

Alternative Models of Higher Education: An Epistemological Enquiry

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Introduction

There is no dearth of literature about the malaise or crisis of the Muslim *ummah* as a result of the clash of two worldviews, namely, the Islamic worldview and secularised worldview. When one talks about finding alternative models of higher education, it implies that the existing model is found to be inadequate. Meaning to say, the current model of higher education construct that is based on materialism, interpreted within the paradigm of postmodernism whose worldview is the result of secularism, does not meet the needs of Muslim universities.

However, it is not only in fulfilling the needs of Muslim universities that the alternative models need to be found; such models must be developed to ease the Muslims of the dilemma which has plagued them since the time of Jamaluddin al-Afghani. It is a dilemma of whether to lead a life that is secularised, which is based on the Western worldview, or a life that is unified, which is based on *tawhid*. Besides the challenge of secularisation, the Muslim academia, which has realised the significance of the de-westernising of contemporary knowledge, has yet to agree on what the islamisation project entails. This project emerged in the Muslim academia since the late 1970s to address the dilemma of the Muslims mentioned above. Since this dilemma could be deciphered through an epistemological enquiry, thus before providing the alternative models of higher education, the epistemological enquiry must first be answered. Hence, apart from finding the alternative models of higher education, the two central issues found in the epistemological enquiry, namely, the intellectual and structural dimension besieging the Muslim universities and academic today, will be dealt with. They are the onslaught of westernisation and secularism, and the differences in interpretation of the islamisation concept.