The Integration of Knowledge in Islam: Concept and Challenges

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Abstract

Integration is an approach/process which can be used in the educational sector to create a madani generation of multidisciplinary knowledge. Integration is defined as a merger between two or several races (factors, sectors etc) as a union or consolidation. The Muslims are obligated to master various forms of knowledge beginning with the Islamic traditional knowledge of faith (akidah), syariah and morals (akhlak). The understanding of the Islamic knowledge together with that of the modern world?s can lead to the emergence of new modern knowledge in line with Islamic requirements. Islam never forbids the Muslims to learn foreign knowledge, in fact it is highly recommended. This paper hopes to highlight the concept of integration of knowledge from Islamic perspectives and the challenges that need to be addressed to make it a reality for the society. The application of western knowledge leads to the spread of secularinfluence in the educational system of a nation, which in turn leads to the gradual loss of Islamic identity of the society. Therefore, the approach to the integration of Islamic knowledge and that of the West needs to be seen as an alternative for the society in leading their everyday lives based on the true teachings of Islam.

Index terms— integration, knowledge, islam and the west.

1 Introduction

s history has it, the knowledge of Islamic Studies was a traditional form of knowledge in Islamic civilization and was taught at various levels of learning process, namely hut schools, madrasah and religious schools. Meanwhile, the aristocrats, rulers and the wealthy people underwent formal education in Islamic Studies taught in the palace (Abdul Monir Yaacob, 2003). Nowadays, the interest among students towards Islamic Studies is undeniable. This is evident from the increase of demand in this field of studies each year from the school level to the higher institution of learning. This positive response from both parents and students is brought about by the acceptance of the society towards the significance and the encouraging future prospects of this field of knowledge. The establishments of administrative institutions and Islamic organizations have opened up employment opportunities for Islamic Studies graduates since the prospective employers and employment sectors now realize the importance of having Islamic knowledge background among the employees. Hence, the government effort and policy to implement Islamic Studies program have given a positive impact to uphold Islam in whatever forms of employment (Marzuki Haji Mahmood, 2003).

2 II.

3 The Concept of Knowledge Integration

Kamus Dewan (2005) defines integration as a merger between two or several entities to form unions or consolidations. Muhammad Solikin (2008) and Muhammad Muda (2008) explain the concept of integration with the corpus of knowledge today by highlighting that the integration of knowledge and religion refers to the integration of knowledge and Islam as a unit. Muhammad Muda (2008) As such, Muslims need to grab this

opportunity in order to develop the society and promote the socioeconomic status and customs comparable to that of the western society.

Several researches have been carried out by overseas scholars pertaining to the integration of knowledge particularly Islamic Studies. Among them are Huzni Thoyyar (t.t) and Mohamad Solikin (2008). These two scholars raise the concept of knowledge integration in general and its relevance to Islamic Studies. Huzni Thoyyar (t.t) highlights the knowledge integration models and the capacity to develop Islamic knowledge on the right path. He further states that there are several factors that trigger the integration of knowledge particularly Islamic Studies. First, the history of science and religion. Second, the strong pressure from scholars who oppose the freedom of science. Third, the crisis that occurs from science and technology. Fourth, Muslims fall behind in science and technology. The abovementioned factors lead to the emergence of several knowledge integration models:

i Mohamad Solikin (2008) discusses the concept of knowledge integration and religion according to Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi dan Kuntowijoyo. In his study, he compares the concept of knowledge integration and religion (Islamic Studies) involving the thoughts of two prominent Islamic figures, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi and Indonesian intellectual Kuntowijoyo. The relationship between knowledge and religion has created some changes either in integration or secularism. Integration involves the process of reuniting knowledge and Islam. Separating these two elements may lead to secularism which can have disastrous effects on Islamic civilization. The fundamental concept proposed by Mohamad Solikin (2008) is the integration of modern/general knowledge and religion referring to the union of knowledge and Islam that are never again separated. This general observation is based on the comparison made on the thoughts of the two selected prominent figures.

4 III.

The Integration of Islamic Knowledge and the West Rasid Muhamad (2010) states that, Islam is a system of life that includes three patterns of human relationships: relationships between man and God, man and man, and man and other creatures. According to him, in order to recognize the three patterns of relationships, three basic axes were formed in Islam as the core, namely faith, worship and morality. As such, it can be summarized that knowledge of Islamic Studies is based on the three basic patterns mentioned earlier. Kamarul Azmi Jasmi & Ab. Halim Tamuri (2011) state that there are several other names that are being used to refer to the knowledge of Islamic faith such as knowledge of tawheed, usuluddin, al-Fiqh al-Akbar and kalam. The knowledge of faith specifically discusses the Divine faith, prophetic and apolistic work that need to be believed as true. The aspect of Divine faith encompasses debates on the nature of Allah s.w.t. Meanwhile the prophetic aspects and apolistic work are related to the nature of task characteristics and revelation of scriptures revealed to them. Both these aspects include beliefs that must be believed by all Muslims alike. This description is amplified by **??**ohd **??**010) states that all the teachings and practices of Islam begin with the good or bad moral character. Syariah teachings form positive minds and morals while the inhibitions distance people from negative values and morals. Therefore, knowledge of Islamic Studies covers a very wide range of subject areas and is the foundation for the Muslims' lives. Thus, new knowledge arising from Al-Quran and Al-Sunni should be explored by the community in order to strengthen the faith/tawheed, daily worship and morality, leading to real perfection.

The Western world has been invading the Islamic world through modern sciences expressed through certain channels. These modern sciences that exclude the spiritual norms have led to the loss of direction among Muslims who are devoted solely to Allah SWT (Che Haslina Abdullah, 2004). Science revolution in the West was originally planned by the Jews for two centuries either by individuals or organizations. This revolution has led to positive developments in the knowledge of science which benefit mankind. However, due to the influence of secularism in this revolution, the negative impact is seen to be greater than the positive impact which causes the thinking of human mind based on religion, in particular Islam. The agenda of the Jewish people to destroy human civilization based on religion and spirituality were realized through this revolution. As a result, some Islamic scholars who are aware of these problems feel that the best way to overcome it is to look at science from the Islamic perspective in order to return man to his fitrah (Abdul Rahman, 2003). As such, every Muslim must be careful in the appreciation of science and must instill confidence in his mind that the truth and the reality come only from the verses revealed by Allah (Zainal Kifli b. Abdul Razak, 2005).

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5 IV. Present Challenges of Knowledge Integration

According to Muhamad Muda (2008), Islamic Education in Malaysia has to go through various challenges in order to uphold Islam in the world arena. A variety of accusations and ridicule about Islam have caused many Muslims to be influenced by Western propaganda which leads them to slowly straying away from the teachings of Islam. His article focuses on the four key challenges and the realities of Islamic Education in Malaysia today.

The first challenge involves the Government or the Ministry of Education (MOE) to coordinate the existing school curriculum so that it is in line with the requirements of the universities. Candidates with Islamic Studies background have limited choices of programs offered at the universities. This is because the subjects taken at school levels are incompatible with these programs. As a result, these students do not have the opportunities to take up other disciplines such as Science and Technology, only programs pertaining to Islamic Studies are opened

to them. Therefore, those responsible in designing the school education system need to look into this and take measures and initiatives to review the current syllabus so that it meets the needs of the programs offered at the higher institution of learning. This recommendation is in line with Abdul Shukor Hj. Husin's (2008) statement that appreciation of knowledge should not be limited to mere Islamic studies but also serious emphasis on modern sciences and technology.

The second challenge involves graduates competing for employment opportunities. In this era of globalization, graduates are required to be well-versed in a variety of disciplines and skills to attract employers to offer them jobs. Islamic Studies graduates have been seen to have basic ethics, values and integrity of Islamic knowledge, but current employment sectors require other additional skills such as interpersonal skills (communication skills) and information and communication technology (ICT) in their job applications. Therefore, there is a need to integrate all these additional skills at higher levels so that the skills needed for employment are met. Muhamad Muda (2008)

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The latest challengeis to putIslamic educationin parallel position with religion and industry. Islamic educationis on eelement that can push Malaysiato achieve Vision 2020. One ofthe visions contained in the vision 2020 is to create alabor force that is not only knowledge able and skillfulbut also with high morals and ethical standards. In today's world, the industrial sectors provide enough jobs for the population.

Industries play a very important rolein forming a better, more comfortableand competitive society. To be really comfortable, religious factors must be in corporated in the daily work practices. At present, food production is an important issue, particularly in Islamic countries in order to over come the problems of malnutrition and hunger. With out adequatenutrition, the Muslim community cannotlead a healthy and comfortable life.Technological applications such asbiofood techno-logy used to solve the problem of food shortages is seen to have a positive impact on society. The technology used must however, be guided so as not to endanger the users. Thus, knowledge of the Islamic religion applied in industrial sectors leads to cautious manipulation of technology.

V.

7 Conclusion

The Integrationof Islamic knowledge and the Westhasa positive impact leading to a better life,in line with the rapid development of today's world. Muslim community can apply the knowledge of science and technology together with other foreign knowledge as required by Islamic lawto attaina civilizedstandard of livingin terms of morality, ethicsandhuman capital and in turnto achievemardhatillah. [1] [2] [3] [4]

7   CONCLUSION

successfully produced graduates from the
integration of the application of knowledge in
science and technology with Islamic knowledge in
one educational program (Ajmain@Jimaain Safar &
Ramli Awang, 2008).

cites examples from programs at Academy of Islamic Studies Universiti Malaya (APIUM) which currently integrate Islamic Studies and modern studies such as management, economics and computer science. In the past, researches conducted on the integration of Islamic Studies focused on the history, the development of Islamic-based public institution of higher learning and the current reality of Islamic Studies in the era of globalization. Muhammad Muda (2008) states that Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) through its Faculty of Islamic Studies offers not only Islamic Studies programs but also integrate those programs with other fields of Statements by Muhamad Muda (2008), Wan Suhaimi & Mohd Fauzi Hamat (2008), Abdul Manam Bin Mohamad & Kamarudin Salleh (2008) and Ajmain@Jamaain Safar & Ramli Awang (2008) are strongly supported by Abdul Shukor Haji Husin (2008) studies such as economics and ICT. Environmental Management, Information Technology, Biochemistry, Biotechnology, Ecology & Biodiversity, Genetic & Molecular Biology, Microbiology, Biohealth Science and Bioinformatics. In 2007, APIUM produced its first graduates of 39 who completed their studies in (UM, 2007). This proves that Universiti Malaya is committed in producing quality graduates who are skilled in multidisciplinary knowledge. Abdul Manam bin Mohamad & Kamarudin Salleh (2008) debate on Islamic Studies at KUSZA (now known as UniSZA) from the historical view and the programs offered since its establishment. One of the objectives of KUSZA's establishment is to create Islamic-based professionals and semi-professionals. Therefore, based on this objective, it is clear that KUSZA has set the integration of Islamic Studies and modern studies as a target to be achieved in developing Islamic society. Among the integration programs offered are Diploma in Islamic Studies and Information Technology, Bachelor degree in Social Science (Anthropology and Dakwah) and Bachelor degree in Islamic Studies (Usuluddin and Counseling). Ajmain@Jimaain Safar & Ramli Awang (2008) highlights the history of Islamic Studies at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). UTM through its Centre of Islamic Studies and Social Development (PPIPS) has set that one of the objectives of PPIPS's establishment is to produce professional manpower who understands Islam in various sectors such as education, science management and technology. This objective is appropriate and consistent with the philosophy of the university and the philosophy of education for the nation. Thus, to achieve the objective, UTM has offeredseveral integration programs between Islamic Studies and other fields such as diploma courses and Bachelor degree in Science and Education (Islamic Studies). In these programs, PPIPS and the Education Faculty of UTM have set two major objectives, namely: i. Graduates are capable of completing tasks in Islamic Studies and teaching profession, skillful in applying information technology as well as possess generic skills to complement the role of a teacher with good morals, creative, innovative and effective in education career. ii. Graduates are capable of disseminating and Bachelor degree in Applied Science and Islamic Studies and Marzuki Haji Mahmood (2003).

[Note: integrating Islamic knowledge and ready to make positive changes in the field of learning and teaching and pursue independent studies in enhancing knowledge and acquiring new skills in Islamic Studies. Therefore, UTM is seen to have]

Figure 1:

and wide within its purview. The Syariah knowledge is also associated with other names such as fikah or fiqh, the statutory law, nas or basis of Syariah law and Syariah masadir or resources.The debate revolves around the knowledge about maqasid Syariah or Islamic Syariah purposes. Wan Mohd Nasir Wan Abd wahab (2011) divides maqasid Syariah into three types, namely dharuriyyat, hajiyat and tahsiniyat. AB. Latif (2003) explains that some of the purposes of the Islamic Syariah are to uphold justice, coordinate human life, educate individuals, form the purposes and goals of the community, so that the moral rights, set rules and justice can take care of the well-being of human beings. Rasid Muhamad (2010) states that moral debate usually focuses on two main issues, namely, the properties of praise (mahmudah) and reprehensible properties (mazmumah).
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Radhi Ibrahim (2006) and Rasid Muhamad (2010) stating that the matter is the entire basis for faith and beliefs in our relationship with one another. Kamrul Shukri Mohd Teh (2008) feels that the field of debate of tawheed/faith coversfour areas, namely uluhiyyah, nubuwwah, sam'yyat and mumkinat. Faith then is the core central and specific beliefs of all Muslims. According to Mohd Asri Abdullah et al. (2009), Syariah is the knowledge of all the commands of Allah in the form of laws or regulationswhich are comprehensive

Figure 2:

iv. The Integration of Knowledge in Islam: Concept and Challenges

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four suggestions to help overcome this challenge: gives

i. Subjects which are professional in nature should be
incorporated into the existing curriculum.

ii. Graduates who are well-versed in both disciplines of
Islamic Studies and professional knowledge must
be increased to meet the needs of the employment
sector.

iii. Strong support should be given to those who strive
to seek improvement in the quality of Islamic
Studies.

Figure 3:

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