Information and Communication Technology Skills and Mosque Administrators

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Abstract

It has been recognized since the earliest period of Islam the importance of mosque as a centre of Islamic educational institution. Attached to the mosque is a library of certain magnitude and importance. Most of these libraries are administered by mosque administrators, whose level of competencies in information and communication technology is assumed to be low. A study to assess the level of competency related to ICT was undertaken. The findings are based on a total of 25 returned questionnaires from mosque library administrators in three mosques in the Klang Valley. Only in three areas of ICT, namely word processing, electronic mail and Internet that mosque administrators exhibited a high level of competency. The respondents reported that it is important to apply ICT for the purpose of religious instruction, da'wah *activities, provision of community services through the website and in the daily business of the community*

Keywords *:* ICT competencies; Mosque Libraries; Internet; E-mail; Malaysia.

1. Introduction

For the Muslims the mosque plays an important role in their daily lives as it serves to gather not only those who perform their religious duties but also those who are engaged in seeking and learning new knowledge. Idriz (2000) pointed out that "the mosque served as a centre of Islamic educational institution, where Muslims gathered not only to perform religious duties but also to seek and learn new knowledge." The seeking of new knowledge is preponderantly done through the delivery systems offered by the library which in most cases is closely attached to the mosque.

In the case of Malaysia mosque libraries have not yet made any significant contribution to the society at large. This could be attributed to the low level of development in library sectors that are servicing the community, including those in the public library sectors. For the library to be really functional and effective in the delivery of their services there should be corresponding efforts on the part of the mosque management to see that the mosque administrators are imbued with the skills and knowledge in the areas of ICT. The mosque administrators should possess not only positive attributes and attitudes but also highly relevant technical skills that can catalyse the achievement of the mission of the mosque library.

The existence of the mosque libraries and the presence of information and communication technology in the libraries will go to nothing if the people who are responsible in managing the libraries are ineffective, especially due to information and communication technology illiteracy. If library users who are mostly illiterate in information and communication technology seek assistance the mosque library administrator must be there to help them in overcoming their problems. The possession of skills in ICT is imperative for workers who

are working in the digital environment In this context it would be useful if a study is conducted to identify the level of ICT skills among the mosque administrators, how the administrators apply their skills in ICT and the problems faced by the administrators.

Towards this end a study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:
  (a) To determine the level of ICT skills among the library administrators.
  (b) To identify which ICT applications in the workplace are considered important to the library administrators
  (c) To understand the problems faced by the library administrators.

2. Review of the Literature

ICT skills are important in meeting the globalization era. With the preponderance of information technology in our society and the growing importance of digital divide, proficiency in IT has become an important concern of our society (Committee on Information Technology Literacy, 1999). ICT competency concerns with one's ability to utilize various digital technology, communication tools and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information in order to function in a knowledge society.

Workers from public and private sectors need to equip themselves with ICT skills and knowledge in order to keep abreast with the speed of today's development in all fields of endeavor. This point is well stated by Dench, (1997), "With today's world of digital age, workers of any institutions or organizations need to have not only good personal attributes and attitudes, but also personal and technical skills which include literacy in information and ICT." Why the workers have to be competent in ICT is because of the technology and information explosion. They need new skills and knowledge in order to be a global player in a knowledge economy. Without such skills and knowledge they might be facing digital exclusion.

This scenario is aptly stated by Rader (2000), "Technology and the information explosion are having a major impact on society as a whole; business, education and libraries in particular. People need new skills to learn and cope with the expanding information in their lives. They need to acquire these new problems and address important issues in the workplace and in their lives."

Studies done in Korea have reiterated the fact that ICT competencies are important for all types of workers at national level (Hwang, Hur and Choi, 2004). It is evident that the influence of ICT literacy is not limited to developed countries alone but also those of developing countries as well, including Muslim countries like Malaysia. At this juncture it is pertinent to note that only with ICT competency the mosque library administrators are able to provide the best service possible for the users of the mosque libraries.

3. Methodology

As the level of mosque library development in the country is just taking shape due to the intervention of the government to promote the establishment of mosque libraries, very few mosques are having libraries attached to them. As such the study is limited to those mosques that operate libraries within their premises. For the purpose of this study three mosque

libraries were selected. All these mosque libraries are located in the Klang Valley and they are administered by mosque library administrators. Of the fifty questionnaires sent to the library administrators of these mosques, only twenty-five questionnaires were returned from these mosques, achieving a 50% return rate.

4. Results

The demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that there are more male mosque library administrators, who acted as respondents in this study, about 56% as compared to female library administrators whose total is about 44% only. In terms of age, there are six respondents (24%) of the total, whose age range between 20 to 30 years, 28% are between 36 to 40 years old, 20 % are between 41 to 45 years old and 28% are 46 years old and above. Majority of the respondents are O-level holders, comprising 52% of the total, followed by those who hold a bachelor degree, 24% of the total. There are also holders of master degree with twelve percentage points (Table 1).

Table 1: The Demographic Characteristics of The Mosque Library Administrators

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender: male	14	56
female	11	44
Age : 20-30 year	6	24
31-40 year	7	28
41-45 year	5	20
46 above	7	28
Qualification : Diploma	3	12
Bachelor	6	24
Master	3	12
Others	13	52

The level of competency of the mosque library administrators in handling ICT is shown in both Figure 1 and Table 2. They were required to respond to sixteen ICT competencies. The ICT competencies deemed to be of primary concerns for the mosque library administrators are as follows: word processing, graphics, spreadsheet, desktop publishing, databases, folders and directories creation, e-mail, faxing, Internet usage, wallpapers and icon themes changes, scanner usage, computer software installation, website construction, digital camera usage, computer repair and computer hardware installation.

The majority of the respondents indicated that they have good or excellent competency with word processing. Eighty percent of the mosque library administrators reported that they are either good (60%) or excellent (20%) in using word processing. In respect of graphics presentation only twenty percent reported that they are either good or excellent in graphics presentation. Majority are either fairly satisfactory (48%) or poor/very poor (40%). The report on spreadsheet usage indicated that most of them are comfortable with this competency. Forty four percent said they are either good (24%) or excellent (20%) and forty eight percent are fairly satisfactory. Desktop publishing competency is considered as not important among the mosque library administrators. About sixty percent are ill equipped with this competency as 36% rated themselves as poor and 24% as very poor. In the case of database competency the mosque library administrators are comfortable as sixty percent said they are either good (20%) or excellent (12%) and twenty eight percent said they are fairly

satisfied. They are also well equipped with folders and directories creation competency as sixty four percent reported they are fairly satisfactory (32%), good (20%) and excellent (12%).

The second competency that almost all are very familiar is using electronic mail. Eighty percent said they are capable of using e-mail and they rated fairly satisfactory (36%), good (24%) and excellent (20%). For faxing competency fifty six percent said they are either good (28%) or excellent (12%) and fairly satisfied (16%).

The third competency that the respondent are familiar with is the Internet usage, where eighty four percent said they are capable of handling this competency, out of which 36% responded good in using Internet, 8% excellent and 40% said they are fairly satisfied. In the case of changing wallpaper and icon themes they reported that this competency is quite unfamiliar as fifty two said they are poor (40%) or very poor (12%) in handling this competency and forty eight percent are capable. Using a scanner is also a problem for the mosque library administrators. Forty eight percent reported they performed poorly (40%) and (8%) very poorly. The next 28% percent said they are fairly satisfied. They also reported that they are having problem as well in installing computer software and hardware. In the case of computer software fifty two percent reported performing poorly (24%) and very poorly (28%) while for computer hardware sixty percent expressed their poor performance (16%) and very poor performance (44%). The mosque library administrators are also ill equipped to handle website construction competency. Sixty eight percent reported performing poorly (40%) and very poorly (28%) in this competency. In regard to using digital camera 32% of respondents reported they are fairly satisfied, 24% reported good and 24% reported poorly. They are also not competent to handle computer repair as seventy two percent expressed their poor (24%) and very poor performance (48%) in this competency.
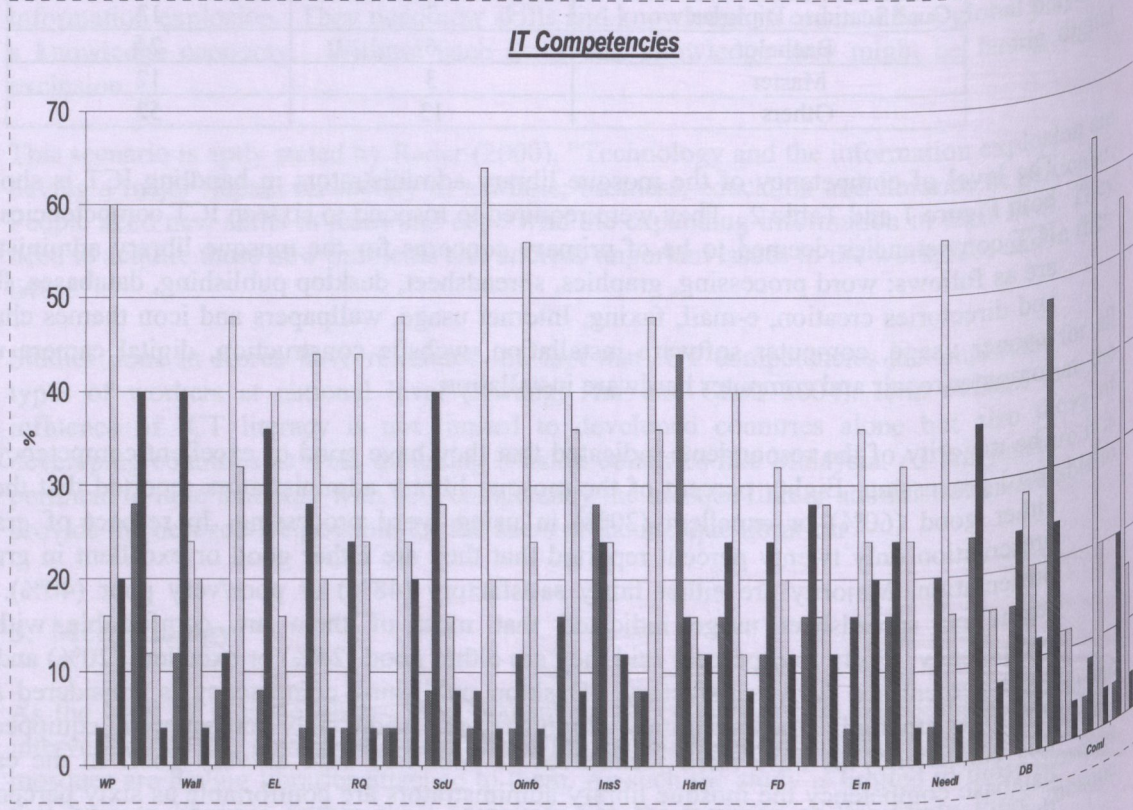

Figure 1: ICT Competencies of Mosque Library Administrators

Table 2: Ability Level For ICT Competency Among The Mosque Library Administrators

ICT Application	Acronym used	% Very Poor	% Poor	% Fair	% Good	% Excellent
Word Processing	WP	0	4	16	60	20
Website construction	WC	28	40	12	16	4
Wallpaper and icon themes manipulation	Wall	12	40	24	20	4
Spreadsheet usage	SpU	4	4	48	24	20
Scanner usage	ScU	8	40	28	16	8
Internet usage	InU	0	16	40	36	8
Install software	InsS	28	24	24	12	12
Install hardware	Hard	44	16	16	12	12
Graphics manipulation	Grap	16	24	40	12	8
Folder/directories manipulation	FD	12	24	32	20	12
Faxing	Fax	16	28	16	28	12
E-mailing	Em	4	16	36	24	20
Digital camera usage	Dcam	16	24	32	24	4
Desktop Publishing	Pub	24	36	16	16	8
Database usage	DB	16	24	28	20	12
Computer repair	Rep	48	24	12	12	4

It is also important to understand the use of ICT at the mosque library administrators' workplace. What type of applications has these people embark upon at the workplace? Figure 2 presents the type of efforts taken by the library administrators. The respondents reported that it is important to apply ICT for the purpose of religious instruction. Forty eight percent of the respondents agreed that ICT application for religious class as important. The application of ICT can be extended to cover *da'wah* activities as well. Seventy two percent considered these activities as important or very important. The provision of community services through the website are also considered important by the respondents. About sixty eight percent agreed with the move to use ICT for community services. ICT has also been shown to be applied in the daily business of the community. In this respect sixty eight percent of the respondents considered this application as important.

It is evident that not all mosque library administrators are competent in ICT activities. However, they seldom attend trainings and workshop supported by their institutions. As such they faced the problem of not being able to keep current with the development in the fields. They also reported that there are not enough facilities in upgrading their skills and knowledge in ICT.
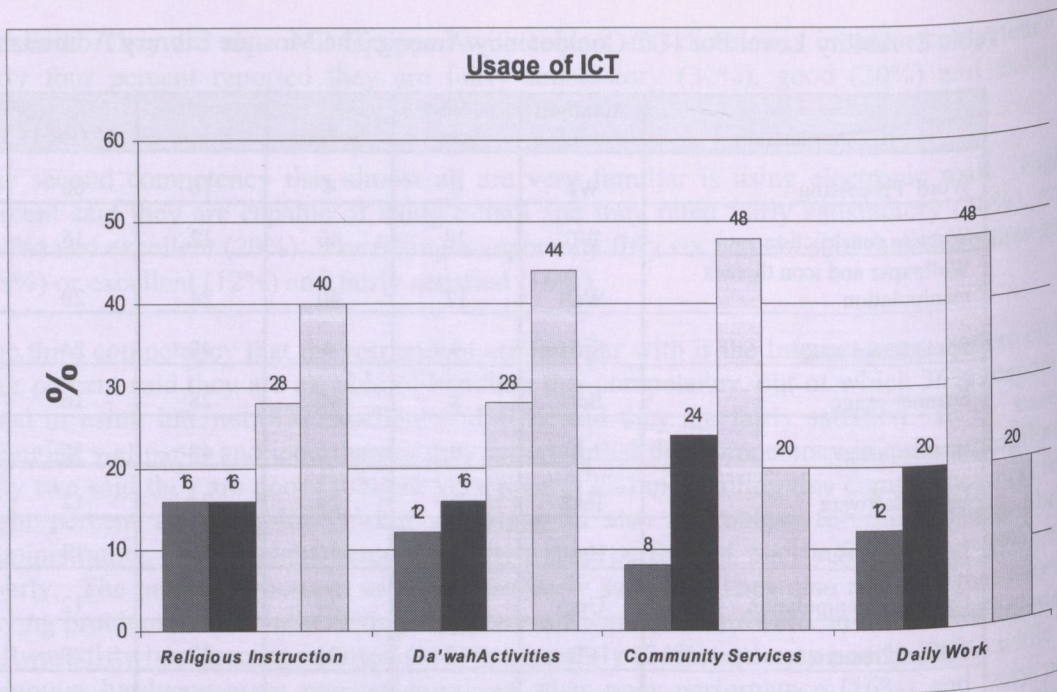
Usage of ICT

Figure 2: How ICT is applied at the Mosque Library Administrators' Workplace

5. Conclusion

The results show that mosque library administrators do possess the basic competencies in ICT. The level of competencies varies from individuals to individuals depending on their exposure to the respective skills. They perceived ICT competency as an important elements in fulfilling and completing their jobs/tasks. The findings showed that there are more male mosque library administrators as compared to female. The mosque library administrators have a high level of competency only in three areas of ICT, namely in word processing, electronic mail and Internet usage. They realized that in order to be proficient in ICT they have to undergo trainings and be attending workshops in order to sharpen their skills and knowledge in those areas.

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