The Quest for a 21st Century Islamic Economics Curriculum for Universities in the Muslim World

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Evolution of ‘Development’ Discourse

- After more than 5 decades of development discourse, standard growth theory has evolved into a multidimensional discourse.
- These changes allow Islamic discourse better interaction with current global discourse.
- Focus for both is human being, in global discourse no more exclusive focus on *homo economicus*. 
Human Development Focus

• Education plays a central role in comprehensive development discourse
• While ‘manpower’ is still a main agenda of national curriculum, greater attention is being paid to Knowledge, skills and values/ethics
• Attention being given to building ‘personality and character’
Higher Education Economics Curriculum

• Curriculum is one important component in the education process
• Economics Curriculum being taught in Universities in the Muslim world is not value-neutral. They are basically a product of the post enlightenment era of western Europe, that have elements contrary to the Islamic worldview
• Challenge is how to meet ‘market needs’ and at the same time, provide an Islamic alternative?
Islamic Economics Programmes still very rare

• IIUM and IIUI; Islamic Studies Academy UM;
• A few universities in Indonesia starting to have ‘program studi ekonomi Islam’; Muhammadiyah Institutions
• Islamic Banking and Finance (IBF) more popular, but more at Masters level; many specializations/concentration packages available in many universities in both the Muslim world and elsewhere

• In many middle east countries, Islamic economics is taught in the *shari’ah* faculty. This has strengths and weaknesses
This paper will discuss:

• the B.Economics programme offered by the Department of Economics, Kulliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences (KENMS), IIUM

• some issues relating to the teaching of Islamic economics based on the 27 year experience of the KENMS
Brief Historical Note
The IIUM was established in 1983 by the Government of Malaysia and was directly influenced by the recommendations of the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah in 1977. Later OIC meeting supported the establishment of IIUM.

KENMS comprises of 3 departments, namely, the Department of Economics, the Department of Business Administration and the Department of Accounting that offer undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate degrees. *The objectives of all programs in these Departments are to produce graduates who are not only professionally qualified but who are also imbued with ethical values found in Islam.*
IIUM Integrated Model

• At least 2 levels of integration
  – Knowledge of *Turath* (heritage) and knowledge of modern disciplines
  – Formal and in-formal education

• Purpose is to develop graduates who have right knowledge, skills and ethical values
  • Professionals with right values
For the B. Economics program at the KENMS, students are required to fulfill 128 credit hours of course work.
# Program Structure: Bachelor of Economics (KENMS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
<th>Total Credit Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Requirements</strong></td>
<td>Co-Curriculum</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Studies Courses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kulliyyah Required Courses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department Required Courses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elective Packages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>128*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** *In the case of international students, the total graduation requirement is 126 credit hours since they are not required to take Bahasa Melayu*

**Source:** *Kulliyyah of Economics & Management Sciences, IIUM, Bachelor of Economics Curriculum Structure (September 2003 Intake Onwards)*
## Percentage of Total Degree Requirements by Course Category and Program Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course category</th>
<th>University required courses</th>
<th>Kulliyyah (Faculty) required courses</th>
<th>Department required courses</th>
<th>Department and other electives&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Total % of credit hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Courses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0-28%</td>
<td>17-45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses with Some Islamic Input/Comparative Courses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0-24%</td>
<td>21-45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Economics Courses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0-14%</td>
<td>7-21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiqh Courses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-2%</td>
<td>5-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usul al-Fiqh Courses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0-2%</td>
<td>5-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Islamic Courses</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

<sup>a</sup>A total of 12 courses with a minimum of 4 courses from at least one of the concentration packages in the Department.

The degree requirement for the Bachelor of Economics program at the KENMS is 128 credit hours.

The breakdown excludes language courses, Qur’anic skills courses and co-curriculum courses.
We categorized courses offered as consisting of the following 6 categories:

- Conventional economics (Conv.) (17-45%)
- Some Islamic input/Comparative (SI/Comp.) (21-45%)
- Islamic economics (IE) (7-21%)
- *Fiqh* (F) (5-7%)
- *Usul al-Fiqh* (UF) (5-7%)
- Other Islamic (OI) (9%)

**Average:**
Conventional 35%; Islamic/Heritage 35%; Comparative 30%
Selected Issues in Islamic Economics Education: The Department of Economics, IIUM Case
1. What is the correct Balance between Economics and Islamic Heritage?

A. Conventional content averages at about 35% of the degree. From nomenclature, this is an economics degree.

Graduates have no problem working or furthering their studies in the best Universities globally.

Economics content matches international standards. This is a plus, but also has drawbacks.
B. The dedicated Islamic economics courses, *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh* and other Islamic courses average about 35% of the degree.

Have these components been an ‘advantage’?

Private sector- Yes, since many graduates work in IBF related area.

Public sector- not sure?

Since 1999, students can do a second degree in IRKH by spending about 1 year extra.

As far as knowledge component is concerned, B.Economics students are well received both in the public and private sector; both in Malaysia and internationally.
2. What is the Content of Economics and Islamic heritage needed?

A. for conventional, mainly mainstream neoclassical economics
   - is it possible or necessary to also include alternative schools of economics; history/philosophy
   - presently do not have academic staff who can deliver this. Mainly due to exposure of academic staff to ‘mainstream economics’

Will serve Islamic economics better if we can widen exposure to ‘spectrum of economics’
B. For turath (heritage), need to move beyond law/fiqh.

- what is alternative? Political economy? Need to focus on ‘ilm al-iqtisad or even of Ibn Khaldun’s ‘ilm al-umran
- Also need for more emphasis on methodology/usul.
- Can we have usul al-iqtisad? (rather than usul al-fiqh as it is understood as dealing primarily with law).

Need to have ‘reclassification of sciences’?
3. The Comparative Component: Attempts at Integration

In IIUM, 30% courses; most difficult, but is what integration is about- creative synthesis of economics with the heritage

Main problem- ability of academic staff to confidently provide a critique of modern economics while at the same time having a good grasp of our heritage.

Need to ‘re-educate the educators’?
4. Human Capital and Reference Materials

A. Problem of quality of Islamizers.
   - Who will Islamize/Integrate (economists or Islamic studies scholars)?

B. Not enough reference materials/textbooks written in Islamic economics
   - need to start with ‘book of readings’/anthologies
   - requires focused collaborative research activities
   - funding for

Can interaction between economists/Islamic studies solve the problem.
   - Speaking different languages
We must utilize the full expertise of our academic staff, both those trained in economics and those trained in heritage.

We must design training courses for these groups so that they can all contribute to developing contemporary Islamic economics.

However, fundamental obstacle is an epistemological and methodological conflict
- the role of revelation as a source of knowledge
- how to utilize revelation for economics
5. Effectiveness of Informal Education

• Has informal education (halaqah, ibadah camps, community service etc.) succeeded in character building?

• Do B.Economics students have the right values and skills required?
  • From surveys done in early and mid 2000s, our students do seem to have values and skills sought after
  • However, more empirical work is needed in this area
Conclusion

• Integrated Model of IIUM can be basis of new curriculum for Muslim world
• Need for Thorough evaluation of IIUM model.
• Need ‘proof’ that it serves market needs and at the same time, gives Right Knowledge, Skills and Values
• B.Economics curriculum is superior at best, but certainly not inferior
• No intellectual and academic reason why it cannot be adopted.

MAH/SAY/RMA
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