

Spirituality and Sustainability

EXPERIENCES OF
THE INTERNATIONAL
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

Edited by
Abdul Rashid Moten

With a foreword by Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak,
Rector, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)



IIUM



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CHAPTER 5

**Moral and Holistic
Development in
Higher Education**

Homam Altabaa

The establishment of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 1983 marked a paradigm shift in the framework of religious education and in higher education in general. The IIUM offers a new approach and overhauls and remodels education on a unique foundation of integration between revealed knowledge and acquired human knowledge. It aims at achieving holistic, comprehensive and sustainable development in all areas of human endeavours. Its integrated approach stresses that education is not merely for material gains but should meaningfully contribute to the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, moral, physical and environmental development of the Muslim communities and of the humanity at large.

Thus the university meets the requirements of the twenty-first century and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It is this type of education that helps actualise the true value of civilisational existence. The holistic education of the IIUM would help countries to produce excellent graduates with the needed qualities of leadership who would shoulder the responsibilities of fostering development of their communities and future generations. Thus, its educational philosophy seeks to ensure double benefits: (1) students build their knowledge and skills in addition to the spirituality, ethics and perseverance needed for personal and interpersonal success and (2) they develop a sense of belonging and responsibility towards society as they realise the vital *amānah* (trust) they carry and the critical roles they play.

The experience of the IIUM in developing and nurturing the holistic and moral character of its students offers a shining example for local and international institutions of higher learning striving to develop their courses and programmes to ensure “excellence with a soul”. This type of comprehensive excellence is achieved when the ambivalent or restless youths grow to become adults with a deep-rooted moral foundation and strong sense of responsibility.

Given this background, this chapter explores and reflects upon various dimensions of the IIUM experiences. It explores the views and insights of

members of the IIUM community about their role and efforts of the university in developing commendable moral characteristics and holistic personality of learners. A number of academics, students and alumni interviewed stressed that it is the principal mission of the IIUM to develop and nurture moral character and holistic personality of its students. There is a widespread belief among members of the IIUM community that this noble mission overarches all their other duties and interests. Many students have given detailed insights about specific programmes, courses and factors that have helped shape their moral personhood.

Holistic and Moral Education as a Foundation in IIUM

The identity, strategies and practices of the IIUM are based on the Islamic worldview of *tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism). The Constitution of the university states that its vision is “inspired by the worldview of *tawhīd* and Islamic philosophy of the unity of knowledge as well as its concept of holistic education”. The mission of the university is “to produce better quality intellectuals, professionals and scholars of distinction by integrating quality of faith (*īmān*), knowledge (*‘ilm*) and good character (*akhlāq*) to serve as agents of comprehensive and balanced progress, as well as sustainable development in Malaysia and in the wider world at large”; and “to nurture the quality of holistic excellence imbued with Islamic moral-spiritual values, in learning, teaching, research, consultancy, publication, administration and student life” (IIUM, 2018: 3-6). The concept of holistic education and morality has thus been deeply embedded in the very existence of the IIUM since its establishment in 1983.

Accordingly, the university sees its *raison d’etre*, i.e. Islamisation, as the basis of holistic human development in the worldview of Islam. The university’s concise Mission statement of Integration, Islamisation, Internationalisation and Comprehensive Excellence (IIICE or Triple-I-CE) is beautifully captured in Figure 4.5. The goodly tree in Figure 5.1, is referred to as pertaining to *tawhīd*. *‘Aqīdah* forms the route that nourishes the tree. *Sharī‘ah* is akin to the robust trunk carrying nutrition for the wide canopy. The tree produces people with good *akhlāq* to promote *rahmatan lil ‘ālamīn* (mercy to all the worlds). IIUM (2018-2020) Strategic Initiatives of balanced staff, balanced graduates, institutional sustainability, responsible research and innovation outcomes, societal wellbeing and value creation and global relevance are depicted as tangible fruits of the university, which is founded on the concept of *tawhīd*.

T A W H Ī D

#Islamisation Unit, CENTRIS IIUM, April 2019

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ صَوَّرَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا لِي السَّمْعَاءُ ۖ تُؤْتِي أَكْثَرًا كُلَّ حِينٍ بَدِينٍ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

See you not how Allah sets forth a parable? A goodly word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches to the heavens of its Lord. It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the permission of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for mankind, in order that they may receive admonition. (Q. 14:24-25)

ISLAMIC ETHICS & MORALITY

DIVINELY DECREED ISLAMIC NORMATIVE WAY, the various MAQĀṢID i.e. objectives of the *Shari'ah* (Hifz: *al-Din, al-Hayāh, al-'Aql, al-Nasl*)

THE CREED of ISLAMIC MONOTHEISM: the Absolute & Uncompromising Oneness of God

The parable of the 'goodly tree' is hereby referred to as pertaining to 'Tawhid'. 'Aqidah Islamiyyah forms the strong root system that reaches wide and deep into the ground, nourishing and supporting the tree. 'Shari'ah Islamiyyah is akin to the robust trunk, carrying nutrition for the wide canopy, which reaches up high to receive light from the sun. 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali interprets this further as receiving Light and Guidance from The Creator Allah s.w.t. Resilient to diseases and strong winds, the 'goodly tree' bears 'fruits' and gives a long list of benefits to other creatures – such as good AKHLAQ that promote Rahmatan 'Ala 'Alamin (mercy to all the worlds). IIUM aspires and works towards being the 'goodly tree'. Some of IIUM's fruits are indicated as its 2018 - 2020 strategic initiatives, those that have begun to sprout on the ground, signifying the university's commitment for sustainability.

Figure 5.1: The Goodly Tree. Source: Nur Jannah Hassan, CENTRIS, IIUM, April 2019.

The educational disciplines and practices of the IIUM are diverse, with its sixteen faculties, twenty-three centres, eleven divisions, four institutes and nineteen main offices. The Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS) is the largest faculty, with three major constituents, namely the disciplines under Islamic Revealed Knowledge, the Humanities and Social Sciences. The Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies (FIDS) is one of the eleven departments under KIRKHS. FIDS offers the university core courses, compulsory for every undergraduate student from all faculties.

The university's trajectory is further secured with the formulation of the National Education Philosophy in 1988, with the vision of a balanced education as the basis for the future success of graduates. Ethics, spirituality and leadership are some of the anchors for Malaysian higher education (Ministry of Education, 2015: 9), and given its unique vision, this is especially true for the IIUM. Hence, by virtue of its status as an Islamic university, it seeks to develop students who are "ethically and morally upright, spiritually grounded, compassionate and caring; appreciate sustainable development and a healthy lifestyle" (Ministry of Education, 2015: 9). Upon successfully completing the curricular and co-curricular courses, students graduate with the

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Spirituality and Sustainability

EXPERIENCES OF

THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

The International Islamic University Malaysia has, since 2018, redoubled its struggle to restore its wisdom, strengths, and dignity and promote comprehensive excellence. Hence, the University adopted the United Nations' sustainable development agenda as a complement to the University's vision and mission of Islamisation, Integration, Internationalisation and Comprehensive Excellence.

The book explains the ways in which the SDGs will provide a new strategy to apply the concept of Islamisation, which has long been the foundation of the IIUM. Consequently, the university's operations and facilities have been adjusted so that they become mediums in applying and showcasing a lifestyle that is sustainable. Everything in the university i.e. the curricular and extra-curricular courses, the research activities, and everyday operations in administrative offices and other places are geared towards sustainable development in line with the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Elements of sustainability are integrated in every aspect of the university's administration and, indeed, in teaching, research and community engagement. Consequently, the IIUM has adopted "Humanising Higher Education through maqāṣid al-sharī'ah and SDGs" as its official strategic mission.

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