

Empowerment of Training and Education at the Institute of Malaysian Army Training and Islamic Understanding (ILMI ATM): An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Training and education based on Islamic values are very important to help members of the Malaysian Armed Forces have the correct understanding and can practice Islamic teachings in their daily lives. Excellent personalities, such as faith, trust, and integrity, are the effects that arise from balanced spiritual and physical education. This study aims to examine the empowerment initiatives that have been and are being carried out to strengthen training modules, educational curricula, and teaching approaches that are more dynamic and relevant to current needs. This initial focus focuses on the training and education management structure at ILMI and the training and education concepts implemented. This study uses qualitative methods, namely library analysis, document analysis, and observation. This article is hoped to provide an initial overview of the need for improvement and to formulate effective strategies in empowering this institution so that it remains relevant in producing military personnel who are integrity-based, disciplined, and have a strong Muslim identity.

Keywords: Empowerment, Training, Islamic Education, Malaysian Armed Forces, ILMI ATM

INTRODUCTION

Training and Education are two elements that are highly emphasized in the process of developing human capital, especially in the military context, which demands that its members' competence is always at a maximum level and in line with the existence of strong self-esteem. Islam refers to matters related to training and education as a process of spiritual and physical guidance that complies with the Sharia and is disseminated in the form of experience and technical skills, as well as fulfilling the demands of the caliph's duties entrusted by Allah through devotion and appreciation of obedience to the commands of Allah (Abdul Rahim 2023).

Allah says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

Meaning: "I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."

(Al-Quran, Az-Zariyat 51:56)

The Institute of Malaysian Armed Forces Islamic Training and Understanding (ILMI) is a training center that plays a major role in strengthening the spiritual aspects and understanding of Islam among members of the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM). With the current dynamic developments and challenges of globalization, the strengthening of Islamic training and education at this institution has become a necessity to ensure that ATM members are not only given emphasis on physical and strategic training aspects alone but also have a solid moral foundation and identity. In the context of this study, empowerment refers to the process of comprehensively strengthening the training and education system at ILMI ATM to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of the institution in producing balanced military personnel from spiritual, mental, and physical aspects. It does not just involve improving the training modules, but also involves efforts to

strengthen the management structure, trainer competencies, and the integration of Islamic values in the teaching and learning process.

This study is an initial focus on the strengthening of training and education at ILMI ATM, aiming to examine the main aspects that influence the effectiveness of the implementation of training and education programs at this institution. Apart from highlighting the goals of the establishment of ILMI, the study also focuses on the role played by ILMI as a training institute that implements various initiatives in training and educating Malaysian Armed Forces personnel, course management procedures, curriculum structure, infrastructure facilities, and the use of technology in training. In addition, this initial focus also identifies challenges and opportunities for improvement in efforts to ensure that ILMI continues to play its role as a competitive military training institution and is relevant to the current needs of the ATM.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design through library analysis, document analysis, and observation. This approach aims to provide an initial understanding of the empowerment of training and education in the context of ILMI, including training management, curriculum development, and spiritual formation of the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM). This is in line with the views of Ahmad Sunawari Long (2022), where qualitative research tends to be more inclined towards data collection methods through observation, content analysis, and documents.

a. Library analysis

The library analysis conducted includes books, theses, academic journals, and scholarly writings by military officers and academics directly involved with ILMI ATM. In addition, digital materials such as the official website of the Ministry of Defense and the Malaysian Army portal that discuss the implementation of ATM religious policies and programs are also used as references. All of these materials are obtained and reviewed through the Ibnu Khaldun ILMI ATM Library Archives, which is the Centre for collecting official references related to training, education, and the history of the establishment of ILMI.

b. Document analysis

Document analysis was carried out by referring to official sources issued by the Armed Forces Religious Corps Direction Department (KAGAT). These materials include policy documents and official guidelines such as *Armed Forces Council Order Number 9 of 1991 (PMAT 9/91)*, *Islamic Mental and Spiritual Development Policy (DPMKI)*, *AT Code No. 1* and *AT Code No. 2*, as well as *KAGAT Assignment Guidelines in Non-War Military Operations*. The selection of materials was carried out carefully based on the relevance of the content, the validity of the source, and the publication period to ensure that the data obtained was original, up-to-date, and comprehensive. This is in line with the study by Ahmad Munawar & Mohd Nor (2018) that content analysis is a method of collecting data obtained from clear and explicit sources such as printed documents, pictures, and visuals. It aims to obtain objective and systematic explanations.

c. Observation

The researcher conducted observations at the Malaysian Armed Forces Islamic Training and Understanding Institute (ILMI), Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, for three months, from June to August 2025. The focus of the observation was to examine how the training and education process was implemented, especially in the aspects of teaching and learning in the classroom, field training, and administrative coordination. The researcher also observed the interaction between trainers and trainees, the implementation of spiritual and physical training modules, and the appreciation of Islamic values in daily routines. Findings from the observations were recorded in writing and visually to capture patterns, behaviors, and identify contextual factors related to empowerment practices at ILMI.

d. Data analysis

The data collected was analyzed using a qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis approach. Each document and field note was read repeatedly to identify ideas, terms, and themes related to ILMI's empowerment initiatives. The process of classifying data into main theme categories, such as spiritual empowerment, curriculum effectiveness, trainer competence, and institutional support. Patterns that emerged from document analysis and observations were compared to ensure triangulation and consistency of the analysis. The final theme is then interpreted based on relevant Islamic education theories as well as previous studies related to organizational training empowerment in the context of the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Ilmi Organization Structure

The Institute of Malaysian Armed Forces Islamic Training and Understanding (ILMI) was established in Jalan Sua Betong, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan. ILMI is the first military training centre oriented towards spiritual education established in the Malaysian Armed Forces. The inauguration of ILMI was carried out on 27 July 2003 by the late Tun Abdullah bin Ahmad Badawi, who was the Deputy Prime Minister at that time (KAGAT 2005).

KAGAT (2021), through the book *Sistem Pengurusan Strategik KAGAT 2021-2025*, has explained that the organizational structure of the Institute of Malaysian Armed Forces Islamic Training and Understanding (ILMI) is formed hierarchically under the Armed Forces Religious Corps Headquarters (KAGAT) and subject to the rule of the Malaysian Armed Forces Headquarters. The organizational structure of ILMI is led by a Commandant. Internally, ILMI includes several main parts that complement each other, namely the administration section, training management section, academic section, and logistics support section. Each division is led by a senior KAGAT officer who is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation of training and education, as well as management and administration, in line with the objectives of the establishment of ILMI.

In the context of training and education, the training management division and the academic division are given the primary responsibility for managing and coordinating courses and programs involving personnel from all three branches of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This organizational structure is designed to ensure efficient governance, clear division of responsibilities, and effective coordination between management, trainers, and trainees. This structure reflects the function of ILMI as the main driving force for the spiritual and intellectual development of ATM personnel, where each layer of management plays its own role in ensuring the continuity of Islamic policies in the country's military training system.

Role Of Ilmi

ILMI is responsible for implementing the Order of the Armed Forces Council Number 9 of 1991 (PMAT 9/91) for every Muslim ATM member throughout their service in the ATM. All programs and activities contained in this document are implemented through courses implemented at ILMI. Based on the document KOD AT No. 1 (2023), generally, the courses implemented at ILMI can be divided into three categories, namely KAGAT Career Course, KAGAT Functional Course, and Three Service Course.

a. KAGAT career course

Its implementation is specific to KAGAT where KAGAT officers and members are required to attend courses set for career advancement, such as promotion and increasing the level of expertise. This career course is also a determinant of eligibility for receiving an increase in the band (salary) level of each member. Seven types of courses must be attended based on qualifications and needs throughout the service.

b. KAGAT functional course

KAGAT functional courses are more synonymous with the term KAGAT side courses among military personnel. The functional courses organized are additional opportunities provided to KAGAT members to increase their level of expertise in the field of da'wah, especially in providing religious education and services to ATM personnel. Among the ancillary courses implemented at ILMI are the teaching and learning of the Book of *Turath*, the *Qawaidul Fiqhiyyah* Course, and the *Fiqhul Awlawiyyat* Course.

c. Three Service Courses

The Three Service Courses mean courses involving non-KAGAT officers and members from the three military services, namely the Army, Navy, and Air Force. It aims to generate knowledge, skills, and attitudes among ATM personnel based on Islamic values in an effort to build superior personalities who to face the challenges and global changes faced by the ATM. Among the courses provided in this category are the Tahsin al-Quran Course, the Purification of Aqidah Course, and the Arabic Language Course for Communication.

The implementation of these courses must be reported to the KAGAT superiors every term to be recorded, evaluated, and analyzed for their results and effectiveness. Compliance with these policies and instructions is considered an effort to shape, build, and maintain the level of discipline and identity of Muslim military personnel so that they remain intact on the foundation of true faith (Malaysian Armed Forces 1991).

Training And Education Policy At Ilmi

Training and Education at ILMI is based on the Islamic Mental and Spiritual Development Policy (DPMKI). It was formulated to form Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) members who have balanced strength and meet physical and spiritual needs. In accordance with the directives of the Armed Forces Council Order Number 9 of 1991 (PMAT 9/91), various programs and activities based on DPMKI have been planned and implemented with continuous improvement to meet the needs of members.

DPMKI can also be understood as a policy that provides guidelines for special education, integrating mental, physical, and spiritual development, thus strengthening the resilience of members in facing challenges. DPMKI emphasizes the spiritual element to help ATM members achieve a balance in life and increase their resilience in facing the pressures and demands of duty.

The DPMKI directive, which began in 1991, outlined certain activities along with the time scale for their implementation, encompassing two forms of development in addition to the existing physical development policy, namely mental development and spiritual development. Mental development refers to the process of generating knowledge to ensure that members can carry out the practices of *fardhu ain* and *fardhu kifayah* perfectly, in addition to having a mature and solid Islamic mind and not being easily influenced by wrong ideology.

The goal of this instruction is to provide basic Islamic education to every Muslim military member, covering basic education of *fardhu ain*, *fardhu kifayah*, understanding of *jihad*, family, morality, leadership, the Quran and Sunnah, worship, Islamic civilization, and Islamic *tasawur*. Meanwhile, spiritual strengthening emphasizes the spiritual aspect in an effort to produce military members who are Muslims, believers, and good people. This education is carried out through continuous training guided by members of the Armed Forces Religious Corps (KAGAT), with the content of the training syllabus including *Ma'thurat* recitation, dhikr gatherings, Quran recitation, *qiamullail*, sunnah prayers, and congregational prayers.

Ilmi Training And Education Concept

According to Mohd Subri (2022), the training and education implemented at ILMI is using the Army Training System (SLTD). The Army Primary Doctrine (2024), explains that this training system includes two main methods, namely conventional and innovative. Conventional refers to classes and lectures, field training and practical training while innovative methods are through webinars, virtual classes and self-learning. Thus, the ILMI training and education structure can be seen through the training and education concept as follows:

a. ILMI Training Concept

According to Hassan al-Banna Mohamed (2016), effective training has certain characteristics. The three main characteristics that need to be streamlined in ensuring that training and education achieve target objectives are setting clear goals and meeting requirements, a systematic and planned implementation process, and efficient

and organized management. If these three characteristics are not well coordinated, training and education will face the risk of failure and difficulty in achieving the objectives that have been outlined. The ILMI training concept can be understood through the training philosophy and training objectives outlined (KAGAT 2005).

i. ILMI Training Philosophy

ILMI Training Philosophy is to train KAGAT members and ATM personnel through holistic potential development to produce soldiers who are skilled, morally upright, and responsible in carrying out the ATM mission for the well-being of this world and the hereafter. The goal is to form military personnel who are faithful and pious through the implementation of the Islamic Mental and Spiritual Development Policy (DPMKI).

ii. ILMI Training Objectives

ILMI Training Objectives aim to produce KAGAT members who are professional, creative, innovative, and positive-minded in carrying out their duties and are able to provide the best religious education and services to military personnel. ILMI also plays a role in training and educating Muslim ATM members so that they are able to perform worship for themselves, their families, and subordinates. This training involves Muslim members from all service divisions through courses organized based on AT Code No. 2 and regulated by the ATM ILMI Training Management Division (AT Code No. 2 2023). In addition, ILMI strives to produce ATM members who are literate in the Quran through a course called Tahsin al-Quran focusing on members who are illiterate and weak in reciting the Quran (AT Code No. 1 2023).

ILMI provides more systematic and holistic Islamic training and education to all ATM personnel in line with current developments in the ATM and the transformation of the national education and training system. This training is carried out based on the Order of the Armed Forces Council Number 9 of 1991 (PMAT Number 9 of 1991). The smooth management and administration of the training process at ILMI is also based on a training concept that has been formed since the early establishment of ILMI, namely Ta'lim (generating knowledge), Ta'dib (building personality), Tadrib (training), Taujih (guiding) and Irsyad (providing guidance). This concept is referred to as the 4TII Training Concept (Burhanuddin Jalal 2018).

b. The concept of education at ILMI

Zakaria Stapa, Noranizah, and Abdul Fatah (2012) recommend that all Muslims return to an education system that meets the requirements of sharia while emphasizing its importance in building and creating a balanced worldly and hereafter society. According to Zakaria Stapa, Noranizah, and Abdul Fatah, three Arabic words that are often used in discussing the concept of Islamic education are *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib*. In discussing military education implemented at ILMI, Burhanuddin (2018) stated five aspects of education (*Tarbiyah*) implemented at ILMI and always emphasized in an effort to produce a defense force that can appreciate spiritual values and has a high spirit of jihad.

The five aspects are *Tarbiyah Ruhiah* (spiritual education), which leads to the development of spiritual strength so that they can face accusations that threaten faith. *Tarbiyah Fikriyah* (intellectual education). This education can produce military personnel who have a peaceful mind and can appreciate the true meaning of jihad. *Tarbiyah Nafsiyah* (mental education), this education is a builder of spiritual strength and the willingness to sacrifice wealth, soul, and body to protect religion and the nation.

In addition, *Tarbiyah Badaniyah*, or physical education which goes through phases of physical training to gain physical strength and personal skills to carry out tasks and roles during peacetime or in the field. The last is *Tarbiyah Ijtimaiah* or community education. This education can produce military personnel who have commendable qualities and are selfless in helping the civilian community, especially when the community needs help. This is in line with religious demands and in keeping with the Army motto "There is no separation between the Army and the People".

The Need For Spiritual Empowerment Of Atm Members

Undeniably, the ATM has successfully trained its members to become a strong and professional military force through a certain formula. According to Burhanuddin Jalal et. al (2022), its effectiveness can be seen in training aspects such as discipline, high morale and spirit as well as proficiency in handling weapons. However, these aspects cannot be decisive for the balance of the identity of the members without the spiritual aspect. According to Burhanuddin, KAGAT has proven the effectiveness of its presence in the ATM through the abolition of several things such as the ban on alcohol the implementation of the policy of covering the *aurat* for female members and the abolition of the *menepung tawar* event in the ATM, but the aspects of training and spiritual education as well as holistic human development need to be continued and strengthened so that ATM members can carry out their duties with full responsibility and effectiveness.

Rashidi Bujai and Azmil (2015) revealed through their study that, despite strict prohibitions, there are still cases of misconduct and disciplinary violations among military personnel such as gambling, alcohol, drug abuse, domestic problems and absenteeism without leave (THTC). According to Rashidi and Azmil, apart from negative environmental influences, the main factor that triggers this problem is the lack of emphasis on religious education and knowledge. Rashidi and Azmil also gave the view that the teaching and learning delivery process needs to be diversified through the use of the latest methods that have a greater impact on the appreciation of spiritual values of military personnel.

Zulkeple Abdullah Sani's study (2019) entitled Knowledge and Implementation of the Duties of Members of the Armed Forces Religious Corps (KAGAT) Against Army Operations (TDM) found that the life scenario of the community, especially ATM members, is still confused in the practice of religion and the direction of life. It clearly shows how necessary the unity of various parties is to intervene in addressing this issue. Zulkeple believes that various problems have entered the lives of ATM members, including the crisis of faith, worship, morality, and ideological confusion. Therefore, the process of spiritual education and da'wah activities must be carried out consistently and systematically towards military personnel, towards producing a balanced army from all aspects of the needs of a person who is faithful and pious. In this case, Islam has proven that a balanced combination of two important elements, namely spiritual strength and physical strength, can produce people or fighters who are willing to sacrifice for religion and the homeland with sincerity and sincerity. In the context of military life, those who are sincere and earnest in their struggle will receive great rewards from Allah the Almighty. Their struggle is a jihad, and their death is considered martyrdom if they are killed in battle (Jamil Khir 2007).

CONCLUSION

Since the start of ILMI operations in 2003, the Armed Forces have experienced many changes, especially in the aspect of spiritual balance and spiritual development, where its effectiveness encompasses the interests of members, family management and the Armed Forces organization (Meniti Kecemerlangan 2010). This article aims to highlight the empowerment efforts that have been implemented by ILMI ATM in improving the effectiveness of training and Islamic Education. This initial highlight will also look at the effectiveness of several other important aspects, namely the concept and structure of training and education implemented, teaching methodology, and the need for empowerment of training and education at ILMI ATM.

In addition, the researcher believes that there is a need for continuous research to be carried out to examine in more detail the empowerment of training and education aspects in an effort to make ILMI a versatile Islamic military training centre, capable and ready to face the challenges of globalization and able to achieve the objectives of its establishment. The researcher suggests that future studies should use an empirical approach to deepen understanding of the effectiveness of the implementation of training and education at ILMI. Quantitative methods such as questionnaires and qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews involving trainers, trainees and management are recommended to obtain a true picture of the experiences, perceptions and challenges in the implementation of the ILMI empowerment initiative. This empirical data can help assess the extent to which the empowerment strategy influences changes in attitudes, the quality of teaching and learning as well as the increase in knowledge in shaping the identity and professionalism of members of the Malaysian Armed Forces. Therefore, it is hoped that this article can provide suggestions towards improving the management of training and education at the ATM ILMI to be more relevant to current and future needs.

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