MUVC RESOLUTION

CHAPTER 7

Way Forward:

Operationalising a Higher Education Model

Based on Islam

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Resolution 11

The strong need for a higher education model based on Islam does not necessarily give rise to the need to establish a new 'physical' university to implement the model. A virtual university concept could be adopted and/or enhanced to operationalise such a model.

In this Chapter, we share the case of how an existing university takes measures to transform itself into an institution of higher education that truly reflects the essence of Islam.

Abstract

The profound need to bring back a higher education model based on Islam in the existing secular world can never be overstated. In operationalising the initiative, we propose an approach that focuses on developing the appropriate worldview of Islamic university based on the principles of Islam rather than through the establishment of a new 'physical' university. Akin to a container absent of content, a physical university, claimed Islamic, serves little purpose if the essence of education from the perspective of Islam is absent. Thus, the harbinger to reclaim Islamic tradition as the alternative, if not as mainstream model for higher education, is to disseminate the right philosophy and worldview of education and the role of university in Islam.

We share the strategies adopted by a Malaysian institution to embark on the journey to transform itself into an institution of higher learning that truly upholds the principles of Islam.

Introduction

That a secular model of education is the *de facto* global education system today makes attempt to infuse true Islamic values into higher education almost as if untenable. But this does not mean that such initiative must be abandoned. If at all, it is the effort by Muslim University Vice Chancellors (MUVC) as believers of Islam to restore the underpinnings of education founded upon Islam that will bring meaning to their role and function as MUVC today. Various documented evidence of how concerned communities in the West are making inroads to reinstate religion and indigenous traditions into secular and Eurocentric educational system demonstrates that the Muslim education communities have been complacent for far too long. For instance, the Working Papers of the Social Science Research Council in the US on Religion and Knowledge in the Post-Secular Academy, states that:

> "By the late 1990s, centers and institutes dedicated to the study of American religion had been established...The goal of this [Centers of Excellence] program was to establish an **academic foothold for religion** at **America's most elite universities**, including Princeton, Yale, Boston University, NYU, Virginia, Emory, USC, Notre Dame, Missouri, and Penn." (Schmalzbauer & Mahoney, 2008, p. 5 & p. 13).

The Report on the Research Study Examining Indigenous Science Perspectives in Saskatchewan Canada in the teaching of science at school concludes that:

> "Canadian education systems will need to create new forms of educational institutions which are grounded in Indigenous traditional knowledge and values, …Indigenous science education must take its rightful place as the vehicle to produce ecologically aware citizens and a healthy global environment."(Herman, Vizina, Augustus & Sawyer, 2008, p. 132).

This Chapter as a final chapter outlines the Way Forward in operationalising the initiative to reclaim Islam as the appropriate model of higher education (HE) for Muslim nations if not for mainstream academia. For the purpose of this Monograph, we use the term 'HE model based on Islam' rather than Islamic HE model. This is to avoid creating a mindset of pigeon-holing HE institutions as Islamic just because they exhibit a list of criteria traits that describe Islam. In this endeavour to bring back a model of HE based on Islam, we frame our reference of "Islamic university" to a HE institution which upholds truly Islamic principles as a whole from the onset, both, in terms of the philosophy and the operationalising of the philosophy. We analogise the establishment of a HE institution based on Islam as a container with the content growing together rather than having a container first and then putting in the content later. Henceforth, whenever the term 'Islamic university' is made throughout this Chapter, it reflects this stance of ours. Otherwise, we would have to keep referring to "universities which actualize HE model based on Islam" which is rather mouthful.

In addition, we also take a standpoint that a "virtual" university concept as identified in the Resolution is not to be strictly interpreted as the "e-platform" mode of instruction. It is rather about the concept to establish the essence of Islamic university through an approach that does not take the path of building of physical infrastructure first. Although this Chapter is universal in applicability, we wish to declare that we frame our work to the landscape of universities in Malaysia which basically are either

i)   pure secular universities absent of the role of mosques;

ii)   secular universities but with mosques as feature; and

iii)   categorised as Islamic universities as reflected in their names and with or without mosques as feature.

A Teleocratic Paradigm of Higher Education Model Based on Islam

In light of the extensive practice of the secularized HE model throughout the world including in Muslim countries, effort to bring back the essence of HE model based on Islam must begin with re-establishing the understanding of Islam as the worldview of life for Muslims. A worldview that accepts the Majesty of the Transcendent creates a sense of purpose in life. For Muslims, the Quran verses 51:56, "I have only created jinns and men that they may serve Me" and 2:30, "Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth…" are all encompassing of the existence of a Transcendental Creator and the purpose of being human.

Extending a transcendental teleocratic worldview of reality as upheld in Islam to higher education will consequently imbue the true spirit of HE where the centrality of the sacredness of human as vicegerents can be brought back. In other words, the model of HE must be one that allows for the recognition and acknowledgment for things to be put in the right and proper place in the order of creation, that is, to actualize what Al-Attas (1980) describes as *adab*. This meaning of *adab* or good conduct thus, goes beyond just the observable mannerism of an individual to comprise too, the dominion of one's internal governance and intellectual discipline. An education that allows for the cultivation of *adab* is what Al-Attas rendered as *ta'dib* while the content or *maudud* of *ta'dib* according to early scholars is ethics and morality or *akhlaq* (Wan Daud, 1998).

When *adab* is actualized, the rightful place of the Transcendent and human is observed. That epistemology includes revealed knowledge too, is a natural consequence. From the perspective of Islam, verses 2 to 4 of the Surah Al-Baqarah provide the formula to prosper or succeed as culminated in verse 5 of the Surah.

- This is the Book, in it is <u>guidance</u> sure, <u>without doubt</u>, to those who fear Allah (Verse 2)

- Who believe in the <u>unseen</u>, are <u>steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them</u>; (Verse 3)

- And who believe in the <u>Revelation</u> sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) <u>have the assurance of the Hereafter</u> (Verse 4)

- They are on (true) guidance, from their Lord, and it is these who will <u>prosper</u> (Verse 5)

But when Muslims no longer believe in the unseen and that good conduct nurtured through Islamic upbringing is the core of their public and professional behavior and instead favour external codes of conduct prescribed in sources other than the Quran and reject revealed knowledge, Islam naturally loses its position in mainstream education. The practice today is of separation between Islam or religion and professional practice. Because mainstream education is secular with human taken as absent of soul, character building is confined to the physical as the main or hard skills while moral, ethics and other internal skills are defined as soft skills.

Today, a demarcation exists between one's private space and public sphere. There is a disconnect between living a life of purpose accountable to a Transcendent (private space) and the purpose of HE which is limited only to attaining the skills set for one's career as a human resource to build the economy (public sphere) as a result of the loss of *adab.* Following Al-Attas' argument (Al-Attas, 1954), that type of mainstream education without an emphasis in character formation has practically no value in Islam. Hence, a true understanding of education as a way to nurture the human mind on how to live a life of purpose including making commerce or business as the medium towards achieving human well-being is profoundly needed. The function of education to mould the souls as well as to inform the intellect (Hooker, 1997) must be reemphasized. "In focusing on the practical aspects of enabling our students to live productive lives in a knowledge-based economy, we risk paying too little attention to the challenge of enabling our students to live meaningful lives in the

world of the future" (Hooker, 1997, p. 8).The mindset of limiting the relevance of an education model that is based on Islam to be restricted only within the perimeter of religious education must be obliterated. So too, must Muslims accept that learning Islam is not just about seeking cognitive knowledge but for application. But until Muslim professionals and educators have faith in Islam as a way of life and vocation and are convicted to actualize this faith in their daily transactions, mainstreaming Islamic model of HE even among Muslim nations will remain rhetorical.

What could make it worse is when out of ignorance, Muslim scholars propagate what they believe as the Islamic model of practice in their profession, yet the truth of it is that it is fundamentally in contradiction to the tenets of Islam. A flawed worldview that does not capture the reality of Islam but proclaimed as Islamic, poses more danger to the *Ummah* than one that admits itself as being of secular in origin. Therefore, to avoid falling into a similar trap of only instituting HE model based on Islam in the form of a physical structure as iconic representation of Islamic university, we invite a shift in mindset to concentrate instead on developing a blue print on how to bring back Islam as the worldview of reality among Islamic intelligentsia, in substance. The issue of the setting up of a physical university becomes relevant only once the Islamic worldview is the premise accepted by the Muslim communities and that the education infrastructure truly manifests Islamic traits and philosophy.

The Role of Worldviews

A worldview or *tasawwur* is analogous to the window or lens which one uses to see the world. It is formed through one's conscious or non-conscious conditioning. According to Tarnas (1991), a worldview has a tremendous influence in configuring the way the world really turns out to be since our approach to reality will influence the kind of reality that we create. By the same token, worldview is what that lends meaning in one's life because one's worldview influences how one interprets a

phenomenon, including about knowledge, the method of knowing, and about reality and existence. In short, it moulds one's belief system which encompasses the defining of one's moral and ethical stance of what is right or wrong and the purpose of doing things. For instance, a worldview on the conceptions of knowledge and education based on Islam hinges on knowledge as being intimately related to one's belief and is part of faith (Alattas, 2009).

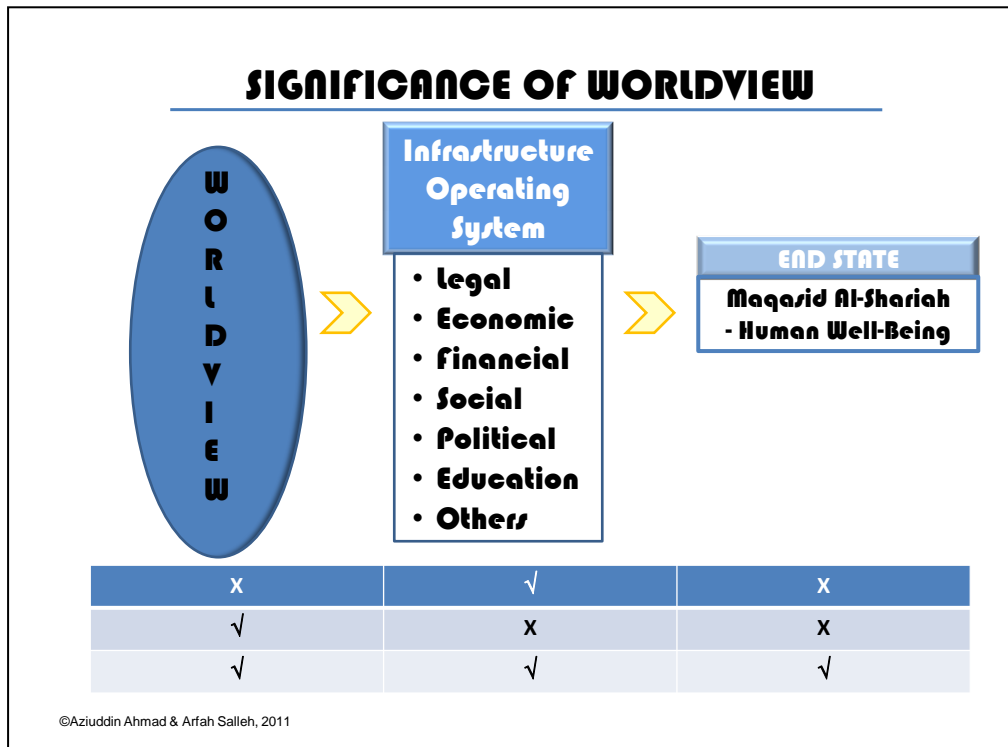The Islamic conception of knowledge sees knowledge and education

> "not merely as the acquisition of information or the capacity for explanation and analysis but also connects these processes to the nature of God and reality and a human ethic of responsibility by no means implies that only what is in revelation is knowledge or that only what is apparently compatible with revelation is true knowledge. Muslims believe that all knowledge originates from God and that such knowledge arrives to humans by way of various channels" (Alattas, 2009, p. 9)

Thus, one's behavior which is a shadow of one's essence is considerably influenced by one's worldview. By essence, we mean an individual's internal governance structure which is about the way of doing things right and proper.

And because humans collectively make up the community and nations, worldview will also have bearing on the operating infrastructure systems of a nation and consequently the end state achieved. This relationship is captured in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Significance of Worldview

SIGNIFICANCE OF WORLDVIEW

WORLDVIEW

Infrastructure Operating System
- Legal
- Economic
- Financial
- Social
- Political
- Education
- Others

END STATE
Maqasid Al-Shariah
- Human Well-Being

X	√	X
√	X	X
√	√	√

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From Figure 1, it can be observed that a worldview can influence the end state or achievement of set objective(s) through the implementation of the various corresponding infrastructure or systems such as legal, economics, financial and others in operation. Should a worldview based on Islam prevail, the end state as in the attainment of the Maqasid Al-Shariah or objectives of the Shariah of preserving human well-being can be arrived at through the adoption of the operating infrastructure drawn upon the tenets of Islam. An in-depth deliberation on the topic of Maqasid Al-Shariah is beyond the scope of this Chapter but suffice to highlight that from contemporary works by scholars such as Kamali sourced from Ghazali and Shatibi (two authorities on Maqasid Al-Shariah), the importance of preserving the Maqasid which has its origin from the Quran and Sunnah is fundamental to Muslims.

But in today's environment where there is unequivocal acceptance of the secular worldview where the centrality of human as vicegerents is absent, the model of

infrastructure operating systems that are currently in existing are drawn upon a secular frame of reference. The infrastructure system dictating the workings of the world economy and financial framework for instance is drawn upon Capitalism, sidelining human, in favour of economic well-being. Many fundamental principles and practices such as the Fractional Reserve Banking systems and maximization of shareholders' wealth that contradict Islamic values litter the otherwise sacred role of commerce as the platform to achieve human well-being. Although these practices have been made legal through various acts of parliament, quintessentially, they remain in contradiction to Islamic principles of justice, fairness, and equity. The attainment of Maqasid Al-Shariah is no longer of primacy. While examples of non-Islamic Western constructs infrastructure operating systems currently in practice are aplenty, the focus of discussion in this Chapter is on the HE framework.

But how many Muslims do question the extent to which the current support system is flawed resulting in the Maqasid Al-Shariah not attained? What could not be more pathetic is that not only many do not realize the flaws of the current infrastructure operating systems but many Muslims worldwide too, have been partaking in the propagation of the wrongness through adopting the Western-designed education model, oblivious to the dangers and perils they are inflicting the Muslim mind. It is this colonization of the mind which the MUVC platform must fight against in order to bring back the sanctity of Islam as a religion and way of knowing. As highlighted by Progler (2001), one only had to look at the form and content of knowledge that was being offered in a typical contemporary university education to realize the omnipresent imperialism that was still rooted among the once colonized community, but this time, through education.

Hence, we stand by our collective resolution as established during the MUVC Kuala Lumpur 2010 Meet that the initiative to bring back the Islamic model of HE should

begin with the rebuilding of the non-physical infrastructure as in reframing the right Islamic worldview rather than focusing on building a physical university. Towards this end, what better way to begin the quest than to question how MUVC Forum should and intends to differentiate itself from non-MUVC grouping apart from the externality of the former being comprised of individuals who are Muslims? This is a question that individual member of MUVC Forum must answer so that they could speak in one voice. As Muslims, we collectively need to remind each other of the Al-Mithaq or covenant that human have agreed with our Creator and the honour thereupon conferred upon us for sustenance. We quote the three verses of the Quran on this matter:

> **Al A'raf (7:172) (Asad)** AND WHENEVER thy Sustainer brings forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam, He [thus] calls upon them to bear witness about themselves: "Am I not your Sustainer?" - to which they answer: "Yea, indeed, we do bear witness thereto!" [Of this We remind you,] lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, "Verily, we were unaware of this"
>
> **Al Ahzab (33:72) (Yusuf Ali)** We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it: He was indeed unjust and foolish.
>
> **Al Isra' (17:70) (Yusuf Ali)** We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation.

And we view that it is in honouring the spirit of the Al-Mithaq that we need to bring back the sanctity of education as it is meant to be in Islam. Only through the correction of our flawed worldview will we be able to bring back the *fitrah* in us

human. For this purpose, we believe lessons from how earlier Islamic institutions of higher learning began could help shed light on the worldview of the concept of university and henceforth facilitate the drawing up of strategies to bring back an Islamic university.

University as a Western Construct

The list of the "Top 10 Oldest Universities of the World" as in institutions of higher learning that have been in continuous-operation of degree-granting (http://www.buzzle.com/articles/oldest-university-in-the-world.html) provides useful point of reference on how universities of the world were established. At the top list are three universities of Islamic education in origin or *madrassa* in the order of the University of Al-Karaouine or Al-Qarawiyyin originally established as the Jami'a Al-Qarawiyyin located in Fes, Morrocco founded in 859 AD; the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt founded around 972 AD and earlier known as the Jami'a Al-Azhar; and Al-Nizammiya of Baghdad founded in 1065 AD in Dhu'l Qa'da. The University of Bologna, Italy founded in 1088 is the first university said as established in the Christian world followed by the University of Paris, France in 1096 and the University of Oxford, England, established around the same time as the University of Paris. However, the existence of earlier universities as in degree granting institutions during ancient time has also been claimed. Such institutions include the Takshashila in Pakistan claimed as established in 6th century BC; the Nalanda Univeristy in Bihar State, India which was said to have been established by the 5th century BC; the Platonic Academy, founded ca. 387 BC in Athens, Greece; the Nanjing University founded in 258 in China; the Taehak founded in 372 in Korea and the Pandidakterion of Constantinople in 425.

When the first known usage of the word 'university' in English was recorded is rather unclear. There is claim that it dates back from the 14th century but others took it

further back to the 12th century marked by the first recorded academic charter, the Constitutio Habita, adopted by the University of Bologna. Regardless, according to the etymology of university (http://www.myetymology.com/english/university.html) it is derived from the Old French word *universite,* derived from the Medieval Latin word *universitas* denoting the universe, the sum of all things or whole. University from the Latin *universitas* according to Colish (1997) was used to refer to degree-granting institutions of learning linked with 'specialised associations of students and teachers with collective legal rights usually guaranteed by charters issued by princes, prelates, or the towns in which they were located' (p. 267).

Based on the historical development of university, we can establish that the concept of university itself is a modern Western construct that was anointed to institutions of higher learning that award degrees even when these institutions never claimed a university status when they were first set up originally. In short, these institutions of higher learning are now retrospectively "templated" as universities according to the criteria identified. And referenced against these criteria, are several *jami'a* that have started under the Islamic education system of the *madrassa* so that they are now recognized as the origin of modern day university. With this recognition, any effort to bring back a HE model based on Islam including through the MUVC Forum cannot but need to revisit the concept of HE as it was earlier practised in order to appreciate the philosophy then.

HE from the Islamic Worldview - The Mosque as the Heart for Knowledge Pursuit

Asfaruddin (2008) reported how mosques used to play a lead role in the pursuit of knowledge by Muslims. From the perspective of Islam as it has always been intended since the time of the Prophet (PBUH) in Medina, the role of mosques was never to be separated from education. Except for the three earlier mosques (Masjid Al-Nabawi,

Masjid Al-Haram and Masjid Al-Aqsa) which were solely dedicated as place of worship, mosques generally, were built as premises for people to be educated in various disciplines hence known as *jami'a* denoting "universal" or complete as far as the courses that were offered. As such, mosques had always taken the centre position in any educational complex both in geographic location and function, in short, the heart. The earlier setting of Islamic university in the form of *jami'a Islami* is depicted in the upper part of Figure 2 (p. 17). To surmise, it was university that formed part of a mosque in contrast to today's structure where mosque is only but peripheral.

During the earlier period, it was the scholar teachers at each mosque who issued the *ijaza* or certificate to their students to signify the level of proficiency that each student had accomplished. Completion of a programme of study tended to differ according to the individual student. The authenticity of knowledge at *jami'a* as passed from the *murad* or teacher to the *murid* or student is determined through the *isnad* or chain of authority of scholar teachers and the *sanad* or institutions which the teachers are attached to. The *isnad* and *sanad,* originating from the tradition of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (PUBH) establishes the legitimacy of a teacher's teaching through linking the teacher to earlier sources of knowledge. For example, the *sanad* of Jami'a Al-Qarawiyyin lists reknown Muslim scholars such as Ibni Arabi and Ibni Khaldoun while Jami'a Al-Azhar, Ibn Haytham.

How instructional setting or *talaqi* in the religious and other knowledge typically took place was in the form of the teacher who sat with students in learning circles or *halaqa* inside a mosque or courtyard. The true essence of education where teachers were proverbially the book that students learned from was the philosophy of teaching and learning. Mosques, while naturally housing libraries in the physical form, also symbolized a fountainhead of knowledge since it was the abode of scholars from

whom original ideas were 'flowing out'. Over time, when students from faraway lands came to join these learning circles, hostels were set up as place for food and lodging. With education being synonymous with mosques, the concept of a mosque school at the more elementary level; mosque *madrassa*; and eventually mosque *jami'a* or universal denoting a place for the congregation of scholars and students learning of universal knowledge became a feature of the Islamic civilization during its zenith. Al-Attas described the *jami'a*, meaning universal in terms of complete course of studies as the early university in characteristics.

The etymology of mosque has its origin in *masjid* in Arabic which is derived from the root word *sajada* meaning to prostrate or *sujud* which signifies submission to his Lord. Although literally, the *masjid* is the location for the *sujud,* because an act of submission to Allah goes beyond the physical to include the pursuit of knowledge, *masjid* in essence should transcend the confinement of the physical infrastructure. On the pursuit of knowledge, the verse of the Quran:

"*Read, in the name of your Lord who created.*" (Quran, 96:1)

which is the first verse to be revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) epitomizes the profoundness of knowledge in Islam. Likewise, the verse "*It is only those who have knowledge who know Allah*" (Quran: 35:28) further embodies the high premium placed on knowledge and the esteem regard in Islam for someone knowledgeable.

"And Allah brought you out of your mother's wombs devoid of all knowledge, but He has endowed you with hearing, and sights, and minds-hearts, so that you may be grateful."

(Quran, 16:78)

clearly provides the guidance on the faculties endowed to human in their quest to pursue knowledge. The Prophet (PBUH) had stated too, that "The whole earth is made as a place of worship and a means of cleansing for me" (Bukhari). Applying this fundamental message from the lesson learned about the role of the '*masjid university*' from the Islamic perspective, it makes much sense to take a similar stance

in the effort by MUVC to reestablish the essence of Islamic university through an approach that stresses on the importance of restructuring the right worldview of university.   This is because, present day secularization, enforced through a worldview of Eurocentrism has diluted the true meaning of higher education from Islamic perspective.

While previous approach to education at the '*masjid university'* or thereafter in this Chapter is referred to as "*Jami'ul Islami"* was the strengthening of *aqidah* and *akhlaq* with the intention to further seek skills set over and above it, modern day universities adopt a stance to only serve as trainers of skills set. Islam no longer serves as the bedrock of life philosophy but only as another discipline of knowledge. The *masjid* or mosque too, eventually became a place of physical worship only and in many instances are managed and governed by authorities separate from those responsible for the institutions of higher learning. Even for institutions which carry the official "Islam" prefix in their name, more often than not, this model of separation in governance prevails. Today, if no attempt is made to bring back HE which is truly based on an Islamic model, the Muslim community can resign to the fact that Islamic universities are only archival pride of the past.

How *Jami'ul Islami* Lost its Essence

How the *jami'ul Islami* gradually had lost its role as what was intended in the beginning is shown diagrammatically in the middle part of Figure 2.

Figure 2: How the '*masjid university'* gradually lost its role
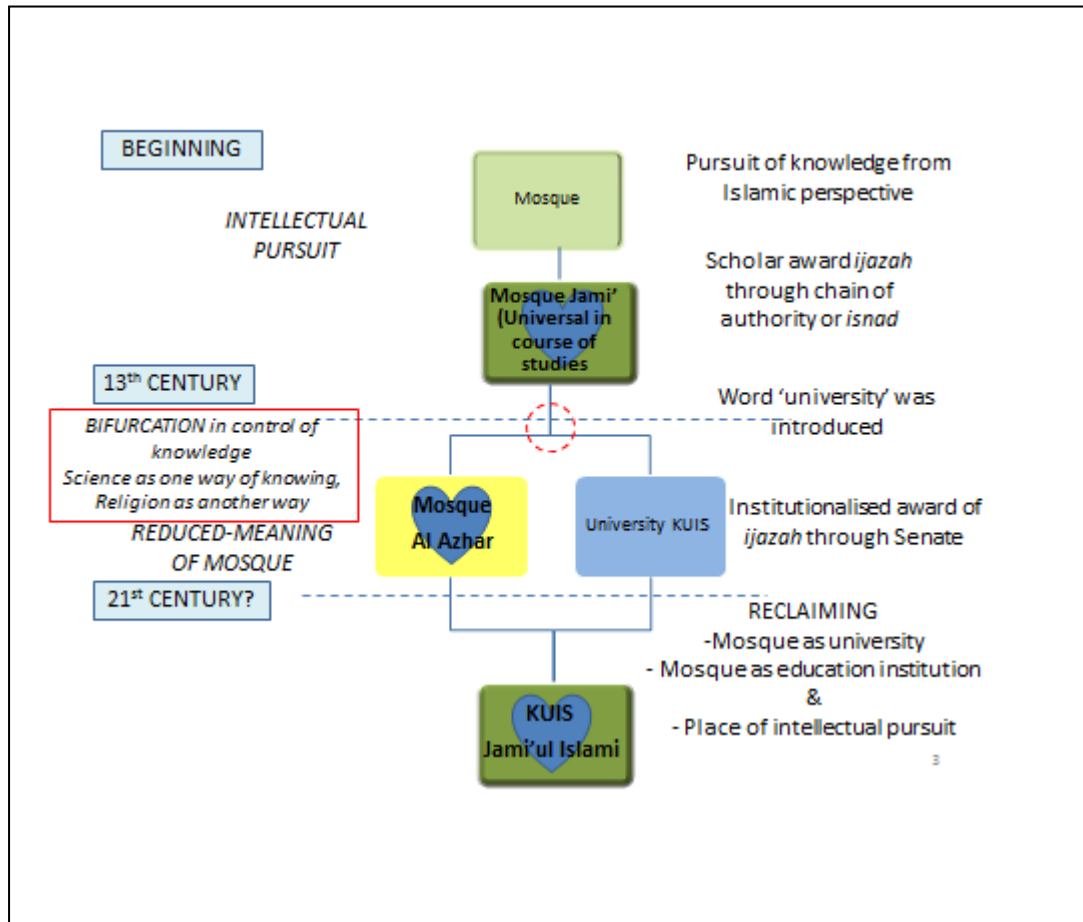
The period between the 12th and 14th centuries which featured the institutionalization of universities in the Western world marked the commencement of Eurocentrism and the bifurcation of the true essence of the integrated role of the *Jami'ul Islami* into two separate and distinct institution of mosque as a symbolic place of *sujud* and the university as a secular institution of learning of the modern day.

A glimpse into history will reveal that this period too, is taken as the ending of the "Dark Ages" from the perspective of Western civilisation which began in the 5th century with the downfall of the Roman Empire. It was during the 12th to 14th century-period too that the seed of Eurocentrism began growing. The Renaissance which

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began in Italy in the late 14th century and the Enlightenment movement dignified Eurocentrism to a higher level. By the 16th century when the heliocentricity cosmological paradigm of Copernicus, itself, accepted as an epoch of a new human civilization was introduced, the superiority of Europe and anything European was further reinforced.

Echoing the separation of revealed and observed knowledge into two separate domains each looked after by the Magesterium and the community of scientists respectively, Islamic institutions of higher learning too, emulated the practice of detaching the governance structure for the traditional mosque education system into two separate entities – the mosques and universities. Each establishment too, was governed by different sets of administrators. While universities maintained a focus of knowledge which is no longer underpinned by *adab*, mosques began losing the non-physical meaning of *sujud* such that mosque gradually became only symbols or icons of physical place of worship. In other words, mosques lost its true essence as the centre for knowledge.

Phenomenal scientific discoveries in Europe post-Copernican era led to the fascination of social scientists and humanists with anything "scientific". Obsessed with wanting to follow natural science and its perceived non-biasness, the objectivity doctrine of Classical science was taken as being the right construct of knowledge in the Western world. Over time, Eurocentrism webbed itself deeper into a dominant worldview throughout the globe including in the Islamic world since Eurocentrism symbolized development and progress. With 'nature' taking a new meaning as that absent of anything 'supernatural', religion included, the earlier concept of *jami'ul Islami* or *masjid university* soon became a distant past that many Muslims today are unfamiliar with. Nowadays, following the Western construct of university, the *ijaza* is granted by a university's Senate symbolizing the completion of courses rather than

the approval by individual teachers of the proficiency level of students. Teachers who are agents of universities provide service to students as "customers" in a relationship that only represents a legal rather than a moral contract. As a consequence, it is not uncommon that students enroll into a programme for the diploma rather than the experience. This Western university mould occupies the setting of present day HE by taking away the function of the mosque as *jami'ul Islami.*

Eurocentrism and the Muslim Educators' mindset

How the Muslim mindset gets subsumed in totality with Eurocentrism is one that needs thorough questioning and deep reflection. The ability of the Western model of HE to profoundly claw its legacy into the Islamic tradition that predates the Renaissance and Enlightenment deserves accolade beyond all the Nobel prizes put together. Most unbelievable is the acceptance of social science in-toto as introduced by Comte through his Positivism belief system – a religion to remove the existence of God.

Believing that only positivist convention which accepts only observed knowledge as the truth, hence, can attain the status of natural sciences, non-scientists adopted blindly these tenets as **the scientific method** for research and teaching practices in non-science and humanities. Quantity has now masqueraded as quality to the extent that only what can be measured, counts, as in the case of performance indicators for instance. It seems incongruous that a Muslim scholar would consciously reject revealed knowledge as a method of knowing when Islam is a religion founded upon faith of the unseen and that the Quran was revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) through revelation mode. Muslims too, know the importance of intention or *niyyah* and its qualitative nature which cannot be substituted with quantitative measure. Ignorance of Comte's motivation for social science appears highly likely a plausible reason for a continued acceptance of the legacy.

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Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (2007) in inviting a look at history of social science and its profesionalisation noticed that in the 19th century, the social world changed from being a community into an industrial-corporate society organized around competing professional careers. Educational institutions were transformed from an educational system that produced 'man of learning' to serve society into Research University model that prepared vastly larger numbers of people or scientists for employment in an industrial society. The new ethos of Research University gave rise to the **impoverishment of the public sphere**. "Today's specialized academics, with notable exceptions, write with a set of intellectual assumptions and vocabulary shared only by their colleagues" (Bellah et. al, p.299), forgetting their role as a 'general citizen of society'.

The narrowly framed specialized social science into silos disavows knowledge of the whole or any part of the whole that lies beyond its strictly defined domain following the reductionism tenet perceived as scientific. The parts, then, are put together to resemble the whole like an assemblage of cogs in machines. This reductionist and syncretism approach dominates social science till the present day. So how do we then address this issue of this misperception of the highest level? Bellah et. al called for social scientists to be conscious of the cultural roots of the assumptions which lie deep in the history of Western thought (Eurocentrism). Social scientists must be able to discern that the assumptions are indeed contestable and accept that narrative is a primary and powerful way of knowing about the whole. Bellah et. al took the position that the recovery of the insights of biblical and republican tradition would be the alternative to the Eurocentric model for education, in other words, the bringing back of religion.

Arguing on the lack of relevance of the underpinning of social science including education but more specific in the business ambit, Faith (2009) highlights how universities in attempt to produce scientists for the economy are fixated with ensuring uniformity and conformity among students. Similar to the production of goods moving along a conveyor belt having to meet the standard of specific criteria, students are rigorously kneaded into single shaped-graduates. The culture at schools where students are not taught to think, but to know facts rather than principles is continued diligently at universities. Ironically though, while on one hand students are shaped into uniform thinking machines, on the other, they are told to be creative and innovative. But there is little room for students to experiment and fail. As a consequence, graduates lost their capacity for adaptability and taking risk, due to fear of failing in the face of uncertainty.

But reality is about uncertainty and risk taking. Quoting Fiske (1998), Faith reiterates how graduate schools reinforce risk aversion, that is, the inability to weigh risk and reward and a failure to recognize when prudent risk taking is needed. To overcome this fundamental flaw of education, Faith calls for revolutionary improvement rather than incremental progress so that the reality of uncertainty is better embodied in the education curriculum. While he did not explicitly raise the bringing back of religion, the call to embed uncertainty into the education system draws fundamental parallel to Islam as the source of the root word for risk in the form of *rizq*. Facing uncertainty entails having faith to face the unknown and can only be operationalised through an education system that recognizes the presence of the Transcendent.

The Need to have a Better Perspective of Science in Religion

While the shortcomings of the assumptions of social science are well documented, the root cause of these shortcomings is hardly discussed among social scientists. The belief that one needs to be objective (in short, remove one's emotions and

values) in order to be non-bias following Comte's Western construct of social science has made many Muslim scholars set aside religion as the guiding principle. Due to the deference for this thinking philosophy it appears as if science and religion must always bifurcate. Yet, it is a known fact that in Islam, science IS a branch of knowledge that is to be revered and that science has never been an issue in Islam.

In order to help alleviate the perceived controversy, we believe the development of science that unfolded during the 20th century could shed some light to assist the community of non-scientist Muslim scholars see things in a better perspective. The discovery of Quantum physics through the works of Max Planck, Einstein, Schrodinger, Heisenberg and many others manifest the parallels between science and the Islamic and other tribal/ indigenous traditions. Quantum physics debunked many of the earlier tenets of the classical Newtonian science even at the most fundamental level of the characteristics of light. Quantum physics recognizes among others how the universe comprises substantively of the non-material than the material; that subjectivity is the general norm; that oneness is the underpinning of the universe so that to hurt others in effect is to hurt oneself; and more phenomenal, the reality of consciousness in the equation of life.

With the importance of human consciousness given back its primacy, human as soul is brought back as the core focus of the model for human life. This development challenges the long dominating classical Western thinking of a temporal purpose of life modality that ends with death of the physical body due to the non-belief in the unseen. But this bringing back of an eternal life centering on the soul which transcends into the hereafter is fundamental to the Islamic model of life and other pre-modern belief systems. In the model of life based on Islam, the good deeds (*ibadah*) during one's life on earth makes up the store of value of blessings for which the rewards will be realized in the hereafter. In Islam, investment in the form of

spending in the way of Allah is clearly revered as a rewarding deed deserving of blessings. "The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing. (Quran, Al-Baqarah, Verse 261).

Yet as mentioned in earlier sections, over time, the sacredness of life gradually was overpowered by the zeal for the profane physical and material well-being. The overemphasis in education on the observable only has led many including Muslims to no longer believe in the unseen and to redefine a Western-constructed measure of success. While originally, the formula of success was one which represented spiritual bliss with higher agenda in life, this was gradually replaced by wealth accumulation for the individual accompanied by total disregard for others – an epitome of the absence of *akhlaq* and loss of *adab*. But within the community of scientists, consciousness (a manifestation of the unseen) began to leave an indelible mark.

Following the bringing back of human consciousness, a long anticipated consequential effect was the re-adoption of human as soul embodied in bio-body suit by Tiller (2009) as opposed to the earlier definition by Le Mettrie in the 16th century where human was taken as machine. This recognition parallels religion and indigenous traditions.

The discovery of neurons in the heart only reaffirms the fact that has been made known to human in the Quran, verse 16:78 about human being endowed with more than just the physical faculties. Mehrabian's (1971) 7:38:55 Rule explains how verbally uttered words merely makes up 7% of the manner human make meaning through communication. The intonation of the voice is responsible for about 38%

while the remaining 55% is by the unspoken body language. Again, the role of the heart or *Qalb* as faculty for knowing rather than a pumping physical organ is central.

But despite science shifting its path to reconnect with religion, within social science, the landscape is of business as usual. Even in academia, the obsession with quantity as surrogate of quality is more well-defined now that before even among communities of MUVC. Today, it is not unusual that one's academic excellence is measured quantitatively for instance through indexing the number of articles published and cited in Western-based publications as indicators equating quality (such as the H-Index). The real quality of writings and one's other contributions to the public at large are disregarded. Just because of the **lack of ease to measure academic relevance to society**, academics prefer the simple way out to **adopt a one-size-fits-all quantitative criterion**. While the claim that diversity is celebrated, in practice, homogeneity appears the philosophy that is observed. But in Islam, does not the verse of the Quran 16:93, "*if Allah so willed, He could make you all one people…*" so denotes that human are not homogenous?

Extant practices in the respective disciplines tend to demonstrate the lack of awareness among social scientists and educationists of the scientific development post Comte's Positivism. Ironically as highlighted in the preceding section, it is for their obsession of wanting to be "scientific" that social scientists believe that human behavior strictly follows the physical laws of the inanimate. If social scientists so badly wish to be scientific, then on that basis alone, they already need to move together with the flow of development in science. But even if they no longer wish so, the reality of the world is glaringly showing the shortcomings of social science, including education, which is based upon the classical Newtonian premise.

While it has been shown that the new sciences parallel Islam, we bring a word of caution in that Islam does not need science to prove of its truth. Islam is about faith in

Allah. Science has a place in Islam much like other disciplines of knowledge. Moving on, Muslim scholars – scientists and non-scientists must go back into origin to bring Islam back to mainstream education. In order for this to materialise, a transformation of the mind is but the only way forward. Without doubt, this would entail a paradigm shift in thinking but as reminded by Faith (2008), only with radical, unprecedented and revolutionary improvement not incremental progress, can transformation take place. For the transformation at the institutional level by MUVC to be pervasive, nothing short of an intentional overhaul-like approach would suffice. Tuchman (2011) believes that university transformation is about altering the deep-set cultures of the institution by changing not only the processes but the select underline assumptions and institutional behaviours and products. Hence, the duration cannot be expected to be completed overnight but instead will occur over time.

Mainstreaming a Higher Education Model based on Islam - The Strategy

In "The Great Reset", Florida (2011) justifies the need to overhaul our education system due to the erroneous path it had taken. Tinkering at the margins will no longer do. As an example, Florida, like many other critics, asserts that the financial crisis is actually a symptom of a much more serious underlying economic malady. Calls for educational reform have reverberated from nooks and corners of the world. Voices imploring for the reintroduction of Transcendental and spiritual essentials into curricular are aplenty. It is as if a new awakening is sweeping the world. Against such backdrop, this initiative by the MUVC could not be timelier.

But a note worthy of attention is that even had the global financial crisis not taken place, reclaiming the model of HE based on Islam should always be an ongoing agenda for all MUVC. The fundamentally flawed model of the Western constructed education system needs correction. In the nineteen seventies, Solzhenitsyn (1978) already cautioned that there were telltale symptoms warning of a threatened or

perishing society of the West. The West according to him had finally achieved the rights of human but with man's sense of responsibility to God and society growing dimmer and dimmer. Hence to Solzhenitsyn, the Western world "is less and less likely to become the leading model" (p. 14) and "it would be retrogressive to hold on to the ossified formulas of the Enlightenment" (p. 21).

Still, the centuries-old Western constructed worldview is almost casted in stone in the mindset of many Muslims. To rid the colonized mind of a fear for change is proverbially about moving mountains. Thus, drawing up the initiative to bring back the Islamic university system of education should not be done in haste. Liberating the mind off the grip of an accepted worldview needs a well-crafted strategy not unlike the Renaissance movement or Enlightenment.

We inscribe the proposed manner to operationalise a HE model based on Islam both at the macro and micro levels of operation.

At the macro level, the approach is not about ridding the world of the secular model of HE in its entirety, the strategy is about imbuing the right worldview and philosophy of Islam in order to reinstate *adab.* This would entail the iterative processes of

i)   unlearning, learning and relearning of the Islamic philosophy through education; and

ii) actualizing the Islamic infrastructure operating system in phases (please refer to Diagram 1)

but not necessarily implemented in a sequential and linear manner.

As can be observed from Figure 2, the state of today's HE is where there is a separation between the role of the mosque which has also been diluted to only serve as a place of physical worship of God and the university which focuses solely to

producing graduates with the skills set to serve the economy. As a consequence, efforts to bring back the vicegerency of human through HE will not be effective given that the soul of human is never recognized. To nurture *adab,* human as spirit and embodied in the physical for locomotion must first be accepted. Only when humans are spiritual, can they be ethical and of high moral, hence, displaying good *akhlaq* in order to contribute to the well-being of others and the environment. And as told by the Prophet (PBUH), "The best of people are those that bring most benefit to the rest of mankind". Towards this end, university governors, managers, educators and others entrusted with the responsibility to run universities must be accountable to perform this trust or *amanah* as assigned to them. The concept of university now will also encompass the role of mosque as a place of submission since learning as part of the act of submission will now take place in the university. Learning here is taken to mean, as defined by Al-Attas, when knowledge has touched the heart.

Unlearning is a process that all Muslims who have been exposed to the Western model of HE should undergo. For existing educators, this requirement becomes a prerequisite to ensure smooth realignment of future teachings to the Islamic model. During this process, the flaws of the Western constructed model from the perspective of non-attainment of Maqasid Al-Shariah for each relevant discipline need to be uncovered. In particular, assumptions that underpin existing models need questioning. For instance, the epistemological root of current practices of Islamic Finance being the same as that of conventional finance (Mirakhor, 2011) must not be sidelined and claimed as petty in the effort to elevate the popularity of Islamic Banking. The real essence of Islam with the Maqasid being a guiding principle must be applied in evaluating Islamic finance practices so that any product that is projected as being Islamic does indeed truly manifests Islam in its pure and uncompromised form. The Islamic worldview must be presented as it is so that its true identity as the path to human wellbeing is portrayed. To redress the existing

scenario, putting across the message that there are worldviews that have been suppressed through an exclusive Western model of HE, is vital.

Once unlearning begins, the process of learning and relearning can take place. In light of the existing incomplete representation of the epistemological structure forming the core of today's HE model – void of contents of the non-material aspect of human, reintroducing Islamic university framework would entail addressing the content to build *adab*. Regardless of the level of education but mindful of the learning styles at different levels, i) the meaning of being human; ii) the purpose in life including the *Al-Mithaq*; and iii) the responsibility to observe both the relationship with the Transcendent (*hablunminallah*) and between human (*hablunminnanas*) and other creations or *makhluq* through attaining the Maqasid Al-Shariah are basic contents that need to be disseminated well. Other contents include the teachings of various disciplines that are framed upon the Islamic worldview. For instance, history must not omit facts that earlier scientific discoveries are made by Muslims during the Dark Ages of the West. At the higher level of education, the science of knowing must move beyond only the limits of Western civilization. What constitutes knowledge and how epistemology was removed of revealed knowledge should be emphasized. The current state of the infrastructure operating systems must be deliberated in terms of purpose for adoption and its impact on human well-being.

For educators, the meaning of education as it should be from the perspective of Islam which naturally includes that of character building and beefed up with the skills set, needs to be fully understood. Inculcating *adab* as the core purpose of education cannot but be the philosophy to be upheld by all educators.

On the issue of transmitting the appropriate knowledge to reclaim the philosophy of Islam, it is pertinent that care be given to not dilute the meaning of Islam. The "Islam"

that is to brought back must be authentic and not be viewed from the prism of the West. As cautioned by Al-Attas, "The signs of the external world must be understood via the same method as the valid interpretation and understanding of the written words of the Qur'an, namely through *tafsir* (direct interpretation) and *ta'wil*, a deeper and allegorical interpretation based on the clear and direct words" (Al-Attas, 1978). And such interpretation is difficult to arrive at without one being a practising Muslim. The "pizza effect" as coined by Bharati (1970) should be avoided. Describing how when Italian emigrants took pizza to America where it changed and became a popular dish and later reimported to Italy as an indigenous traditional food as the 'pizza effect', Bharati (1970) asserts that the Hindu renaissance has suffered a similar malady.

With respect to implementing the Islamic Infrastructure Operating System into the current infrastructure operating systems as depicted in Figure 1, we take the stance that it cannot be carried out overnight. It is only with education and the right knowledge of the flaws or *fasad* inherent in the current system that the motivation for alternatives can come by. We foresee the replacement of existing systems taking effect very slowly but one that must begin from now.

Given that the evolution of universities has been but one way – from the Islamic tradition into a secular one, there has not been documented a case of a HE institution going back into the full essence of the Islamic mode. As such, any effort to do so need to be solely guided by the fundamentals as contained in the Quran and the Sunnah. Whichever the institution that takes the decision to bring back the Islamic model of HE, it will set the benchmark for others to follow. Since embarking on a journey to search for an institution that offers HE model truly based on Islam including the governance structure, we have the opportunity to observe a university

college in Malaysia that has begun this initiative with the support of its stakeholders. We document herewith the steps to actualise the bringing back of a *jami'ul Islami* to an existing institution of HE as a role model for others.

iii)   Actualising the establishment of a *jami'ul Islami* as a model – The Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS) Story

Within the Malaysian HE landscape featured by the three types of university structure as depicted on Page 3 of this Chapter, KUIS represents the Third category of universities, that is, it is a HE institution that has Islam in its official name. What makes KUIS story an interesting one is that despite already labeled an Islamic HE institution, its management since April 2010 believes that KUIS needs to transform itself fully in order to live the HE tradition based on Islam. Two main questions that framed the transformation agenda was "what was it that would depict KUIS as an Islamic university in its true essence?" and "what was it that would reflect the human at KUIS as human who actualized *adab,* or in Islamic terminology, *insan ta'dibi*"? These two questions set the stage for the journey and subsequent strategies that were developed.

Internalising the core features of *jami'ul Islami* led to the firm belief by KUIS Management that a decision needed to be made of either to do justice to the Islamic prefix in its name by truly operating according to the HE model based on Islam or apply for a name change to reflect its existing secular essence. Taking responsibility as Muslims put into position of power hence having to execute the accompanying *amanah*, the Management also decided to make the unprecedented move to transform in totality – to revolutionise from the core thinking paradigm of the staff (academic and non-academic) and the students; to the governance; and reporting structure, despite having full knowledge and awareness of the absence of existing

model to serve as benchmark. KUIS, instead, would have to set itself as the benchmark.

The initial step to set the stage involved charting the route that would take KUIS to the level so desired. But rather than beginning in April 2010 with the setting of a time frame to complete the design and documenting of a fully completed strategic roadmap blueprint, the path chosen was to at once, actualize the transformation agenda together with the crafting of the blueprint. This period had begun with effort to share the transformation concept and the rationale for such need. With the initiative to embark on the journey to transcend from an Islamic HE institution in label to one in essence being avant-garde-like, the whole programme takes the form of a design-and-build effort – subject to changes along the way with new discoveries emerging where and when relevant. The blueprint documentation is itself part of the deliverables. Henceforth, it is most apt to describe that in this assignment, the emergent quality phenomenon so characterizing human in facing life is truly actualised. Thus, unlike in many projects where strategies, targets and milestones can be clearly observed in a linear way, the KUIS' transformation programme identifies several to be executed in a parallel non-linear manner and with room for new emergent ones.

About the only milestone that is clearly identifiable is the one that marks the beginning of the programme and that is the buying-in from the Management team. Following on from there was the identification of areas that needed transformation so that KUIS could differentiate its graduates as being technically competent yet with their underlying core values steadfast upon Islamic principles. Towards this end, apart from the overhauling of the governance structure to be in line with the traditional Islamic model similar to the like of Jami'a Al-Qarawiyyin, KUIS focused its attention on developing new sets of curriculum drawn upon two fundamental thrust

areas – Islam as the core and the core competency that its graduates should possess. Based on the detailed content of the two core aspects, the ensuing curriculum was designed. Strategies and action plans to roll out the curriculum were then meticulously charted. Unlike in the traditional approach of developing proposed key performance indicators to assess in the future whether its graduates would have the characteristics desired through the conventional systems thinking of input, process and output, KUIS focused on creating the setting that would provide the experience that students should undergo in order to graduate into *insan ta'dibi*. The hope is that each graduate will take along the pre-graduating experience into the new workplace environment and apply the same fundamental principles of Islam but for a different context.

Conscious of the need for total support in order to bring changes to both the governance structure and the new direction it was going to embark, KUIS has from the onset established a consultative approach in sharing its transformation agenda with its key stakeholders that of the Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS), that is the state Islamic religious council as its main shareholder; the Lembaga Zakat Selangor (LZS) which the board responsible for the state tithe collection and management as KUIS' source of finance; as well as the State Government and the Ministry of Higher Education who has administrative and licensing rights respectively. But most significant to the whole initiative was getting the belief of its staff as driver of the transformation agenda. And given a stronghold that Eurocentrism has gripped the education world, this has been one big challenge. Yet, the fact that the blueprint is awaiting final official endorsement from its shareholders which as a consequence will result in phenomenal change to its governance structure, perhaps as the only one of its kind in the country if not the world once implemented, KUIS' trajectory to imbue Islamic essence in its operations as a HE institution is enroute to success inshaAllah.

Summarising the key measures that had been involved in the journey, several distinct but non-sequential events were prominent as listed below:

(1) identification of salient characteristics of jami'ul islami from earlier days Islamic universities such as in the case of Jami'a Al-Qarawiyyin as baseline in terms of administration and governance structure as well as the theocratic teleological underpinning of the curriculum.

(2) Identification of what constitutes Islam as the core ideology and the competence that graduates should be equipped with, enroute to the development of curriculum from the aspect of philosophy, content and approach to teaching and learning;

(3) mapping of the gap between existing KUIS' practices and the Islamic way of conduct through a thorough, in-depth and honest mapping exercise;

(4) developing of strategies and action plans to create the setting in order to roll out the curriculum for the different stages within the education chain that KUIS could participate;

(5) ascertaining the priorities or *fiqh awlawiyat* of the sequencing and rolling out of the actions that had been planned; and

(6) actualising what had been decided.

Currently, having conducted many workshops on a continuous cycle for its academic and non-academic staff, and sharing of knowledge with its stakeholders, KUIS has completed its proposed structure change for its governance framework and core curriculum revamping phase of its Stage (6) actualisation. In other words, KUIS has moved from the "idealising to the actualizing" and from the "model to module" phases, putting into effect what Florida (2010) termed as the Great Reset. Nonetheless, as highlighted earlier, the initiative will never be completed in light of new and emergent discoveries along the path. These could include those brought about by the unfamiliarity of many parties who are directly involved in the teaching

and learning process as well others who may play an indirect role. Regardless of the situation, passion, determination and faith become the internal drive for motivation. Again, the process of unlearning, learning and relearning continues to play a fundamental role.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to bring back the model of HE based on Islam in the true sense involves effort that is unprecedented. We need to take heed of the aphorism that it is an insanity to expect a different result by continuing to do the same thing as before. But if MUVC as custodian of HE for Muslims throughout the world prefer to disregard the *amanah* endowed by Allah, then, the HE landscape will remain one that is secular and riddled with flaws or *fasad.* In light of the absence of a benchmark, each MUVC needs to be courageous to chart the potentially perilous journey for their respective institution and in this regard, total faith in Allah is a precursor to success. But given that transformation is not an alien concept in Islam, bringing back a teleological education based on the fundamentals of Islamic theocracy should not be impossible. After all, "since the time of Muhammad, Muslims have seen Islam as being, in some significant measure, a **means** for the **transformation** of **emotional life** from one of ignorance and backwardness to one appropriate to a **divinely created nature"** (Shweder, Haidt, Horton and Joseph, 2008, p.423).

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