

The Online Zakat Learning System: An Initiative Undertaken by The Malaysia's Federal Territory Zakat Institution

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ABSTRACT

Online learning originated within the context of open learning or open education, with the purpose of allowing the sharing and interchange of all types of knowledge. By and large, online education is intended to promote self-directed learning through the use of a range of materials such as videos, links, documents, and a discussion and communication space. The Federal Territory of Malaysia's Zakat Institution (Pusat Pungutan Zakat, or PPZ) has created an online zakat education system, which is the focus of this study. The purpose of this study is to discuss the strategies, modules, and learning topics associated with the zakat learning system as a result of its practical implementation. On the other hand, this online zakat education system is a relatively new endeavour, and participation is expected to grow in the future as the public embraces it. All zakat institutions are encouraged to join these initiatives in order to spread zakat knowledge as widely as possible.

Keywords: Online learning, MOOC, Islamic education, technological teaching, online pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

Zakat is one of the Islamic pillars that all Muslims are required to adhere to. For the Muslim community's economic progress to succeed, as well as for the destitute to live in the same manner as other societies, the collection of zakat is essential. The study of zakat is therefore essential for every Muslim, as comprehending zakat influences people's decisions about whether or not to pay zakat (Muhsin & Suhaili, 2021). While appreciating zakat's potential as a catalyst for economic development, it is necessary to strengthen zakat education in order for the community to gain a better understanding of the function of zakat (Muhamad Muda et al., 2005). Zakat education courses are still in their infancy in Malaysia, with the majority of them being delivered through online platforms.

In response to the development of technological applications such as the

Internet and its applications, the role of computer-based instruments in the learning process has increased. As a result, some educational institutions and private organisations have an increasing need to use virtual learning environments, which is an electronic learning platform that supports the traditional teaching-learning-assessment process. There has been an explosion of apps designed to make it easier to manage the online learning process more effectively, as well as blended learning-type applications, as a result of this phenomenon (Popat. K et al., 2007). This type of platform frequently performs two functions: first, it provides content management (courses, assignments), second, it facilitates synchronised collaboration (via chat, video conferencing), and third, it facilitates non-synchronized collaboration (through group projects) (forum, messages, blog). Second, they may be able to deal with the courses as

well as the pupils who have applied to take part in them (Weller, M., 2007).

In connection with the foregoing, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, sometimes known as Industry 4.0, has also influenced the way people live and act around the world. It also necessitates the rapid development of technology items and the development of more inventive automation systems, which puts pressure on all parties to act rapidly. According to reports, Malaysia would be one of the countries leading the way in the development of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (R4.0) by 2019. (Ismail Sualman, 2019). Whether we were aware of it or not, the technology revolution had influenced our way of life and activities. As a result, those who do not wish to change will be bothered and abandoned by new technological developments. The speed of technological advancement is now extremely rapid, and the entire world is trying to develop and trigger breakthroughs in order to grasp this technology. In order to promote anything that is beneficial to the community, any organisation should make full use of available possibilities and space while also aggressively utilising technology, such as online learning, where possible. If enterprises do not embrace the complex new technology problems that they face, they may find themselves far behind the curve in the global market. Because of this, the purpose of this article is to underline the need of zakat institutions going into this field in order to propagate zakat knowledge throughout the world to the greatest extent feasible.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Open Learning is a concept that is being developed within the context of Open Education, where it is expected to resume academic features such as interaction, access to debate, knowledge exchange, and transparency outside of the realm of content

provision (Quiliano Terreros et al., 2009). All types of knowledge may be transmitted and shared with ease thanks to the usage of modern technologies. Overall, online learning is structured to encourage self-directed learning by providing a variety of materials, such as videos, links, documents, as well as a forum for discussion and communication amongst students.

A popular trend in the realm of online learning is the use of MOOCs, which stands for Massive Open Online Courses. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are a popular learning approach in which the majority of students do not attend classes in a physical location. Using the acronym also draws attention to the important components, which are online courses that connect the possibilities for learning in a large-scale, distributed community of peers with open practises on a broad scale (Conole, 2016). These qualities distinguish MOOCs from other types of courses: they are massively multi-user, online, open, and free (sometimes and most of the time). In a nutshell, huge indicates that it should be accessible to a vast number of students, far more than a regular face-to-face class or an online course. In contrast to traditional classroom learning, online learning allows students to complete their course work from anywhere in the world using the Internet. This feature is vital for anybody in the world who has access to the Internet, and anyone can engage in these platforms if they have a computer and an Internet connection. On the other hand, openness suggests that the course should be available to anybody who wishes to participate and should not require any prior qualifications or levels of performance in past studies to do so (Hafiza Haron et al., 2019). Students will be able to improve their utilisation of MOOCs in their learning as a result of this facility. Professors can also increase instructional materials in MOOCs in terms of design, arrangement of activities and assignments, and selection of content materials that emphasise animation components, audio

and video selection, as well as creative and interactive features. MOOCs are becoming increasingly popular (Norfarahi Zulkifli et al., 2020).

In the framework of online learning, collaboration and the establishment of a virtual community are possible. Online learning has grown increasingly popular and acceptable in higher education institutions as a result of the widespread usage of information technology such as laptops, tablets, iPads, and mobile phones (Starr-Glass, 2013). Online learning has the ability to give a wide range of benefits to students, including redirecting students' attention away from less important information and allowing them to participate in collaborative learning activities with other students (Alwi et al., 2012).

The usage of online learning in education has grown dramatically in the last decade, and there are numerous benefits to be gained from doing so (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Increasing numbers of students are taking their courses online, driving educators and content developers to create online courses in order to improve learning outcomes and instructional efficiency (Evans, 2014). A large number of studies have discovered that online learning can boost student involvement, improve the quality of conversations, and stimulate online interactions between students. By assisting students in resolving complicated challenges, the discussion forum platform has the potential to benefit them and boost their learning. Furthermore, mobile technology such as applications and PCs may make it easier to access an online learning platform and may improve the efficiency of mobile learning by making it more convenient (Panigrahi et al., 2018).

Aside from that, because of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the exponential increase in online learning, institutions and training providers have been rushing to maintain market share and, in some cases, have had to abandon

their plans to enter the market. This is due to the fact that the education system was substantially touched by this condition, and as a result, significant changes occurred that had an impact on pupils and the entire population. Social distance, quarantines, isolation measures, university closures, border closures, and travel restrictions are just a few of the negative consequences. Teaching institutions around the world, including the teaching committee and the students, were confronted with unprecedented obstacles (Mahiswaran Selvanathan, 2020). The adoption and growth of education technology began even before COVID-19, with worldwide education-tech investments hitting US\$18.66 billion in 2019 and the whole industry for online education predicted to reach \$350 billion by 2025. Since the COVID-19 conference, there has been a considerable increase in the use of language apps, virtual tutoring, video conferencing technologies, and online learning software, among other things (World Economic Forum, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This paper introduces and explores the implementation of the online zakat learning system undertaken by The Federal Territory's Zakat Institution (Pusat Pungutan Zakat, or PPZ), Malaysia. As an implementor, it was carried out by a specific unit known as The Zakat Academy (Akademi Zakat or AZKA), which was responsible for it. As a result of its practical application, the zakat learning system has introduced new methodologies, modules, and learning themes, which are discussed in this paper.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ZAKAT ACADEMY (AZKA), MALAYSIA

Introduction of AZKA-PPZ

The Zakat Academy (Akademi Zakat or AZKA) was a unit with specific goals. AZKA was officially established by The Federal Territory's Zakat Institution (Pusat Pungutan Zakat, or PPZ) in February 2019. AZKA's location is located at Wisma PPZ, 68-1-6, Dataran Shamelin, Jalan 4/91, Taman Shamelin Perkasa, 56100 Kuala Lumpur, and can be contacted via email at azka@zakat.com.my. Currently, AZKA has published three series of their academic journal called AZKA International Journal of Zakat & Social Finance (AZJAF), six research papers, and one chapter-in-book. AZKA also promotes its activities via its websites (<https://azka.zakat.com.my>) and telegram (<https://azka.zakat.com.my>).

Primary aims of AZKA are to investigate zakat and philanthropy, as well as to work with industry in order to generate value for all stakeholders and society. The mission is carried out through the organizing of numerous seminars, workshops, and webinars that bring together members of academics, zakat industry members, and the general public. Besides that, it carried out zakat research and published journals, articles, and books on the subject. It also partnered with industry and academic institutions to identify specific difficulties and meet the demands of the industry. Specifically, AZKA engages in four major activities, which are as follows:

- i. Enriching knowledge with zakat and philanthropy. Programs include forums, classes, workshops, colloquium or dialogue involving academia community, zakat industry members, and the public;
- ii. Research on zakat. Studies of specific issues based on industry need and collaboration with other stakeholders such as universities and recognized research bodies;
- iii. Publication. publication of journals, papers, and books related to zakat; and
- iv. Make industrial and academic collaboration. Strengthen partnership with industry and academicians towards research conducted related to zakat.

Platform Used for Online Zakat Learning

The OpenLearning system has been used as the core platform for the introduction of the online zakat learning courses by the Public Policy Zone. In addition to being a social learning and MOOC platform, OpenLearning also allows universities, schools, and educators to create, design, deliver, and offer courses to communities via the internet.

OpenLearning Limited (ASX: OLL) is an education technology company that provides a scalable lifelong learning platform and learning design services to education providers, as well as a global marketplace of short courses, micro-credentials, and online degrees for learners. OpenLearning Limited is headquartered in Sydney, Australia. OpenLearning, based in Sydney, Australia, was founded in 2012 with a vision to increase access to high-quality education, promote lifelong learning, and future-proof the workforce by enabling education providers to design, deliver, and sell transformative courses and degrees around the world. OpenLearning is a for-profit corporation. OpenLearning began operations in Southeast Asia in 2015 with the establishment of a branch office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and has since grown to become the region's largest platform for online higher education. The OpenLearning platform includes more than 2.7 million learners globally, thousands of courses, and collaborations with more than 167 education providers as a result of partnerships with premier institutions and government organisations (OpenLearning Limited, 2020).

The OpenLearning platform is largely a B2B2C platform, with education providers using it to give courses to learners. Depending on the education

provider's objectives and the types of courses offered, the firm may be able to market the provider's courses to other learners via the OpenLearning platform. This results in a network effect, which is enabled by several critical design decisions, including a single global cloud platform shared by all education providers and learners; additionally, each user has an OpenLearning profile that automatically aggregates all of their evidence of learning, as well as their badges, certificates, and progress, into an online portfolio (OpenLearning Limited, 2020). PPZ selected the OpenLearning system as the central platform based on four characteristics:

- i. Among the exciting things about this system, it can be accessed in various-mode either through a computer, tab, and smartphone. Note that online learning, assisted with information technologies such as laptops, tablets, iPads, and mobile phones, has been widely used and accepted in higher educational institutes (Starr-Glass, 2013).
- ii. A variety of delivery channels available such as video, audio, post sharing, and others
- iii. Most of the courses offered are free, covering the topics of Islamic Finance, Technology, Management, Engineering, Medicine, and many more.
- iv. OpenLearning system is also used by most public universities and corporate companies such as universities, government bodies, and others. To date, more than 268 courses are offered only in Malaysia.

Zakat Modules Provided

On 12th June 2021, the public was introduced to the online zakat learning module (<https://www.openlearning.com/azka>). It was established by The PPZ to encourage learner participation in the zakat commitment. Additionally, the themes

studied will mould students into human beings who understand the value of zakat in assisting the socioeconomic system and its role in poverty eradication. There are numerous reasons for the development of these modules, including the following:

- i. To spread the message of zakat through the concept of online learning. The implementation of online zakat learning aims to attract and increase the interest of users' level of understanding through interactive techniques and learning mediums that help stimulate their enthusiasm in the learning process.
- ii. To develop a centralized learning environment for Zakat knowledge. The ability of online zakat learning in terms of information sharing to every layer of society is necessary. By creating an environment centered on knowledge, zakat can be learned by focusing on only one place of search
- iii. To create a new method for Officer Training Hours. Online zakat learning can assist users in undergoing training virtually without involving financial and travel costs. It can be accessed at any time, 24 hours a day.

By the end of the course, students will have mastered the assessment of zakat based on individual income sources and will have developed into community preachers. In this lesson, students will go through four stages of study before becoming adept in calculating zakat. The four phases are as follows:

- i. Understand the definition and management of zakat,
- ii. Process the information learned by comparing the current situation,
- iii. Remembering the information processed,
- iv. Delivering zakat to friends around,

PPZ's Online Zakat Learning includes the following five modules: Introduction, Mandatory Conditions, Zakat Types, Asnaf, and Zakat Management. The most comprehensive modules are those on zakat types, which include information on zakat on income, zakat on business, zakat on money savings, and a variety of other zakat types. This session should take approximately 23 hours to finish, especially for those who are unfamiliar with zakat.

However, the duration of the course may be reduced if students are already familiar with the ins and outs of zakat. The final component is the examination and receipt of a Certificate of Participation. To get this Certificate of Completion, participants must take an exam consisting of 23 objective questions covering all five themes. This is illustrated in the table below:

Table 1. The List of Topic (Module) in PPZ's Online Zakat Learning

Topic	Title	Details	Estimated Time to Complete (For beginners)
1	Introduction	Introduction	3 hours
		Definition	
		History	
		Purpose of Zakat	
		Conclusion on Topic 1	
2	Mandatory Conditions	Mandatory Zakat Conditions	1 hour
		Conclusion on Topic 2	
3	Type of Zakat	Type of Zakat	12 hours
		Zakat on Income	
		Zakat on Business	
		Zakat on Money Savings	
		Zakat on Share	
		Zakat on EPF	
		Zakat on Gold	
		Zakat on Silver	
		Zakat on Agriculture	
		Zakat on Livestock	
		Zakat on Minerals	
4	Asnaf	Zakat al-Fitr	3 hours
		Conclusion on Topic 3	
		Asnaf	
		Had Kifayah	
		Zakat Assistance Scheme	
5	Zakat Management	Conclusion on Topic 4	3 hours
		The History Of The Establishment Of The Islamic Religious Council	
		Zakat Management	
		Amil	
Conclusion on Topic 5			1 hour
Test			

Notes: All of the above topics and titles are in Malay

Source: Taken from PPZ's online learning website, <https://www.openlearning.com/azka/>

Participants will receive an email with a Certificate of Completion once they have completed all five topics and scored 100 percent on the test. In addition, this PPZ's Online Zakat Learning provides participants with e-books and Digital Zakat Calculation Booklets as supplementary resources for further reference.

When it comes to the delivery aspect, a variety of channels are utilised to build an interactive zakat module that is not simply a simple reading exercise. Slides, video, audio, quizzes and exercises, as well as uploading and chat sharing, are some of the formats that are employed. Another fascinating feature is two-way communication, which allows participants to share posts with others if they wish to find out more information or exchange thoughts with other members of the community. This publishing and discussion capability functions in the same way as

Facebook's social media platform. Cooperation and virtual communities, as stated by Zhonggen Yu (2021), could be developed in the context of online learning, according to Yu. Online learning has the ability to give a wide range of benefits to students, including redirecting students' attention away from less important information and allowing them to participate in collaborative learning activities with other students (Alwi et al., 2012).

More importantly, collaborative learning was found to be significantly and positively connected with peer conversations and engagement rates (Brown, 2001). As a result, the establishment of virtual communities may have a positive impact on the results of online learning (Panigrahi et al., 2018). The following is an illustration of the PPZ's online zakat learning display interface:

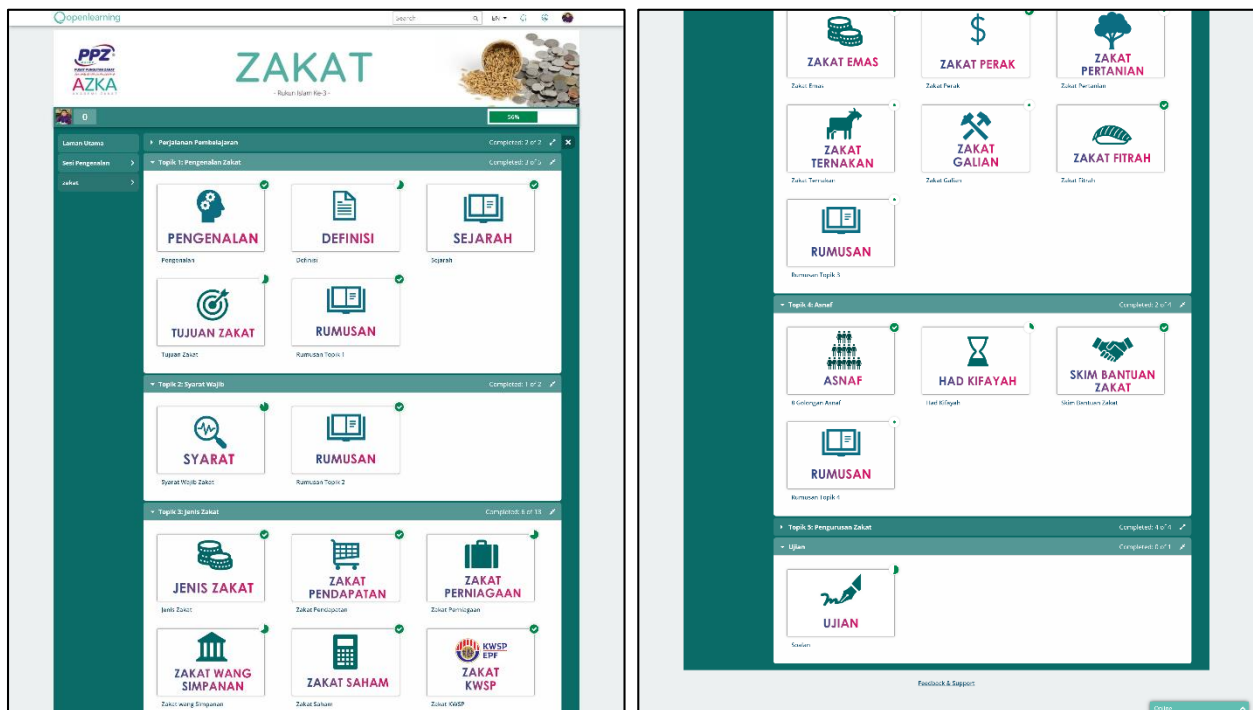


Figure 1. PPZ's Online Zakat Learning Display Interface

Source: <https://www.openlearning.com/azka/>

As we all know, the PPZ's online zakat learning platform is a brand-new project that has just been launched. PPZ's online zakat learning programme has just

reached its maximum number of 47 participants as of the 29th of June in the year 2021. The rate of participation is projected to rise in the future as the general

public becomes more accepting of PPZ's online zakat learning programme. As a result, constant improvement in PPZ's online learning must be carried out at all times. This includes refining learning exercises, updating the most up-to-date information, as well as developing new module content. As Jay Andrew Cohen (2020) points out, well-designed online learning should provide a broad range of learning affordances via pedagogically relevant technology in order to encourage rather than inhibit learners' ability to learn effectively. Self-directed learners should be able to participate in a wide range of learning activities, including those that are facilitated by the teacher or trainer, such as an organised debate, case study, interactive demonstration, role-play, or an organised synchronous discussion, amongst other activities. Self-directed learners should be able to control their own learning through text, audio and podcasts, graphics, animation, and video, among other mediums of communication (Jay Andrew Cohen, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper is to emphasise the importance of zakat institutions entering the online learning realm in order to disseminate zakat knowledge as widely as is reasonably possible. As a result, we launched PPZ's online zakat learning programme as a first step. Online learning, which has become widely used and approved throughout the world, is now being met by this initiative. Online learning has the ability to give a wide range of benefits to students, including redirecting students' attention away from less important information and allowing them to participate in collaborative learning activities with other students. Furthermore, according to Shearer et al. (2019), "learners are very independent, and they have complete control over their learning process." They are self-motivated, self-

controlling, and self-monitored individuals. In this course, students learn through participating in in-depth conversations and exchanges with their fellow students and professors, as well as by solving complex real-world situations using critical thinking and metacognitive processes. Teachers play the roles of facilitators, mediators, and mentors." Given this, great online learning design shifts the emphasis away from direct instruction and toward learning affordances and self-direction, which are enhanced by technology and facilitated by thoughtful learning design.

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