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Remembering the IIUM's Efforts for 'Islamising the Self' from 1983 to 1990

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Islamisation has been one of the top priorities of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) ever since it was established.

Islamisation is defined as a process more than just an intellectual exercise which also entails transforming the character, demeanour, attitude, ethics, and moral behaviour of students, academics and administrators, also known as 'Islamising the Self'

perspectives.

From 1983 to 1990, 'Islamising the Self' was handled under the aegis of holistic Islamic personality development through non-formal educational programmes and initiatives.

The academics of the Centre for Fundamental Knowledge (now defunct) assumed the role of a *murabbi*, shaping, moulding, inspiring, nurturing, guiding, and leading students in accordance with Islamic beliefs, norms, guidelines and standards so the students could become accountable, conscientious, competent, clean, corrupt-free, compassionate, honest, responsible and trustworthy individuals, leaders, scholars, and thinkers who would and lead the world to make it a better place to live in the spirit of *Rahmatan Li'l Alamin*.

Murabbī is a role everyone should play; its importance cannot be taken for granted or ignored at any cost. Exemplifying the *murabbī* stance must be an overall responsibility of the Islamic university in that the academics have a significant share. This makes the Islamic university unique.

Recognising the efforts in 'Islamising the Self' in the University benefits students, the faculty, and the general public.

From 1983 to 1990, efforts for 'Islamising the Self' were made through two key programmes: *Halaqah* and *ʿIbādah* Camps. These two focused on developing students' moral and spiritual excellence as one of the primary initiatives for 'Islamising the Self', although this phrase was not explicitly used.

The weekly *Halaqah* sessions detail its operationalisation and the curriculum spread over four years.

Under the *ʿIbādah* camps, several themes included the concept of *ʿIbādah*, Brotherhood, Islamic personality, social awareness and responsibility, *daʿwah* (as a fundamental obligation), Islamic civilisation as a saviour, realising the Islamic ideals and social realities, and *istiqāmah* were discussed and articulated.

Futuristic in thought, action, and sustainable development of morality and spirituality, the need for moral and spiritual

leaders or heads of state or policymakers and serve the *ummah* and humanity.

Creating and instilling a thirst for honesty, integrity, a good governance mindset, a corrupt-free attitude, a moderate stance in religious interpretations distancing extremism, and ummatic behaviour in graduates would deter corruption during their professional tenure for some leaders were neither free from corruption nor interested in the well-being of their citizens.

Hence, prioritising, considering and providing *tarbiyyah rūḥiyyah* (spiritual training) was indispensable for the success (*al-falah*) and sustainable development of the *ummah's* spirituality, producing Allah-fearing, Allah-conscious and Allah-accountable human beings aware of their role and responsibility for people.

Therefore, a non-formal educational programme to supplement official curricula was implemented with a systematic syllabus.

Indeed, it was the first experience in a higher learning institution that focused on spiritual sustainability, ultimately leading to self-Islamisation and producing perfect and dedicated human beings with *Sejahtera* consciousness, otherwise known as *Insan Sejahtera*, in the current context of the University.

Halaqah sessions for all students addressed the need for holistic leadership with comprehensive excellence committed to reforming (*islah*) the *ummah*, as stated later in the University mission, but with a focus on manifesting moral and spiritual excellence, one of the instruments of sustaining spirituality, otherwise known as 'Islamising the self', which had no precedent locally or internationally, received the support of many global Muslim thinkers.

Halaqah sessions also provided a place for participants to engage in conversations and discussions and share their expertise and experience to improve their speaking and debating skills.

Students were divided into small groups called *halaqah*, supervised and monitored by student leaders (*naqīb/naqībah*) who followed a unique curriculum focused on studying the

The curriculum comprehensively developed moral, spiritual, intellectual excellence, and leadership qualities relating to classical and modern issues. Each academic staff was in charge of five or six *ḥalaqah* groups.

Nuqabā' and *naqībāt* attended weekly *ḥalaqah* with their respective supervisors, who discussed the curriculum in order to improve competence and confidence in leaders who faced concerns and problems posed by students. Weekly sessions were held, and supervisors were required to keep records. Marks were given for required attendance and credited to each semester's courses.

The *ḥalaqah* curriculum was designed to last four years. The syllabus was classified into two divisions: one for members of the *ḥalaqah* and another for *nuqabā'* and *naqībāt*.

There were 20 sessions per annum. Students must attend all sessions, and attendance and participation were graded. *Nuqabā'* and *naqībāt* were in charge of keeping attendance records for their respective groups' members.

The *ḥalaqah* sessions over four years focussed on issues crucial to 'Islamising the Self' and developing leadership skills and qualities. The curriculum for Islamising oneself covered topics like Sincerity and Intention behind all Actions, *Shahādātayn* and its Significance, Principal Tenets of Islam, Innovation in Religion, *ʿIbādah* and its Meaning and Concept, Tendering Good Advice, Injunction for Regular Observation of the Prophet's Practice and its Conditions, Acceptance of *Sadaqah* and *Duʿā*, the Concept of *Akhlāq* and its Inter-Relationship with Man, Piety and Discarding Doubtful, *Tawhīd*, Rendering Good Advice, Honouring the Guest, *Ikhlāṣ al-Niyyah*, Self-Control, Softness, Tolerance and Kindness, Warning against Envy, Divine Surveillance, Modesty, the Dangers of *Kufr*, Perseverance in Religion, *Al-Salāh*: its Meaning and Blessing, Excellence of *Dhikr Allāh*, Harmful Deed, Back-biting, Enjoining Virtue and Forbidding Evil, Belief in Life After Death, Grace and the Mercifulness of Allah, Excellence of *Zuhd* (indifference) to the World, *Salāt al-Jamāʿah* and its Virues, Prohibition of Breach of Faith (treachery/treason), excellence of

towards Neighbours, passions, bribery, peace and dissension, greeting, remembrance of Allah, administration of justice, Manifestation of Extremism, Cause of Extremism, Emphasis on Allegorical Texts, Lack of Insight in History, Duties of Young Muslims, Knowledge, Values and Actions, Sympathetic Understanding of the Abilities, Limitations and Circumstances of others and Advice to Muslim Youth.

ʿIbādah camps with specific themes were considered imperative to Islamising the individual and were required at the beginning of each semester. The themes of *ʿIbādah* camps corresponded to courses offered every semester.

Thus, the camp activities assisted students in better understanding the forthcoming formal courses and improving their religious consciousness and devotion, thus 'Islamising the Self' in specific ways. Each student would attend eight *ʿIbādah* camps prior to graduation to nurture religio-moral and spiritual excellence.

Each camp lasted three days and two nights, during which all academic staff collaborated with students in organisation, lectures, forums, demonstrations of specific rituals, community service and games. They were required to pray in congregation, recite the Qur'ān in small groups and sometimes with commentaries, attend *qiyām al-layl*, pray *taḥajjud* and *witr*, recite *al-Ma'thūrāt* and fast.

All *ʿIbādah* camps were attended to and monitored by academic staff from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. They stayed with them and played games with them in the afternoon. Because of the focused commitment of the University's academic community, this curriculum significantly impacted students.

It was considered the ideal approach for faculty and students to share their experiences, understand one another, and treat the university community as a robust family. Regular participation in the *ʿIbādah* camps brought about many positive changes and improved student character and personality.

spiritual, intellectual, and leadership characteristics, which remained an unattainable goal in many regions of the Muslim world.

Hence, the speeches aimed to set students on a path of righteousness by equipping them with skills necessary to achieve and maintain spiritual excellence as role models throughout their professional careers, empowering them to be corrupt-free individuals and consequently create a corrupt-free society.

The phrase *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* [character refining or rearing] dominated the discussions in connection to the refinement of individual character with a special emphasis on students.

The phrase was frequently used to motivate students and faculty. Thus, the campus was filled with a distinct ecosystem in which students immersed in a true Islamic setting.

The 'Islamisation of the Self' agenda also focused on and discussed strategic themes such as the qualities and characteristics of *ʿIbād al-Raḥmān*, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, and *Khalīfatullāh fī al-Arḍ*, the attribute of *Ulū al-albāb*, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, *al-Nafs al-Ammārah*, *al-Nafs al-Muṭmaʿinnah*, the culture of "Say What You Do," the Concept of *Tijārah* and *Anṣārullāh*, the Concept of *al-Birr* and *al-Taqwā*, Avoidance of *ḥubb al-Dunyā*, Ridding of *Amrāḍ al-Qalb*, *al-Falāḥ*, *Amānah*, *Shūrā*, the Concept of *Ibtilāʾ* and *Miḥnah*, the Method of *Wasaʿiyyah*, Deviant Teachings, the phenomenon of *sūʾ al-ẓann*, Unity and *Ummatism*, and Congregational Prayer. ***

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