



International Conference
Roles of Islamic Studies in Post Globalized Societies
21st-23rd December 2010
www.cis.psu.ac.th/rispgso

**THE ROLES OF THE ISLAMIC STUDIES
PROGRAMS OF THE NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA IN
GLOBALIZED SOCIETY**

**College of Islamic Studies
Prince of Songkla University**
www.cis.psu.ac.th



THE ROLES OF THE ISLAMIC STUDIES PROGRAMS OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA IN GLOBALIZED SOCIETY¹

Prepared by
Ibrahim Abu Bakar², Mohd Nasran Mohamad³ and Idris Zakaria⁴

Abstract

The roles of Islamic studies in globalized society can be perceived from two keywords namely Islamic studies and globalized society. Islamic studies are studies based on or with reference to Islam and/or Muslims who have embraced Islam, a world, universal and global religion. Globalized society refers to human beings living in a global village or global world. The globalized society is the world society sharing various political, economic, social, and cultural patterns and modes of behaviors to the extent that they become interdependency and indispensable working interrelationships among all the geographic and other components of human beings. Based on these connotations of Islamic studies and globalized society, this brief paper intends to describe the roles played by the Islamic studies programs offered by the National University of Malaysia (NUM) in relation with the globalized society.

Introduction

Based on the topic of this paper, no doubt that it has two main components namely Islamic studies and globalized society. It is probably better to succinctly explain the history of Islamic studies in Malaysia in general and at NUM in particular and the demands of globalized society before this paper ventures into the roles of the Islamic studies programs of NUM in the globalized society. The main contention in this paper is the Islamic studies programs of NUM indeed have contributed to the globalized society or at least have fulfilled some demands of the globalized society.

Islamic studies in Malaysia

Historically, Islamic studies in Malaysia in the university education system began in 1960s at the University of Malaya (UM) in Kuala Lumpur when the Department of Islamic studies was formed in the Faculty of Arts in that university. The Islamic studies department offered courses on Islamic or Muslim theology, law, mysticism, society, history covering the classical, medieval and modern periods, Islamic civilization, Prophetic traditions, the exegeses of the Koran, the studies of the Koran, and Islamic jurisprudence. (Ibrahim 2000).

In May 1970 when University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in the Malay language or National University of Malaysia (NUM) was founded by the Government of Malaysia, Islamic studies found in one of three initial faculties of NUM. The faculty consisted of two departments; one was for Islamic

¹ This paper is prepared for the International Conference on Roles of Islamic Studies in Globalized Society on December 21-23, 2010 organized by College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani, Thailand.

² Associate Professor Dr IBRAHIM ABU BAKAR is the Head Department of Theology and Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, NUM. E-mail: abi@ukm.my

³ Prof. Dr. MOHD NASRAN MOHAMAD is the Dean Faculty of Islamic Studies, NUM. E-mail: nasran@ukm.my

⁴ Prof. Dr. IDRIS ZAKARIA IS the Deputy Dean (Students' and Alumni's Affairs) of Faculty of Islamic Studies, NUM. E-mail: aris@ukm.my

legal studies or *Shari`ah* and another one was for Islamic theological studies or *Usuluddin*. The undergraduate students in both departments were required to pass the faculty compulsory courses including the Arabic courses. The two departments offered the four year study period for a bachelor of Islamic studies in *Usuluddin* or in *Shariah* with honors. However, when the undergraduates completed their three year period of studies, they were granted the general bachelor degrees of Islamic studies in *Usuluddin* or *Shari`ah*. If they continued into the fourth year and succeeded, they graduated with the honor degrees of Islamic studies in *Usuluddin* or *Shari`ah*. After few years, the general degrees were not awarded anymore for the third year students. They had to complete the four year period to receive either general or honor bachelor degrees depending on their results. The bachelor degrees of Islamic studies in *Usuluddin* or *Shari`ah* were classified into the general, the second lower and the second upper honor, and the first class. After few years in the four year system for the bachelor degrees of Islamic studies with the general, the honors and the first class, the system was changed to the three year program.(Ibrahim 2000). Since then the bachelor program of Islamic studies has been the three year system.

Before the establishment of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 1983, Islamic studies were offered by UM and NUM. With the establishment of IIUM in 1983 and Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia(KUIM) in 2000 and then the college changed to Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia(USIM), more departments offered courses on Islamic studies.(Ibrahim 2008). However, unlike NUM, the other universities namely UM, IIUM and USIM do not prepare their undergraduate and postgraduate programs for the degrees of Islamic studies. They have different names for their degrees based on their faculties since non of them has Islamic studies faculty. Islamic studies faculty remains with NUM. Take for example UM, after the establishment of Academy of Islamic Studies Academy (AIS) of UM in 1981 and the original department of Islamic studies became part of the AIS, the academy granted the five bachelor degrees namely 1.*Usuluddin*, 2. *Usuluddin* with Islamic Education, 3.*Shari`ah*, 4. *Shari`ah* with Islamic Education, and 5. Islamic education.(Ibrahim 2000: 16). The master and doctoral programs offered by AIS of UM are based on the three academic areas namely *Usuluddin*, *Shari`ah* and Islamic education. The bachelor degrees offered by IIUM also have not used the term Islamic studies since there is no Islamic studies faculty at IIUM. Like IIUM, USIM also has not used the term Islamic studies for its faculties since there is no Islamic studies faculty at USIM. NUM is the only university in Malaysia that has Islamic studies faculty and its bachelor, master and doctoral degrees have used the term Islamic studies.

In addition to UM, NUM, IIUM and USIM, courses related to Islamic studies are found in other universities in Malaysia in non-Islamic studies faculties such as at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UNIZA) and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM).

Islamic studies programs at NUM

As stated above, NUM began to offer the Islamic studies program for the undergraduates in 1970 when NUM was established and Faculty of Islamic Studies was one of her three initial and pioneering faculties. The other two faculties were Arts and Sciences. The Islamic studies undergraduate program was offered through the two departments namely Department of *Usuluddin* and Department of *Shari`ah* in 1970. In that year, Faculty of Islamic Studies of NUM was located in Petaling Jaya at the former campus of Kolej Islam Malaya (KIM) or Malayan Islamic College (MIC)

before NUM and the Islamic studies faculty moved to the new campus located in Bangi, Selangor in 1977.(Ibrahim 2000: 13).

The Islamic studies faculty of NUM began with two departments and one Arabic unit in 1970. Later on another department named Department of Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization was formed in 1974. Later on in 1979, two new departments were formed namely Department of Islamic Mission and Leadership and Department of The Koranic and Tradition Studies.(Ibrahim 2000: 14).

Since the two departments namely *Usuluddin* and *Shari`ah* were the oldest departments of the Islamic studies faculty of NUM, they were able to offer the graduate program earlier than the three other departments. Now the five departments offer both the undergraduate and graduate programs. The number of Malaysian students for the undergraduate program at the Islamic studies faculty is decided by Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. However, the ministry does not decide on the number of Malaysian and non-Malaysian students for the graduate program. Moreover, the ministry has encouraged the university and faculty to take in more graduate students than the undergraduate students in line with the research university status granted by the ministry to NUM in 2007.

According to the star online dated Friday, October 20, 2006, Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Muhamed promised to provide the addition allocation of RM100,000,000.00 to each of the four designated research universities in Malaysia in early 2007 “for research, development and commercialization activities.” The four designated research universities in 2006 were Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) or National University of Malaysia(NUM), University of Malaya (UM) and Universiti Putera Malaysia (UPM).(Ng Su-Ann 2006). Later on in September 2008, USM was designated by Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education as Apex University. The term Apex stands for the accelerated program for excellence. Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, the Higher Education Minister, explained that “quantitative and qualitative criteria were used to select USM” for the status of Apex university.(Simrit and Karen 2008).

As in late October 2010, the total number of registered students in the undergraduate and graduate programs of Islamic studies faculty is 1731 consisting of 1047 undergraduate students and 503 master students and 181 doctoral students. Meanwhile the total number of faculty members or lecturers consisting of professors, associate professors and senior lecturers is 102 persons. The student and lecture ratio is 1: 16.(One lecturer is for 16 students).This statistical information about the registered students and the number of lecturers is obtained from the faculty dean who briefed the faculty academic and supporting staff on December 15, 2010.

Globalized Society

According to UNESCO (2004), the implications of globalization for higher education are many and diverse such as “the growing importance of the knowledge society/economy, the development of new trade agreements that cover trade in education services, innovations related to information and communication technologies (ICTs), with emphasis on the role of the market and market economy.” Moreover, “Globalization is a multifaceted process with economic, social, political and cultural implications for higher education.”

UNESCO clearly states that “higher education in a globalized society should assure quality of access and respect cultural diversity as well as national sovereignty.” There should be “International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications”.(UNESCO 2004: 25). The demands of the globalized society cover many areas such as economy, communication, politics, government, environment and military. However, the main attention of this paper is the demands of the globalized society for higher education in terms of quality, access, diversity, funding, research, knowledge production and dissemination, academic freedom, internationalization, intellectual property rights, stakeholders’ perceptions and lifelong learning.

NUM have offered the undergraduate and graduate programs of Islamic studies; both programs are in line with the demands of the globalized society in terms of quality, accessibility, diversity, internationalization, research, knowledge production and dissemination.

1.The quality of academic programs and services

NUM has determined to improve and maintain the quality of all her academic programs including the two programs of Islamic studies. NUM are under or subject to the two external bodies namely Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) and SIRIM Berhad for her academic programs and services including Islamic studies programs. The academic programs proposed by the academicians of NUM have to be submitted to the Senate of NUM in according with the guidelines issued by MQA. SIRIM Berhad, “the leading organization in industrial research. Fulfilling the industry needs by blending new innovations with quality and standard”, has issued the certificates to the Islamic studies programs.

2.The accessibility and diversity

NUM has always welcomed Malaysians and foreign students into her graduate programs offered by her faculties and institutes including the graduate programs of Islamic studies offered through the five departments of Islamic studies faculty. Foreign students who have become the master and doctoral graduates of Islamic studies are from the Arab countries such as Libya, Jordan, Palestine, and from the non-Arab countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Thailand.

In 2009, NUM had conducted the research among her graduates, Malaysian and foreign graduates, who graduated from the academic session of 2008/2009. The research was aimed at knowing and identifying the attitudes of her graduates towards the academic programs offered by NUM faculties and institutes as well as the places or organizations offered jobs or employments to the graduates of NUM in 2009. Based on this research, for example, the graduates from the Islamic studies programs were asked to expressed their views on the curricula from the suitability of study contents, the balance between theory and practice, Industrial training, the university courses, the co-curriculum courses, and the preparation for their employment, they expressed very positive views. They gave the grade A minus as recorded in this research.(UKM 2009: 56).

3. Internationalization

NUM has embarked on the internationalization plan involving her students, lecturers and researchers. For example, in 2008, there were names of international seminars or conferences held in Malaysia and outside Malaysia attended by the lecturers and from the Islamic studies faculty.(FPI 2009: 69-74). In 2008 and 2009, some of the lecturers and researchers from Islamic studies faculty

were able to establish links with the universities outside Malaysia such as the universities in New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Indonesia, Thailand, India and United Kingdom.

4. Knowledge production and dissemination

NUM has produced knowledge and disseminated it through various means such as books, chapters in books, articles and book reviews in journals, seminars, meetings and online sources. The lecturers and researchers of Islamic studies faculty in 2008 as an example had some of their publications recorded or documented in the faculty report of 2008(FPI 2009: 90-111). The knowledge acquired and produced by the lecturers and researchers of Islamic studies faculty is disseminated through the seminars, public lectures in side and outside the campus of NUM.

5. Research

After NUM has been designated as one of the four research universities in Malaysia in late 2006 and NUM began to receive the extra fund from Ministry of Higher Education in early 2007, the Islamic studies lecturers have to embarked on library and field researches. The some of the titles of their researches and the amount of the funds for their research projects for 2008 are recorded in the faculty report of 2008(FPI 2009: 52-65). Some of the research projects and topics for 2009 and 2010 are recorded in the proceeding of research seminar held in December 2010(FPI2010b).

Conclusions

NUM and Islamic studies programs have taken steps and measures to offer the programs in line with the demands of globalized society in the five areas mentioned briefly in this paper namely the quality of academic programs through the external recognized accreditation bodies, the accessibility and diversity of students who can join or register in the programs, internationalization of programs and their international students especially the graduate programs namely master and doctoral programs, knowledge production and dissemination nationally and internationally, and research topics and projects.

Bibliography

- Agensi Kelayakan Malaysia (Malaysian Qualification Agency). 2008. *Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation*. Petaling Jaya: Agensi Kelayakan Malaysia (MQA).
- FPI(Fakulti Pengajian Islam). 2009. *Laporan Tahunan Fakulti Pengajian Islam 2008*. Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Islam, UKM.
- FPI(Fakulti Pengajian Islam). 2010. *Panduan Siswazah Fakulti Pengajian Islam Sesi Akademik 2010-2011*. Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Islam, UKM.
- FPI(Fakulti Pengajian Islam). 2010a. *Panduan Prasiswazah Fakulti Pengajian Islam Sesi Akademik 2010-2011*. Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Islam, UKM.
- FPI(Fakulti Pengajian Islam). 2010b. *Prosiding Seminar Pemantauan Penyelidikan dan Penerbitan Fakulti Pengajian Islam*. Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Islam, UKM.
- Ibrahim Abu Bakar. 2000. Islamic Studies in Malaysian Universities and Colleges An Overview. In *Islamic Studies in Asean Presentations of an International Seminar*, pp.7-25. Edited by Isma-ae Alee, Hasan Madmarn, Imtiyaz Yusuf, Yusof Talek, Arin Sa-idi, Muhammad Roflee Waehama and Ibrahim Narongraksaket. Pattani: College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University.
- Ibrahim Abu Bakar, Muhamad Muda and Mohammad Alias (Eds.). 2008. *Perkembangan Pengajian Tinggi Islam di Malaysia*. Bandar Baru Nilai: Penerbit USIM (Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia).
- Ng Su-Ann. 2006. RM100mil for varsities. In <http://thestar.com.my/story.asp?file=/2006/10/20/nation/15784403&sec=nation> (Accessed on Dec. 12, 2010).
- Simrit Kaur and Karen Chapman. 2008. USM gets apex status. In <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/9/4/nation/22236521&sec=nation> (Accessed on Dec.13, 2010).
- UNESCO(the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). 2004. Higher Education in a Globalized Society UNESCO Education Position Paper. Paris: UNESCO. In http://www.unesco.org/education/higher_education/quality_innovation (Accessed on Dec.8, 2010).
- UKM(Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia). 2009. *Laporan Kajian Pengesanan Graduan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia 2009*. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.