

**TOWARDS HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND
WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS: A MAQĀṢID
AL-SHARĪ'AH AND SDGS
(SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS)
TRANS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH IN
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
(IIUM)**

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to show how the Department of Uṣūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion attempts to promote and achieve holistic development and well-being of its students by applying the trans-disciplinary approach through spirituality and an integrated education. In the educational structure of IIUM this approach aims to integrate religious or revealed sciences with human and natural sciences. This paper first examines and analyses the learning outcomes and objectives of two courses offered by the Department from their official course outlines. Subsequently, the responses of three students about the courses which they have undertaken are evaluated. In addition, accounts of their academic and personal developments in terms of goals as well as expectations for the future are presented to reflect holistic development and well-being. The findings have shown that the learning outcomes correspond with the goals of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah and SDGs trans-disciplinary approach. The findings also indicated there appears to be a correspondence between the objectives and learning outcomes of the course and what the students said they have gained from the course. This correspondence indicates the courses are successful in promoting holistic development and well-being in the students. Lastly, the students' accounts of their individual journey towards success and happiness also constitute elements of holistic development and well-being. The unique feature of these success stories is that they could be attainable by every student who undergoes an educational curriculum and system in IIUM.

Keywords: *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'Ah, Sdgs, Trans-Disciplinary Approach, Holistic Development and Well-Being, Integrated Education.*

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INTRODUCTION

The core business and essential element of any university including International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is its curriculum which encompasses its teaching and learning methods with the aim of achieving its well-defined goals. For IIUM it has chosen 'IIICE' (Integration, Islamisation, Internationalisation and Comprehensive Excellence) as its mission and vision. In relation to the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS) generally and the Department of Uşūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion in particular this mission and vision have direct and practical bearing on the teaching and learning methods as well as their outcomes. Presently, 'IIICE' has been synthesised into a holistic universal goal fitted comprehensively within IIUM's structure and its ecosystem which now have been formulated and articulated explicitly as the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) and FPK (*Falsafah Pendidikan Kebangsaan*).

This paper is concerned with the holistic development and well-being of IIUM students focusing especially on undergraduate and postgraduate students at the Department of Uşūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion. The *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* emphasizes holistic development and well-being through the preservation of religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*), the soul (*hifẓ al-nafs*) and the intellect (*hifẓ al-'aql*) and one of the SDGs is physical health and well-being. Holistic development for students seeks to address their multi-dimensional nature which includes physical health, emotional nurture, mental stimulation, focus and clarity and spiritual nourishment. The distinct feature of this approach is that students learn different skills in a stage-wise manner with the final objective that they develop overall in various spheres (iDreamCareer.com, April 2019), and in terms of well-being they are feeling and operating at their best when their needs are met in each sphere (Beasley, 2015). The trans-disciplinary approach is defined as "an approach to curriculum integration which dissolves the boundaries between the conventional disciplines and organises teaching and learning around the construction of meaning in the context of real-world problems or themes." (UNESCO, n.d.). In the context of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and SDGs the trans-disciplinary approach helps to achieve the goals of holistic development and well-being of students through its contribution towards spirituality and an integrated education. In the educational structure of IIUM specifically this approach aims to integrate the religious or revealed sciences with the human and natural sciences encompassing the theological, philosophical, and ethical fields.

From a more fundamental perspective, holistic development and well-being can be achieved through the correspondence between microcosmic and macrocosmic goals. In Islamic thought, there are three basic realities: God or the metacosm, the cosmos or macrocosm (*al-'ālam al-kabīr*) and the human being or microcosm (*al-'ālam al-ṣaghīr*). The principle of correspondence and harmonisation between macrocosm and microcosm is based on the Qur'ānic verse "We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and in themselves, until it is clear to them that He is the Real." (41:53). What the verse indicates is that the world and human beings are created directly by God and both realms or derivative realities are related to and correspond to each other and have a direct link to God, the Divine and Ultimate Reality. (Buchman, 1998). In other words, both the principle and verse reiterate the central concept of Divine Unity (*al-tawhīd*).

In Islam, as explicated by luminaries from its intellectual tradition such as Ibn Sīnā, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', Al-Ghazzālī, Ibn al-'Arabī, 'Azīz al-dīn al-Nasafī and many others, only in the state of unity (*tawhīd*) between the three realms can real success, equilibrium and happiness be achieved in the human being and the universe. This is the real meaning of submission to the will of God in Islam, the Lord and Sustainer of the worlds. The global goals which constitute the seventeen SDGs including that of physical health and well-being only take into account the microcosm and the macrocosm disregarding completely God the metacosm which in essence is the origin and end of all that exists and which falls under His Dominion and Decree. Hence, from the Islamic perspective the SDGs must be viewed from a higher level of reality to guarantee comprehensiveness and meaning.

In order to demonstrate how the Department of Uşūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion promotes and tries to achieve holistic development and well-being the learning outcomes and objectives of two courses offered by the Department is examined and analysed. In addition, three students who have graduated with Bachelor of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (BIRKH) degree in Uşūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion were interviewed and their responses towards the aforementioned courses are presented and evaluated.

THE GOALS OF EDUCATION IN ISLAM

In this study the views of the Islamic philosophers (*falāsifah; hukamā'*) on education forms the basis of the meaning of education in Islam. The *hukamā'* are Islamic philosophers from the *hikmah* tradition who identify their science with the Qur'ān (2:269): "He gives wisdom (*hikmah*) unto whom He wills and he unto whom wisdom is given, he truly has received abundant good; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding." According to them, education is based on (*al-tawhīd*) i.e., the principle and goal of all that is conceived as Islamic. Therefore, the goal of education is the goal of faith or religion (*al-dīn*) itself as envisaged in the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. In its historical development Islam established an educational system which produced devout Muslims as well as foremost thinkers in various intellectual disciplines (Nasr, 1985). By the same token, this is the same goal for all Islamic educational institutions including IUM.

The subject of Islamic education is the whole human being (*al-insān*) and the human being as stated in the Qur'ān is Allāh's servant (*'abd Allāh*) and vicegerent (*khalīfat Allāh*) on earth (Qur'ān 2:30). An Islamic education program seeks to address the human being holistically or in all its dimensions as body (*al-jism*), soul (*al-nafs*) and spirit (*al-ruh*) or intellect (*al-'aql*). Hence, education has to be imparted holistically to body, soul and intellect. In terms of content, an Islamic education seeks to integrate both theoretical knowledge and purification of the soul for knowledge or science (*'ilm*) to become grounded in the soul. The goal of education then is the actualisation and perfection of both rational and spiritual faculties with the aim of fulfilling the purpose for which human beings were created i.e., the knowledge of Allāh (*ma'rifat Allāh*) (Nasr, 1985). This divine knowledge will ultimately and inextricably unite the human with the Divine within the matrix of knowledge which is more commonly referred to now as the *Tawhidic* paradigm in knowledge and education (Bakar, 2014).

With this comprehensive view in mind, the philosophers (*hukamā'*) consider the meaning of education in the light of the fundamental questions of "who is the human being?" or "what is his/her nature?", "where does he/she come from?", and "where is he/she going?" The answers to these three fundamental questions lead to the goal of education which is to transform the soul and beautify it so that it will be prepared for the hereafter (*al-ākhirah*). The transformation including its beautification entails the actualisation of all the possibilities of the human soul leading to the supreme knowledge of the Divine (*ma'rifat Allāh*) and the happiness that results from the attainment of this knowledge and the adornment of the soul with virtues (*faḍā'il*). According to the Islamic scholars this is the state of the soul of the faithful which is worthy to enter the eternal world at the end of this earthly life. Consequently, Islamic education relates to the strengthening and possession of faith (*īmān*) (al-Attas, 1995). This strengthening is possible with moral education (*akhlāq*) and acquiring the virtue of purity and fear of Allāh (*taqwā*) (Nasr, 1985). Hence, the most comprehensive view of education can be found in Islamic philosophy which attempts to harmonise the microcosmic and macrocosmic goals and between the religious and secular goals.

METHODOLOGY

The two courses that are examined and analysed are History of Islamic Philosophy (RKUD 4350) and Belief Systems and Ideologies (RKUD 6270/7270) which the author has taught for several years. Their official course outlines and learning outcomes are analysed to indicate the specific goals of holistic development and well-being that can be achieved through spiritual and integrated education.

Subsequently, three individual students from the Department are interviewed by email and their responses of the two courses are recorded and evaluated. These students have been selected since they have completed the courses at both the undergraduate and master's levels. Two are writing their master's theses and one of them completed the Research Paper 1 all under the author's supervision which made it easier to have access to them and to trace and highlight their most recent developments. The assessment of the two courses by the students of their learning outcomes and objectives is based on the students' individual responses. In addition, excerpts of their personal accounts of their academic and personal developments in terms of goals as well as expectations for the future are presented to reflect holistic development and well-being. The approach taken here is that these individual narratives qualify to measure success in terms of holistic development and well-being if success is measured from the progress they have made before entering IUM and their present achievements. The

contention here is that development or progress is relative to the aspirant and cannot be measured in absolute terms.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Building Trans-Disciplinary Knowledge Within The Matrix of *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'Ah* and The SDGS

The Two Selected Courses

History of Islamic Philosophy (RKUD 4350)

History of Islamic Philosophy (RKUD 4350) is a core course with three credit value which students of level three or higher majoring in Uṣūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion are required to pass to graduate for a Bachelor of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (BIRKH) degree in Uṣūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion. A description of the course based on its synopsis and learning outcomes as stated in the course outline dated July 13, 2017, are as follows:

Course Synopsis

This course explicates in general the key ideas of major Muslim scholars from the beginning of the Islamic intellectual tradition and philosophers from various schools of Islamic philosophy. The philosophers' views on such areas as metaphysics, cosmology, epistemology, and ethics will be discussed. The relation between the disciplines of philosophy, *'ilm al-kalam* and Sufism especially in the thoughts of later Muslim philosophers will also be examined.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to firstly, synthesize the views of the Muslim philosophers; secondly to display scientific and creative thinking skills in dealing with philosophical methods to address contemporary issues in writings and presentations; and finally, to propose solutions to intellectually and spiritually related issues in light of Islamic worldview. The teaching-learning methods are made up of lecture, group project and teamwork. For lecture the assessment method applied is test; for the group project the methods used are article and video reviews as well as participation in class discussion; and for the assessment method of teamwork, term paper and presentation are applied.

It is evident from the course synopsis which outlines the objectives, the course is expected to fulfill the goals of Islamic education set by the Islamic philosophical tradition as explicated above. This perspective or worldview is associated with the great men of learning and science. Its educational system produced philosopher-scientist such as al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Bīrūnī, Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazzālī, Shihāb al-dīn al-Suhrawardī, Ṣadr al-dīn Shirāzī etc. Certainly, with a significant focus on human spirituality and intellectuality in its curriculum, the Department specifically and IIUM generally hope to follow the footsteps of the traditional system to produce well-balanced graduates who experience holistic development and well-being in their lives. In this way, both microcosmic and macrocosmic goals can be achieved.

In relation to the course, the ideas and thoughts of these figures are discussed and students are assessed based on written test and term paper as well as multimedia presentation covering ideas of these philosophers on areas encompassing the three domains of metacosm, macrocosm and microcosm namely, metaphysics, cosmology, epistemology, psychology and ethics. Students undertaking the course are expected not only to understand but to internalise to the best of their ability the definition and meaning of philosophy as espoused by the philosophers themselves. This is because Islamic philosophy is not only theoretical but practical in its objectives, content, and method. For example, al-Kindī who is generally recognised as the first Muslim philosopher states: "Philosophy is the knowledge of the reality of things within man's possibility, because the philosopher's end in his theoretical knowledge is to gain truth and in his practical knowledge to behave in accordance with truth." (El-Ehwany, 1963). Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' the well-known anonymous group of philosophers stressed the importance of

ethics and acquiring good character (*akhlāq*) as an end of philosophy. As quoted by Nasr (2006) from their *Rasā'il*: "The beginning of philosophy is the love of the sciences, its middle knowledge of the realities of existents to the measure of human ability and its end words and deeds in accordance with knowledge."

In addition, students are also expected to address contemporary issues using the philosophical method of reason and logical argument and not applying mere opinion and emotive in their writings and presentations. They also must be able to propose solutions to spiritually and intellectually related issues in the light of the Islamic worldview by synthesising the views of the past philosophers and making them relevant for present times. This is evidence of a participation in the building of a trans-disciplinary knowledge within the matrix of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and the SDGs. Clearly the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* are met with the content of Islamic philosophy which reflects the Islamic education system in preserving especially religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), the soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) and the intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) for the purpose of the common good (*maṣlaḥah*) (Auda, 2008). In terms of the SDGs the learning outcomes of the course encompass not only the goals of quality education as aspired by the trans-disciplinary approach but simultaneously supersede it in terms of providing an integrated education encompassing spiritual, psychological and ethical dimensions. The approach of scientific and creative thinking skills to provide comprehensive solutions to current issues including those which pertain to SDGs in the economic, social and environmental domains (Hassan, 2019) such as integrated sustainable cities and communities, peace, justice and strong institutions, good health and wellbeing, climate action and others.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Students' Responses of the Course

The following are responses from the three students who have taken the course which represent their evaluation of the course in terms of the learning outcomes and what they have personally and intellectually gained from studying it. The question that was posed to them was: "What have you learnt from the course History of Islamic Philosophy (RKUD 4350) which you took in your undergraduate program?"

The History of Islamic Philosophy course has enlightened me in many ways. I managed to discover the differences between Islamic philosophy and Western philosophy. At the same time, I had learnt how the Muslim philosophers present their arguments and how their arguments differed from what had been presented by the Western philosophers. In addition, I also discovered how one Muslim philosopher differs from another Muslim philosopher. (Response from Student #1, dated 15.8.2019)

I believe that studying History of Islamic Philosophy is important as it would offer us insights on how Islamic Philosophy and Western Philosophy differ. As a student majoring in Uṣūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion, it is crucial to have the correct worldview and master the core concepts or foundations of philosophy. Moreover, I learned to appreciate Islamic tradition by doing research on the ideas of the Muslim scholars. (Response from Student #2, dated 15.8.2019)

The course taught me the vastness and immensity of Islamic philosophy. I learnt about Islamic thought and the rational capability of Muslim scholars through its historical development. Through the different stances taken against philosophy, I found out that philosophy is not un-Islamic as has been promoted by some Muslims. Logical thinking and reasoning have always existed in Islam and were used in many occasions to defend the dignity of the religion. (Response from Student #3, dated 15.8.2019)

The students clearly benefitted from the content of the course and there appears to be a correspondence between the objectives and learning outcomes of the course and what the students said they have gained from the course. This correspondence is viewed to indicate the course is successful in promoting holistic development and well-being in the students based on the *Tawhidic* paradigm in knowledge and education

COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED KNOWLEDGE AND STUDENT HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT***Belief Systems and Ideologies (RKUD 6270/7270)***

This course is an elective course of three credit hours which students majoring in Uşūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion, Qur'ān, and Sunnah and Fiqh and Uşūl al-fiqh can opt to take and pass to graduate for a Master's of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (MIRKH). What follows are the Course Synopsis, Learning Outcomes, Learning Methodology and Course Assessment taken from its course outline.

Course Synopsis

This course examines various belief systems such as monotheism, pantheism, dualism and atheism, and ideological challenges advocated by western thought such as positivism, genetic determinism, secular humanism, liberalism, naturalism, nihilism, hedonism, realism and materialism. It also discusses religious pluralism, post-modernism and other issues related to them. The movement of liberal Islam will also be focused.

Learning Outcomes

After completing the course, the student would be able to differentiate the fundamental sources of belief systems and ideologies; clearly explain the belief systems and ideologies; identify the salient features of ideologies; compare the worldview of Islam with others; and produce and deliver the assignments' findings effectively through information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

The course requires that students can differentiate the fundamental sources of belief systems and ideologies, to identify their salient features and expound on them clearly with the final objective of comparing the Islamic worldview with those of other belief systems and ideologies. In focusing on the belief systems and ideologies mentioned in the course outline such as pantheism, dualism, atheism, secular humanism, materialism, post-modernism etc. the task of the course is to translate the concept of ideology which originated from the West, specifically Europe, and based on modern Western philosophy and its schools of thought to an Islamic perspective.

Modern Western thought is marked by the philosophical foundations of humanism, rationalism and empiricism and the ideologies which are derived from them. The Islamic perspective is taken both from a general framework of Islam as a religion and way of life or tradition (*al-dīn*) focusing on the particular aspect of Islam as thought or *fikr* and not just from its legal point of view. Hence, humanism, rationalism and empiricism constituting the basic philosophical foundations or principles of modern ideologies form the focus of analysis and evaluation of the course from the Islamic perspective with the aim of providing creative responses to them as Muslims.

The course is treated as a comparative and evaluative study of two contending worldviews or civilizational perspectives, that is, of the modern secular West and Islam. It is pertinent to highlight here the meaning of 'modern secular West' from the Islamic perspective as the belief that humankind has no need of divine revelation to guide it in the seeking of knowledge and proper life and civilisation-building. In other words, modern civilisation is one that is founded on the forgetting of God (Bakar, 2014). It is from this fundamental meaning of 'modern secular' that the evaluation of modern thought and ideologies are undertaken.

Generally, it is said that Muslim students do not have a good foundational knowledge of modern ideologies, but it is imperative that they study it to understand the modern world in which they live. Just as how the Western scholars' study and evaluate the Islamic religious and intellectual traditions from their perspective, Muslims must be able to do the same with Western civilisation and the prevalent modern Western worldview from the Islamic perspective.

The result is to enable the Muslim students to respond to the challenge of modernism and secularism in general and the various ideologies which have a great impact on the lives of Muslims in the world today. The ramifications and effects of these ideologies are seen and experienced everywhere from the areas of science and technology,

the political and educational to the economic and financial institutions down to the worlds of entertainment and fashion. It is very important that the students not only look at the superficial and practical aspects of these ideologies, which may appear to be positive, but more importantly to delve deeper into the philosophies that underlie them to have a more profound understanding of modern thought and Western civilisation.

In addition, what this course hopes to achieve is for the students to have an intellectual response to ideological issues besides the 'fundamentalist' and 'modernist approaches' which are adopted to coexist peacefully with the modern West. This can be done by understanding modernism or the worldview of the modern West and by clearly distinguishing their philosophical foundations from those of the Islamic worldview. The important question to ask here is, how do Muslims especially the youth maintain and be confident of their identity without resorting to violent means because of their alienation or hatred towards the West and what it represents or alternatively, throw away their tradition and culture and adopt the Western worldview and way which intrinsically are not theirs and which ultimately would lead to alienation? The approach taken for this course is that the problem faced by Muslims today is one of knowledge and the solution lies in Muslims drawing from their own intellectual tradition to find solutions to their current problems.

TRANS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH AND FINDING MEANING IN REAL-WORLD CONTEXTS

Students' Responses of the Course

The following are the students' responses to the question posed to them, "What have you learnt from the course Belief Systems and Ideologies (RKUD 6270/7270) which you took in your master's program?" Their answers reflect the increased awareness of the impact of belief systems and ideologies on Muslims after taking the course.

The course keeps me alert and aware of the current ideologies promoted by the West. We cannot deny the fact that there are some good things in them. Therefore, this course has put some framework regarding the boundaries and limitations on how much we can rely on the West. In addition, since we are living in a globalized world and cannot escape from facing these ideologies, this course provides guidelines on how Muslims should respond towards them. (Response from Student #1, dated 16.8.2019)

It was in the Belief System and Ideologies course that I learnt how practical misapplication of philosophy could mislead Muslims, for instance the adaption of liberalism of Sisters in Islam (SIS) and Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL), and Islamism of the extremist groups. The extreme application of rationality does not fulfill the main purpose of philosophy in Islam, which is to draw oneself closer to the Truth, instead it alienates it. (Response from Student #3, dated 15.8.2019)

The experience from the course enhanced my intellectual development especially when I learned a proper method to write an academic paper. In addition, this course has provided me the chance to widen my horizon of insights which range from contemplating on the core and fundamentals of Islam, to the discernment of philosophies and contemporary ideologies. Apart from academic technicalities, I learned the *adab* in seeking knowledge. Sincerity in seeking knowledge should precede all other goals. It taught me that the act of seeking knowledge should not be confined within the four walls of the classrooms; rather, it should be extended to outside the classroom as well. (Response from Student #2, dated 15.8.2019)

The students' responses show how the Belief System and Ideologies course tend towards a trans-disciplinary approach and the students themselves have grasped its learning outcomes when they are able to find meaning in the context of real-world situations and problems.

Applying these foundational principles (*uṣūl*) to the concrete case at hand the courses representing the sciences have as their goals the holistic development of the student through acquisition of comprehensive and integrated

knowledge which brings about their holistic wellbeing. Consequently, the goal of becoming a person of knowledge and virtue together with becoming wise and faithful believers can be achieved. The learning outcomes correspond with the goals of a modified definition of trans-disciplinary education which encompass both religious and spiritual domains and the human sciences or worldly sciences represented by the ideologies and the issues that derive from them. The subject matter or content of the sciences of the human soul, the cosmos, and the Qur'ān as signs (*āyāt*) of God are integrated in the two courses. This approach can be viewed as a harmonisation of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and the SDGs in which the former forms the higher and encompassing goal of the lower SDGs which emphasise more on issues of this world only at the levels of individual, society and environment.

REALISING GOALS OF HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

This paper also aims to present the relationship between the objectives and learning outcomes of the two courses under study with the personal and intellectual development of the students interviewed. The personal development of these students and their future aspirations are viewed from the targeted goals of a holistic development and well-being expected from an Islamic education program under which trans-disciplinary education is subsumed. The students were interviewed with questions which are pertinent to anticipate the link between the learning outcomes and what they have acquired from the courses to show their personal development. The questions posed to them which they responded in the following paragraphs were:

1. "Did you foresee yourself to be in your present position in terms of your academic and individual achievement before you entered IIUM? Do you think you are on track in achieving your goals?"
2. "Do you feel happy and contented with yourself now? What other goals do you plan to achieve if any?"

The path of a student who has graduated with a master's degree will be show-cased first followed by the accounts of two students who have taken both courses and now writing under the author's supervision their master's theses. The students' responses are quoted at length to highlight their unique individual paths and personal story towards realising their goals. Student #2 has obtained a MIRKH (Uṣūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion) in 2018. She tells of her personal and intellectual journey with humility, gratitude and great sense of hope and accomplishment for the future:

Before I entered IIUM, being a mediocre student, I thought that I would never win myself an opportunity to explore the academic field further. However, things changed gradually... As I started my university years still not knowing what my passion is, I believe that the best that I could do is to be serious in my endeavors and polish my skills. For each semester, I tried my best to excel in every course that I took and to improve my skills...

Nonetheless, I consider myself to have a long way to go before claiming myself to be successful in the academic field. Becoming a teacher to Pre-university students and a Research Assistant helps me a lot in gaining experience to become an academic, if Allāh wills.

Becoming an academic is one of my goals and therefore all my endeavors are meant to actualize this potential. However, I should not restrict myself to chasing only one goal... rather what's important is for me to know how that goal can serve society and work towards realizing it. I envision myself to providing society with proper education, as I believe education and true knowledge could resolve many problems in the world. (Dated 15.8.2019)

Student #3 completed his high school education in a *pondok* (traditional religious school) and graduated with a BIRKH (Uṣūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion) from IIUM in 2016. He is now working as a religious teacher at a *tahfidh al-Qur'ān* school. His account shows one of confidence and single mindedness in the pursuit of knowledge:

I foresaw myself doing my master's thesis on one of the topics of philosophy even during my high school since I have already planned my steps after high school graduation. ...I

am grateful for what I have achieved until now. I am sure one's academic success highly corresponds with his personal achievements in life. However, instead of the CGPA or the certificates, the knowledge and attitudes which result from his academic success are more important. To me, academic success is measured by how someone applies the values of what he studies.

I still feel dissatisfied with my life now because I feel I am lacking in knowledge. I aspire to build a religious school of my own in the future. Therefore, I believe I should acquire profound knowledge in the Islamic sciences so that I can manage the school myself. (Dated 15.8.2019)

Student #1 obtained a BIRKH (Uşūl al-dīn and Comparative Religion) from IIUM in 2018. She is currently conducting classes in Qur'ān recitation for adults and children. In her response she may not show self-confidence and her path appears not to be clearly set out for her, yet she shows an underlying resolve to achieving her goals:

Honestly speaking, I never thought of reaching up to this point. Upon graduating with a bachelor's degree...I felt that it was impossible for me to continue my postgraduate studies because I thought it would be really challenging and tiring. I realized that I don't have enough knowledge to face society and at the same time our society is totally in a dire situation, therefore, it needs more experts and knowledgeable people to help improve the situation. So, I decided to challenge myself and chose to further my studies.

Sincerely, I am not sure how I feel about myself now. However, I am happy and grateful because I manage to survive and all praise is to Allāh, He gave me a golden opportunity to further my studies... I am contented with everything that I have today. However, I know that there is always room for improvement. If possible, I am looking forward to further my studies to the next level after I finish my master's. (Dated 16.8.2019)

These students' accounts reflect their individual journey towards success, equilibrium and happiness in their lives which constitutes elements of holistic development and well-being. The unique feature of these success stories is that they are attainable by every student who undergoes an educational curriculum and in a system which allows and promotes this holistic self-development and well-being the final goal of which is self-actualisation or self-realisation. In other words, the three big questions of "Who am I?", "What am I doing here?", and "Where am I going?" are finally answered and realised.

CONCLUSION

Although this paper is not based strictly on an empirical study and its claims could be investigated more concretely with more rigorous quantitative methods however, certain conclusions could be made based on Islamic principles as well as historical evidence and individual testimony. The Islamic narratives of correspondence of different sets of goals and their harmonisation with the outcome of realisation of the goals in the individual human souls point to the inherent structure of hierarchy, inter-relatedness, and ultimate unity in the nature of reality. This pattern if replicated in human endeavors such as the pursuit of knowledge and establishment of an education system will unfailingly bring about order, harmony and beauty and since it is in 'the nature of things' will translate into success and happiness. Human success and happiness can only be attained when each soul actualises his or her potential to be the true servant (*'abd*) and vicegerent (*khalīfah*) of Allāh. He or she who actualises the highest possibility in these two roles is the perfect human being or *al-insān al-kāmil* or *Insan Sejahtera*. In the final analysis this is the real and true success story to be achieved by human beings and this is the story which IIUM strives for everyone in its educational ecosystem especially its students.

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