

## THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION SYSTEM: The Philosophical Basis

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Generally the education principles being adopted in most Muslim countries today are derived from the West through the influence of Western Colonialism. It is a system generally described as secular, which separates the spiritual from the physical aspects of life, rendering such subjects as the Sciences and Humanities devoid of moral values related to religion. Religion may be taught in some instances in the same institutions as the secular subjects. However, there, they merely coexist with no integrations or infusions between the worldly and the religious. When morality is taught, it would be in the form of civics or scientific humanisms, in which God can be omitted, and morality becomes a matter of personal choice, totally and absolutely within the discretion of individuals. So strong has been the influence of secular morality, it is not surprising that a great majority of our scholars who are Muslims by birth have imbibed the secular attitudes in their approach to education and their daily life. "Give unto Caesar what belong to Caesar, unto God what belongs to God" (Bible).

In secular education, compartmentalization of knowledge has been the rule rather than the exception, although lately there has been some trend towards interdisciplinary approach, which was moved principally by the concern for environmental education and followed by curriculum revisions at lower grade schools. However, the lack of moral education through the integration of religious values in the new trend of interdisciplinary approach is still evident.

Compartmentalization can lead towards unrealistic divisions of knowledge, totally or partially unrelated to the universal truth that physical and environmental factors in the universe are interrelated under one creative force. This is contrary to the Islamic perception of the unity of creation. Compartmentalization of knowledge has directly or indirectly influenced our way of thinking in projecting certain issues out of proportion to the reality of its position relative to other issues. This is again contrary to the Islamic system of thoughts that is based on harmony and balance of relative events and issues that occur in the physical universe.

Secular approach to education is partly the by-product of the belief in Antropomorphic Gods. It is a God created largely from the projection of the proud human personality into the Heavens. Such a God is incapable of producing a unified and harmonious sanction to moral and spiritual values

under one supreme guidance, hence the secular approach to its value system.

Under the secular approach to education, it is possible for a student to be exposed to the sciences on the mechanistic principles of creation, which explains that all events in the universe occur naturally under the automatic forces of Nature with no volition of God or Deity in Heavens. When this secular belief is extended to the social sciences, the effect is catastrophic to the traditional religious norms of social values. Under the circumstances society has to accommodate a cosmetic approach to religion and morality, where hypocrisy and double standards need to be acceptable in passing, until scandels emerge into public views. In the Social Sciences a student may be exposed to the concept of man as a free agent who interacts freely in society. There seems to be no higher authority to restrict his freedom, since man with his own intelligence is assumed to be able to control and determine his own destiny. Man's ultimate purpose in life becomes centered on materialism, and his sense of justice is centered around his interests and needs.

This secular approach to life represents an acceptance of antropomorphic Gods that has nothing to do with Islam. The dichotomy of the physical and spiritual in the education principles being practised in the Muslim world today is, therefore, non-Islamic and endangers our perception of the unity of creation by Divine Will, which is the basis of the Islamic world view of the Universe, the basis of our moral and spiritual value system and hence the basis of our educational principles.

In the face of these dangers, steps must be taken to reintroduce the Islamic approach to education to avoid any negative back lash in the confrontation between the present trend of Islamic resurgence and the present secular civilization. Such a confrontation can manifest in a total rejection of physical progress and developments, intolerance or other forms of extremism, leading to a dual society among the Muslim ummah, between those who totally absorb the secular values and those who totally reject such values. The modern civilization of today, which has been regarded as being the product of science and technology, is greatly different from the traditional world of the early Muslims. Adjustment of Islamic thoughts into the modern world of science and technology can look formidably complex and can produce negative reactions of rejecting science and technology itself. This would be contrary to the spirits of Islam with respect to science. Science and technology by themselves are incapable of providing guidance to a way of life; science and technology are tools to shape a civilization and the Islamic system of thoughts and values can use the same tools to shape its own civilization.

With the resurgence of the Muslim world, it is paramount that there must be a reorientation of the education system reversing the system from the unislamic secular approach to the unified Islamic approach. This unified Islamic philosophy of education will be propogated in the spirit of Tauhid.

Its ultimate purpose is to recognise the Divine Will as the driving force of all physical laws of nature, which are manifestations of the Divine presence,

Allah the Almighty the Absolute. In Islam, knowledge is neither pursued for knowledge sake, nor merely for the satisfaction of the unsatisfiable human needs. Knowledge is to have a higher purpose, leading ultimately to the recognition of Allah and submitting oneself to His Will as His servant and Khalifah on earth. "The most pious are those who are the most learned" (Hadith). Knowledge is not a personal right that is self acquired to project the ego of man, but on the contrary knowledge is a Divine gift and a trust (amanah), not to be acquired and to be used as "Ibadah" — devoted for universal peace, progress, harmony, justice and righteousness. Knowledge is part of education, unifying the formal and the non-formal, and infusing the moral and spiritual values into the humanities, sciences and technology.

The evolution of an Islamic education system needs to be given a beginning. The proposed International Islamic University represents one such, though a small one, to contribute towards the beginning of such an evolution.

The theory and principles of Islamic Education, as described briefly above, seem simple. The philosophy has been discussed in depth in many conferences. However, it is not as easy to put into practice. The difficulties are not apparent until we begin to try to put into practice what we preach. A living model of how these principles and philosophy are being practised is lacking today, although it existed in the early Muslim civilization. Much of the difficulties lie with the human factors. The influence of secular thoughts is still strong among the educated class. Cosmetic attitudes towards religion in the secular sense need to be replaced with honest commitment to Islam in its total involvement to Islamic practices and way of life.

The integration of Islamic value system, its moral and spiritual norm need to be imbibed in the personalities of the teachers first before knowledge can be infused with the same spirit to the students. The old pastime among some religious scholars to condemn everything under the establishment as non-Islamic will have to be moderated with positive thinking and rational understanding of the difficulties in changing social attitudes. This is a slow and painful process to be approached with caution and wisdom that differ under varying circumstance. For these reasons the proposed International Islamic University will need to organise orientation programmes for its staff to ensure complete understanding, not only of the principles and philosophy of the University but also the system of values in the personal conduct of all personnels. A rational approach to evolving the Islamic education system in the University can neither be made to compromise with radical and revolutionary outburst nor with secular attitudes persisting in the academic system of the University as a whole. All the above factors involve human relations. In facing these problems the University will need to function as a total Islamic institution, not only in its academic but also in the administration and the community structure to ensure success and obtain the Blessings of Allah. The human element in the success of this effort of evolving an Islamic education in the University is paramount, and no amount of idealism can substitute

the patience, dedication and honest involvement of the human endeavour. Briefly the objectives of the International Islamic University is as stated below:

#### General Objectives

1. To revitalise the Islamic spirit of learning where to seek knowledge is an act of prayer and the spirit of science emanates from the Holy Quran.
2. To recreate the ancient Islamic tradition of learning where knowledge was propagated in the spirit of Tauhid.
3. To reestablish the primacy of Islam in all fields of knowledge as a continuation of the tradition of Islam in the pursuit of knowledge and truth as reflected by those pioneering works of early Islamic scholars and thinkers that began with the teaching of our Holy Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon Him).
4. To widen the scope and options in higher education for Muslim students through the creation of an Islamic institution of higher learning and to excel in all forms of academic achievements."

#### Specific Objective

To provide courses of studies leading to recognised bachelor degrees and higher (postgraduate) degrees, using Islam as the source and basis of learning in its academic, research and student development programmes.

The philosophy of the University is based on the recommendation of the first conference of Islamic Education held in Mecca in 1976. Briefly the philosophy of the University may be stated as shown below:

1. The philosophy of the University shall be based on the meaning and spirit of Surrah Al-'Alaq, verses 1-5 of the Holy Quran.
2. Knowledge shall be propagated in the spirit of Tauhid and submission to Allah.
3. The recognition of Allah as the only Absolute represents the apex in the hierarchy of knowledge. All knowledge should lead towards this truth.
4. Knowledge is part of education, unifying the formal and the non-formal in one process for the purpose of creating trained personnels, professionals and scholars to serve as servants of Allah and Khalifah on earth, for progress and development of humanity in harmony with the nature of his being and his environment.
5. The unified education concept of Islam integrates the physical and the spiritual; hence the science, technology and humanities shall be propagated with Islamic value system and principles.

6. "There is no compartmentalization of knowledge in Islam. Such is contrary to the Islamic view of the unity of creation and the relativity of the physical universe, which permits no portion of knowledge to stand alone and unrelated to the total universe and the ultimate purpose of creation."

A fear has been expressed that the unified idea of the Islamic education would face confrontation between the physical and the spiritual. Actually such expression of fear originates from secular mind. Islam is a natural religion, and is always in harmony with natural processes. Such processes always seek to conform to the interrelations of factors in the relative universe. In the overall human relationship, the physical must be in harmonious interrelation with the spiritual. The two are neither mutually inclusive nor totally exclusive. Limitations within the human personality require a balanced integration of his physical and spiritual possibilities and potentials. In Islam such an integrating process produces no confrontation since the Islamic moral system is based on the belief of God as the only absolute. God is NOT anthropomorphic to partition the universe into separate authorities, each one in competition with the other, leaving man the sole right to determine his own destiny or at least in managing his own physical need and consequently in this assumed role find contradictions and confrontation with reality. This situation does not exist in Islam and the fear of confrontation does not arise.

The International Islamic University, therefore, shall offer all branches of knowledge, covering the Sciences, Humanities and Technologies. However, the approach shall be through the Islamic system of values and Islamic system of thoughts.

This does not mean that there is a need to change the present concept of atoms and electrons to create a new Islamic idea of molecules and thermodynamics. Such scientific knowledge of laws, theories and hypothesis are actually abstractions of reality which manifest the Glory and Wisdom of Allah and thus Islamic in spirit. Changes are needed, however, in the system of thoughts, attitudes and approach towards knowledge and the propagation of knowledge. The background philosophy towards knowledge and education must be Islamic without changing the structure of cells and chromosomes as we know them today.

The Islamic view that the physical universe is relative and profane, all creations are unified under one Divine Will, that man is a servant of Allah with limited free-will, and that the human intelligence has its limit, are some of the ingredients in the Islamic system of thoughts that shall form the background approach in the propagation of knowledge within the University. Such systems of thoughts are quite different and opposed to the secular view that man is a free agent interacting freely in society, the universal motion is set out under its own mechanistic principles, and that man controls his own destiny by his own intelligence. The tendency for the secular thoughts

to reject Divine intervention in the motions of physical universe has its background in history. It is a rejection of the idea of divine attributes being conferred upon the physical universe. Such ideas impede the progress of science. Islam has no such problems, and the Islamic concept of the universe as profane allows the empirical dissection of the universe for the progress of science without fear of interference with any dogma.

The transformation of these systems of thoughts from the secular to the Islamic is a process, which will totally involve the academic structure of the International Islamic University. It is in this sense that the University is Islamic in character, as summarised below:

“This proposal is for the establishment of an Islamic University and NOT a University merely about Islam or a University teaching merely Islamic theology. It attempts to recreate and revitalise the ancient Islamic tradition of learning where to seek knowledge is an act of prayer, and the spirit of science emanates from the Holy Quran”.

“....., the University.....would serve as the vehicle to produce morally and spiritually strong, mentally rational, physically fit and professionally equipped individuals to develop the Muslim Ummah, and achieve progress that is in harmony with Islam and to defend the Islamic faith and ideals”.

The Islamic character of the University may also be expressed in the following manner:

- a. A strong Islamic content shall be infused and integrated in the curriculum.
- b. Courses in Islamic civilization, Islamic way of life, Islamic value system, Islamic world view of God, Man and the Universe shall be the basis and foundation compulsory within all academic programmes.
- c. The Islamic philosophy of knowledge and education shall be the basis of formulating the objectives and structures of all academic programmes within the University.
- d. The University shall be sponsored by the International Muslim World with the Board of Governors representing its ownership.

On the basis of the above principles and philosophy, the International Islamic University shall offer courses of studies in subjects that have been regarded as secular, but rendered Islamic under the University's academic structure. These courses of studies are as listed below:

#### Academic Programmes of International Islamic University

1. Bachelor of Law (L.L.B.):—  
Combining Islamic legal principles (syariah) and professional legal practices, with comparative studies of other legal systems.

2. Bachelor of Economics and Bachelor of Business Administration (B.Econ. and B.B.A.):—  
Integrating Principles of Islamic Economics with professional Economics and Business Administration and with comparative studies of other economic systems.
3. Bachelor of Human Sciences (B.A.) or (B.H.Sc.):—  
which is made up of the disciplines normally included in the Humanities and the Social Sciences.
4. Bachelor of Basic Sciences (B.Sc.):—  
which is made up of the Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Computing Sciences.
5. Bachelor of Applied Sciences (B.Sc.):—  
which is made up of technological advances in modern sciences such as Biotechnology and Advanced Technology and Automation.
6. Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.):—  
majoring in the Engineering Sciences both traditional and modern.
7. Bachelor of Architecture (B. Arc.):—  
majoring in Architectural Sciences and related studies.
8. Bachelor of Medicine (M.B.B.S.):—  
covering all aspects of Medical Sciences and Dental Sciences.
9. Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed.):—  
A postgraduate programme in Islamic Education.
10. A Research Institution:—  
To promote research within the University.

The structure of the academic programmes in the University is represented in the diagram provided in this paper. In all the various professional disciplines are represented as outward divisions of the same system, with the middle circle representing courses for horizontal unifying concepts, integrating the disciplines together under interdisciplinary subjects. Subjects like the “unity of science” and “man and the environment” are examples of such unifying concepts. The centre circle represents the apex for a vertical unifying concept, leading knowledge to the integration of Islamic values and principles. The task of integrating these Islamic values and principles will be undertaken by a Centre for Fundamental Studies, and subjects offered by this Centre become core to all the academic programmes in the University. As a service Unit, the Centre will not offer any undergraduate academic programmes of its own except for graduate studies. Most of the Islamic study subjects not found in the Faculties may be obtained from this Centre.

Having fixed the academic base of the University to Islam, it has been assumed by many that the University will lose the usual academic freedom that is essential for intellectual growth of a University. Such notions assume that Islam is narrow and has a rigid system of thoughts. The earlier explanation of Islamic thoughts in this paper clearly demonstrate that Islamic

thoughts are more relevant to universal reality. Concepts of academic freedom assumed an unlimited human intellectual capability. The human mind is assumed to be the ultimate in the evolution of universal expression with unrestricted potentials. The concept represents the highest of human pride in glorifying his ego. Unfortunately such assumptions are false. There is nothing absolute about the human intellect to grant an unlimited freedom of thoughts.

Proponents of academic freedom used to glorify agnosticism and "free thinkers". Acceptance of spiritual values is regarded as restricting the freedom of thoughts. In actual fact it is the secular thought that is restrictive, because it is confined and restricted to merely the physical phenomena, rendering the free thinkers to think in circles.

For instance, in the sciences, theories are required to explain laws, and laws are dependent on theories to provide a base. Connecting principles are instituted to complete the circle. Thus the theory of evolution is explained by the Law of Natural Selection, and this law is in turn explained by the genetic mechanism which provides a rational for the theory of evolution. Thus we complete one circle. Laws and theories are abstractions of reality and the free thinkers as well as the agnostics are intellectually confined to these abstractions. They fail to perceive the absolute and thus assume the relative physical reality as the ultimate of existence. To become free of this restriction and circular thought they must accept spiritual reality in their thought structure and accept Allah as the only absolute. Such is the position of the Islamic system of thinking. By accepting Allah, the absolute imposes no limit to intellectual potentials, and by basing on truth, Islamic thoughts can be open and flexible without any danger of eroding or collapsing. Thus differences of opinion among Muslims with respect to interpretations in religion, so long as such differences are within the guidance of the a'quidah, represents the strength of Islam and not its weakness, and demonstrates the flexibility and openness of Islamic thoughts. By reducing the physical universe as profane the Muslims are not restricted by any dogma of Divinity to investigate the physical reality for the progress of science, and by accepting the physical laws and manifestations of the power and glory of Allah, the Islamic system of thoughts brings spiritual strength to the human personality and intellect.

The above explanation, though brief, serves to show that there is nothing to fear about the evolution of Islamic education, and the proposed project of International Islamic University should get the support of all humanity, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, for peace, harmony and progress of all mankind. This University is now coming into reality. Its staff and student intake are now being processed, and its temporary campus is under renovation to get ready for the opening on 4th July 1983 with the projected intake of 180 students, initially for Law and Business Studies.

## ACADEMIC STRUCTURE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

