quran to develop qualities of Ulul Albab teachers. In order to develop teachers of those qualities, teachers' professional development programs for Ulul Albab pre-service and in-service teachers become vital. These programs should be designed based on the Islamic world view (Mohd. Kamal, 2010, Nor Hayati, 2015).

#### Professional Development Program for Teachers of Ulul Albab

The term "professional development" means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (NCLB, 2001; cited from Sixel, 2013). This term mainly refers to teachers' professional development, whereby, teachers' education is needed to be refined and revised to attain the best result. Teacher education is ineffective if the teachers in that program fail to transform or change themselves to bring great influence on their students. M.Hamid Al-Afendi and Nabi Ahmed (1980) had stated that, a curriculum and the text books that had been designed based on Islamic curriculum, will not be able to determine the way knowledge delivered is Islamic either in practice or spirit if the teachers of that curriculum do not follow the teaching of Islam and fail to understand the correct method of teaching according to the objective of the curriculum itself. According to Guskey (2002), "professional development programs are systematic efforts to bring about change in classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students". He argued, "Educators at all levels must be continuous learners throughout the entire span of their professional careers" (p. 19). It is the aim of teacher education, which is to provide relevant education for teachers. It clearly can be understood that, professional development is aimed to generate qualified teachers, as there is evidence showing that quality professional learning is directly linked to student learning (Reeves, 2010; Guskey, 2003; Fullan, 1993 and 2003; Hirsch and Killion, 2007; Danielson, 2009; Zepeda, 2008; Yoon et al.,2008; M.U.Farooq, 2016).

Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. is the best example of an excellence teacher. He also went through the process of learning and accomplished his professional development as prophet and teacher through wahyu (revelation) delivered by Jibrail a.s. from Allah, the Almighty. He went into specific process to became a prophet. Yet, it made him into perfect teacher and an exemplar for all humankind. Then, his companions were the best followers and also the best teachers after him, which later make them the best people after Prophet s.a.w. They also went through specific professional development and Prophet s.a.w, as their lecturer and facilitator. Next, Muslim Ummah of the Golden Age of Islam has created the most outstanding civilization in the world. The achievement was also based on specific professional development that they have had at that time. History has stated that they have the best university in the world which produce excellent thinkers, scholars, doctors, engineers, philosophers, and so forth, which brought huge changes in western civilization indeed. Therefore, the Ulul Albab generation need teachers who have attended specific professional development, too, that should be closely attached to the meaning of Ulul Albab in order to enable them to become the best teacher for the Uul Albab generation. An Ulul Albab teacher needs to be a role model to his/her students. Muslim generation live with the example shown by past generation. By the example in terms of intellectual and manner portrayed by teachers plus the intelligence and wisdom student could have, will make the efforts to develop Ulul

Albab generation easier and worthwhile. Again, to make the teachers able to be the right role model, special training need to be provided for them.

### **Conclusion**

People of understanding and intelligence, Ulul Albab, always work diligently to achieve goals within the individual roles as servants and vicegerents of Allah. They continue to merge faith and knowledge to fulfil the trust and the roles (Suhaimi & Yusuf, 2013). These qualities require countless effort. Eventually, to produce students with these qualities, teachers have to play their role effectively. Teachers of Ulul Albab program somehow may not able to perform effectively if they are not prepared with proper guidelines. Therefore, teachers need to be trained according to the standard of Ulul Albab program. It is therefore vital to make sure that they are qualified and capable of educating, sustaining and developing Ulul Albab students. Thus, qualified teachers who possess well-balanced personality and holistic skills are expected to educate students who are projected to be Ulul Albab. Ulul Albab students need teachers to show them the way to be smart intellectually and mannerly. As the role of teacher is dynamic and important, preparing an Ulul Albab professional development program for the teacher is most pertinent, so that they have specific and special guidelines to educate students of Ulul Albab program.

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