

STRATEGIZING ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper attempts to put forward a formulation of a strategy in realizing Islamic education. The scope of Islamic education here does not confine to Muslims per se, but instead goes beyond ethnic-religious groups to entail with universally virtuous human beings and system of life, benefitting all, not only the Muslims alone (rahmatan-lil-alamin). With such a premise, this paper tends to emphasize on two fundamental requirements in strategizing the Islamic education. Firstly, on the nature of Islamic educational institutions. Secondly, on the strategy in enhancing the Islamic education itself. The discourses of the former come with the conviction that an Islamic educational institution has to be embedded firmly within Islamic philosophical and epistemological underpinning, reflecting by all of its deeds, from management, teaching-learning method, and research methodology. In the later, mission of an Islamic educational institution is stressed to be accomplished via innovative endeavors, by doing away with emulation from, benchmarking, and competing with other existing so-called Islamic and non-Islamic education. The aim is to become a real pioneering and leading institution, leaping forward beyond the typical follower image of many contemporary existing Islamic educational institutions nowadays.

Keywords: Islamic education, education, education strategy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to seek for a workable strategy in maximizing the enhancement of Islamic education, for the benefit of not only the Muslims, but also for the whole mankind. In so doing, this paper is divided into two main sections. Firstly, as a backdrop, it presents an overview of the development in contemporary Islamic education. Secondly, it puts forward a conviction of what and how to do more for the Islamic education, especially in relation to the operational nature of Islamic educational institutions and the strategy to accomplish their aims.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Islamic education, especially since the Islamic resurgence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has emerged quite remarkably. There was an emergence of Islamic educational institutions almost at all levels: firstly - to borrow the categories of the levels used by Daun, Arjmand & Walford (2004:17) – at the level of elementary education (Quranic schools, mosque schools, etc); secondly, at the level of complementary or secondary education (post-Quranic school, *madrrasah*, Arabic school); and thirdly, at the level of higher education (Islamic universities).

Prior to this, and even at present, Islamic education has been determined by the socio-economic and political atmosphere of respective countries. In colonized countries for instance, the state-run education has been separated from the *Shari`ah*, due to the modernization brought by colonialism.

At independence, many Muslim countries tried to adopt the model that has been practiced by Japan, that is the 'modernization without Westernization'. In such a model, education systems were 'nationalised'. Firstly, the state, such as in most of the Middle East, North Africa, and Pakistan, determined the curriculum and the structure of the system. Secondly, the national language was introduced if it had not been previously the language of instruction in the colonial schools. And thirdly, Islamic matters were included in the curriculum of the state-run education. In some countries such as in Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan, the state maintained the parallel system that had emerged during the colonial period when the secular school network expanded along with the Islamic schools. In countries with a less influential Muslim tradition, such as for instance, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and some Asian countries, the secular education system was maintained. In all of such countries, Islamic educational arrangements have been established outside of the state sphere (Daun, Arjmand & Walford 2004:9-10).

In the Western world such as in Europe, there are at least three categories of countries that may be related to the treatment of the Islamic education. The first are the countries that have a unitary and national system (national curriculum and secular education). The second are the other countries that opt neither to control nor support Muslim education as an alternative system of education or a supplementary component of the present system. The third are the countries that opt for a multi-cultural framework in trying to accommodate immigrant and minority cultures, hence opting for a "compromise" to establish supplementary education (based on a national curriculum) and economically subsidizing such arrangement (Daun & Walford 2004:1).

Although the Islamic education seems to be governed by the socio-economic and political atmosphere of the respective countries, Muslim educationists, both in the Muslim and Western countries, have tried their best to enhance the Islamic education in ways possible. Interestingly, the pace in the Western countries where Muslims reside as minority group seems to be *at par* with, if not more than the efforts in the Muslim countries themselves.

Muslims in Europe for instance, with their 'Euro Islam', are having heavy debate about the possibilities and limits of accommodating to the cultural, ethical, and technical patterns of the Western way of life (Meijer 2009:7). In consequence, some states such as Britain for instance,

have to accept the reality of the importance of giving ways to Islamic education. The British Government, particularly the Minister of State (Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education), Bill Rammell, in 2007, has appointed a Muslim educationist Dr Ataullah Siddiqui of the Markfield Institute for Higher Education as the adviser to the British Government on Islam in Higher Education. The appointment is attributable to the British Government's concern that the material available about Islam in educational institutions is often unduly narrow in its outlook, and does not deal adequately with the role of Islam in a modern pluralistic society. Dr Siddiqui was asked to advise the British government on how the quality of information about Islam available to students in British universities and colleges can be improved¹. Consequently, his subsequent recommendations submitted to the British Government on 10th April 2007 have been accepted overwhelmingly, one important of which was the recognition of Islamic Studies as a discipline in British universities and colleges, as opposed to the previous treatment where Islamic studies were just put under Middle-Eastern or Theology or Religious Studies².

In the United States of America (USA) too interesting efforts in augmenting Islamic education has happened. As early as in 1960s, a group of Muslim intellectuals for instance has initiated what is called the Islamization of Knowledge movement. They envisioned the combining of the disciplines of Islamic history and culture, that is the disciplines of revealed knowledge, with both contemporary culture and science, that is those of human and technological sciences. They published writings related to such a belief, and in 1963, they established a major Islamic cultural society named the Muslim Students Association (MSS) in the USA. These were followed in 1972 by the establishment of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) in the United States and Canada, in 1981 with the establishment of International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), and in 1999 with the establishment of the Child Development Foundation (Abdulhamid A. Abusulayman (2007:13-14).

The meaning of the Islamization of Knowledge was explained as follows:

“...(It) is a plan to reformulate Islamic thought, using as its starting point beliefs and Islam's humanitarian, global, and civilizational principles based on tawhid and deputation. The plan aims at recapturing the positive, comprehensive Islamic vision, with a view to reforming the knowledge. The plan addresses the reality of human life on earth with the aim of realizing the purposes of Islamic Law – namely, conciliation and welfare – and observes the principles of reason and the divine laws of the universe. It thus, provides the necessary tools to purify and refine Islamic culture and remove the distortions, and the superstition, charlatanism, impurities, and illusions that have infiltrated it. Ultimately, it will provide sound educational and cultural inputs to reform the mental and psychological constitution of Muslim individuals and of the Ummah and raise generations endowed with strength, ability, and productivity” (Abdulhamid A. Abusulayman 2007:14-15).

¹ See <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2006-05-25c.72455.h>

² Personal communication with Dr Ataullah Siddiqui on 30 June 2010 at his office at Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE), Leicester, United Kingdom. For his full report to the British Government, see Ataullah Siddiqui 2007.

In short, the Islamization of knowledge movement attempts to reform Muslim approach to education by integrating Divine with human sources for a powerful whole. The revealed knowledge is believed to be able to provide a comprehensive spiritual and moral guidance in the sphere of human action and universal laws, while the scientific and technological knowledge are the tools for that action (Abdulhamid A. Abusulayman 2007:11).

Actually, the Islamization of Knowledge movement was not alone in such a stance. The integrated knowledge envisioned by the movement has also become the factor that attributed to the organization of the First Conference on Muslim Education by King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Makkah from March 31 to April 8, 1977. The conference, attended by a total of 313 Muslim scholars from different parts of the world, attempted to remove the dichotomy of religious and secular education systems that were operative in Muslim countries. For this, the participants of the conference studied and analyzed basic problems, stated the aims and objectives of education, and recommended the methods of implementing them (Syed Sajjad Husain and Syed Ali Ashraf 1979).

But as opposed to the more philosophical and conceptual-based efforts of the Islamization of Knowledge movement, the Makkah Conference has reached at a clearer, straight forward operational objective of the Islamic education. The Conference, in a simple sentence stated as follows:

“The aim of Muslim education is the creation of the ‘good and religious man’ who worships Allah in the true sense of the term, builds up the structure of his earthly life according to the Sharia (Islamic law) and employs it to subserve his faith” (Ahmad Salah Jamjoom 1979:v).

The efforts for an integrative Islamic education could also be very much seen on the ground. In Indonesia, for instance, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang (UINM) does this by emphasizing the learning of a full pledge Arabic language during the first year of its students, and encouraging memorization of the Qur`an before embarking in subsequent years on specialization in disciplines related to the fields of humanities and technology³. Such an integrative education also has been experimented in Malaysia at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), beginning from 1988 and specifically until 1999, during which one of IIIT thinkers took charge of the University (Abdulhamid A. Abusulayman 2007:16). The IIUM has attempted to become an academic and scientific platform and a beacon in religion, human sciences, medicine, and engineering education. Some years after that, the IIUM was followed by the establishment of Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM), initially at the outset of its establishment named Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia (KUIM), by the Government of Malaysia with similar integrative concept⁴.

³ See <http://www.uin-malang.ac.id/>

⁴ See <http://www.usim.edu.my/usim/>

At a lower level, State governments in Malaysia (and in some cases particularly the States' Religious Councils) also play an important role in realizing the integrative approach to Islamic education. Among others, the State of Kedah does this via its Kolej Universiti INSANIAH (INSANIAH)⁵, the State of Perlis via its Institut Pengajian Tinggi Islam Perlis⁶, the State of Penang via its Kolej Islam Teknologi Antarabangsa (KITAB)⁷, the State of Perak via its Kolej Islam Darul Ridzuan⁸, the State of Selangor via its Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS)⁹, the State of Malacca via its Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM)¹⁰, and the State of Pahang via its Kolej Islam Pahang Sultan Ahmad Shah (KIPSAS)¹¹.

All the Islamic educational institutions, existing in almost all States in Malaysia side by side with many other private Islamic educational institutions, combine the Islamic religious studies such as *Tahfiz al-Qur`an*, *Tahfiz al-Quran wa al-Qiraat*, *Qiraat*, *Al-Qur`an* and *Al-Sunnah/Hadith*, *Usuluddin*, *Shari`ah*, *Muamalat*, and Arabic with contemporary knowledge, such as Multimedia, Information Technology, Medicine, Nursing, Engineering, Business Studies, Finance, Banking, Accounting, Communication, Counseling, Management, Law/Jurisprudence, Psychology, and Hospitality Management. A quite different approach from these States but with the same integrative concept is also done by the State of Terengganu via its Imtiaz School of Excellence. It has a special program for the memorization of the Qur`an, and simultaneously teaches its students science subjects according to Malaysian national syllabus. Its aim is to produce generations of *Ulul Albab* with three special characters: firstly, Quranic (memorize, understand and act in line with the Qur`an); secondly, Encyclopedic (mastering knowledge in a comprehensive manner); and thirdly, Ijtihadic (able to decide on contemporary issues for the sake of the betterment of the ummah)¹².

Islamic movements in Malaysia too are working hard in realizing the integrative Islamic education. Among the earliest was the now the defunct Darul Arqam movement (1968-1994). As early as 1973, it introduced its independently managed education with the aim of producing integrated Islamic scholars and Islamic technocrats possessing high integrity based on the Qur`an and Sunnah. This was then continued since 1997 and 2008 by its *de facto* successor companies Rufaqa Corporation and Global Ikhwan Sendirian Berhad respectively (Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid 2010:57). The Darul Arqam education system has twin objectives: firstly, to produce Islamic scholars of high integrity based on the Qur`an and Sunnah, and who lead society towards truth; and secondly, to produce technocrats possessing high integrity based on the Quran and Sunnah, who can develop all aspects of life in Islam (Ashaari Muhammad 1990:144). Beside Darul Arqam and its *de facto* successor companies, other Islamic movements such as Jemaah Islah Malaysia (JIM), Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Jemaah Tablighi and Pan-Islamic Party Malaysia (PAS) also have their own Islamic educational institutions. Although many do not seem to have any

⁵ See <http://www.kuin.edu.my/>

⁶ See <http://portal.iptips.edu.my/>

⁷ See <http://www.kitab.edu.my/>

⁸ See <http://www.kiperak.edu.my>

⁹ See <http://www.kuis.edu.my/>

¹⁰ See <http://www.kuim.edu.my/>.

¹¹ See <http://www.kipsas.edu.my/>

¹² See <http://www.myimtiaz.com.my/v2/>

direct official linkage with the movements, it is an open secret that the institutions are operated by the members of the movements, either individually or in groups. One of the examples is the Pusat Pendidikan Al-Amin Berhad, which is believed to have been operated by members of JIM¹³. The others are Akademi Kajian Ketamadunan (AKK) and Kolej Dar al-Hikmah (KDH), which are related to the members of ABIM.

It has to be admitted that the integration and combination of the revealed knowledge with the humanities, technology and sciences is actually not a new form of Islamic education. In fact history has shown that the previous Muslim scholars have in fact already done it with a remarkable achievement. The previous Muslim scholars have never restricted their studies to religious sciences like *tafsir* (exegesis), Hadith (traditions), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *usul al-fiqh* (principles of legal system), comparative religions and rationale of religious canons alone (Nadwi 1992:7). Instead, they also studied chemistry, physics, botany, mathematics, medicine, geography, philosophy of history, religion, culture and different philosophical systems. There were also familiar names of great Muslim scholars such as al-Khawarizmi (d.236/850), Abu al-Qasim Abdullah ibn Khurdadhbih (d.300/912), al-Sharif al-Idrisi (d.562/1166) in geography; Ibn al-Haytham (d.431/1039) in Mathematics and Engineering; Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khawarizmi (d.236/850) in mathematics, apart from also in geography as above; Al-Battani (d.317/929) in astronomy; Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Razi (d.311/932) in chemistry, philosophy, and physics; Ibn al-Baytar (d.646/1248) in vegetal pharmacology; Abu Ali Ibn Sina in philosophy, medicine and psychology; Ibn Khaldun (d.808/1406) in social sciences; and Abu Rahyan al-Biruni (d. 440/1048) in physics, metaphysics, pharmacology, chemistry, geography and history (Nadwi 1992:8-9).

The efforts of the contemporary Muslim educationists therefore are actually a revival of what the previous Muslim scholars have done and achieved considerably. They are very necessary and pertinent, so as to re-empower the integrated Islamic education to not only be able to be enjoyed by the Muslim ummah alone, but also by the whole mankind.

3.0 STRATEGIZING ISLAMIC EDUCATION: WHAT AND HOW TO DO MORE

Enough for the brief overview of the backdrop of the Islamic education, the discussion now move to the second issue, that is what and how could Islamic education advances. The `what` question here refers to the operational nature of the Islamic educational institutions while the `how` question refers to the strategy in enhancing quality Islamic education. The `what` question involves at least two elements; firstly, what is the management method of the Islamic educational institutions should be; and secondly, what is the pedagogical and learning methods that should be adopted in the institutions. The `how` question deals with how the Islamic education could advance in an operational framework that is thought to be innovative and workable. All the three elements embedded in both `what, and `how` questions however intimately linked to each other, forming the very foundation in strategizing the effective enhancement of the Islamic education. This paper deals with them one by one as a one whole strategy in strategizing the Islamic education.

¹³ See http://www.al-amin.edu.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=90&Itemid=84

3.1 Management of Islamic Educational Institutions

As has been portrayed earlier, awareness of the importance hence the mushrooming of Islamic educational institutions in the Muslim world or even in the Muslim-minority world undoubtedly is already becoming a sort of a trend. Indeed it is not too worried about the number of Islamic educational institutions at the moment, though these institutions might need to certain extent align themselves with the socio-economic and political ideology of their respective countries. What is more worrying is the operational nature of the so-called Islamic educational institutions, whether or not they are operated within a management framework that are able to accomplish the aim of the 1997 Makkah Conference in producing “good and religious man who worships Allah in the true sense of the term, builds up the structure of his earthly life according to the *Sharia* (Islamic law) and employs it to subserve his faith” (Ahmad Salah Jamjoom 1979:v).

The picture on the ground might not be as convincing as it should be. In fact it is surprising to note that, for instance, out of 20 Islamic development institutions in Malaysia researched in 2008 by an academic of the Centre for Islamic Development Management Studies (ISDEV), Universiti Sains Malaysia, only 3 institutions are using Islamic management methods called *Tawhidic* Management and Celestial Management originated in Malaysia and Indonesia respectively. The other 17 so-called Islamic development institutions - educational institutions included, apart from Islamic administrative, worship, banking, financial, socio-economic, medical, legal and social institutions that have been researched - all are adopting quality-based management methods, most popular of which is the Total Quality Management (Fadzila Azni Ahmad 2008).

One could definitely wonder how could the exogenous-based management method with different philosophical and epistemological underpinnings from those of Islam become the most popular method adopted by these so-called Islamic development institutions? If careful consideration on the usage of the management method seems to be ignored, it is not impossible that so is the educational philosophy and policy. It is unfortunate if this is the case, as the 1977 Conference in Makkah has stressed clearly that “we cannot have a philosophy or an educational policy which is based on a concept not identical with the Islamic...(for) Islam embodies a general and comprehensive concept which sustains a self-contained, unique and distinctive concept” (Ahmad Salah Jamjoom 1979:v).

One may perhaps question, what is wrong with the adoption of the exogenous management method as long as it is not contrary to Islamic teachings? In fact, this is also exactly the stance of the Makkah Conference which concludes that if “the means by which the end can be achieved, there is no objection whatsoever to the full exploitation of every successful human experiment so long as it is not in conflict with the Islamic concept” (Ahmad Salah Jamjoom 1979:v).

But this paper bets to differ a little bit from such a simplistic stance. No doubt one may definitely adopt the Islamically convergent means such as the exogenous management method to accomplish the Islamic objectives. But at the same time, one has to be aware of two important realities. Firstly, the usage of such a means is only at the operational level; and secondly, such an

operational mechanism does not exist in isolation from its original philosophical and epistemological underpinnings. Using the operational mechanism without changing its original exogenous philosophical and epistemological underpinnings would actually mean using that exogenous mechanism in its full sense. Subsequently, one has to align with the operational mechanism and eventually live with it not only in his pattern of thinking but also in his pattern of deeds and actions. The do's and don't's would also be determined by the guidelines outlining by the exogenous mechanism.

Therefore, the adoption of the exogenous operational mechanism in the management of Islamic educational institutions, to my opinion, must be undertaken, if it is really necessary to do so, by firstly changing its philosophical and epistemological underpinnings, from the exogenous to the Islamic ones. This involves a whole process of overhauling the operational mechanism of the said management, from identification and development of our own worldview and epistemology to a redefinition of existing exogenous and subsequently the development of our own Islamic concepts related to management. In consequence, one would find that he is actually not really adopting the "means that is not in conflict with the Islamic concept" as was envisioned by the Makkah Conference, but instead he is developing and adopting the Islamic management method itself.

In this sense, this paper believes, there is no room at all for Islamic educational institutions to adopt the exogenous management method, for if they attempt to do so, they have to actually develop the Islamic management method itself, by injecting Islamic world-view and epistemology as the very foundation of the operational mechanism of the management. Thus, rather than adopting the exogenous management method but in due course inevitably ends up with developing an Islamic management method, it is better to straight away develop and subsequently adopt Islamic management method from the framework of Islamic philosophical and epistemological underpinnings themselves. Moreover, the very concept of the management itself lies firmly in the very function of human beings, that is as vicegerent of Allah SWT that need to manage his world at all levels, from individual to social and universal level.

The management aspect of Islamic educational institutions therefore needs to be addressed seriously in constructing a strategy for the enhancement of the Islamic education.

3.2 Teaching-Learning Methods

Apart from the management of the institutions, there should also be an emphasis on the right teaching-learning method of the Islamic education. Allah SWT has provided within human beings two important tools of teaching-learning, that is the mind (*`aql*) and the heart (*qalb*). But in between the two, the emphasis and usage of the mind nowadays seems to be dominant even in the Islamic education system, while in many cases, the usage of the heart is ignored. The emphasis of the Islamization of Knowledge movement on the reformulation of Islamic thought, vision, reason, mental and psychological constitution of Muslim individuals could be one of the examples of such a

trend¹⁴. It originates from the movement's assumption that the problems of Muslims are attributable to distortions in their ideological vision, cultural motivation, intellectual approach, and educational discourse (Abdulhamid A. Abusulayman 2007:5). To a thinker of the movement, reconstruction and reformation of the Muslim mind as well as restoration of its connections with the Book of God and the Sunnah could become the substance of the renewal of the Islamic thought and Islamization of knowledge (Taha Jabir al-Alwani 2006:7). Reshaping the Muslim mind on the levels of culture, thought and behavior and rectifying the course of knowledge in such a way that it is once again regulated by Islamic premises and achieves its comprehensive, balanced aims is believed to be one of the ways in realizing this renewal (Taha Jabir al-Alwani 2006:47-48)¹⁵.

Such an emphasis undeniably is important, but ignoring the usage of the heart is also incorrect. It would reduce the teaching-learning method to only what could be called 'mind-to-mind' method, leaving out another important method which could be termed as 'heart-to-heart' method. 'Mind-to-mind' method here refers to a teaching-learning method which uses mental (*'aql*) as its tool. The concentration therefore is more on rationality and scientific reasoning. On the other hand, 'heart-to-heart' method refers to a teaching-learning method which uses heart (*qalb*) as its tool. The concentration is more on the realm of the intangibles and intuitions, but it is also able to accumulate and disseminate knowledge scientifically with reasoning based on al-Qur'an and al-Sunnah.

In between the two teaching-learning methods, the 'heart-to-heart' method is more effective as it is the heart that becomes the platform of one's faith, not the mind. Moreover, 'mind-to-mind' method may be able to give birth to knowledgeable persons but not necessarily to the ones who practice their knowledge. The name of their game normally is 'mental gymnastic' and the normal characteristic amongst them is the disintegration between knowledge (*ilm*) and practice (*amal*). This is in spite of the fact that spiritual and intellectual dimensions work in harmony, although distinct (Elaine 2005:263). They may publish excellent writings in Islamic consumerism, but they themselves are the ones who maximize their own consumption. They may also talk about the need for accountability, but they themselves are the ones who do not fulfill promises with their own fellow human beings. They may preach the importance of self-purification (*tazkiyah an-nafs*), but they themselves are the ones who are so rich with evil attributes (*mazmuumah*).

Unfortunately, there are quite significant numbers of such intellectuals around us, many of whom are also the so-called Islamic educationists. Students that graduated from such kind of intellectuals

¹⁴ See Abdulhamid A. Abusulayman 2007:14-15.

¹⁵ Altogether the thinker mentions five ways. The other four are: (1) draw inspiration from its own Islamic roots even as it digests and assimilates modernity and its ways; (2) has to be presented in the form of a contemporary enterprise which is unified, integral and liberated and which rest upon sound thinking; (3) need to examine ourselves and identify our areas of deficiency and vulnerability; and (4) nurture and give birth to civilizations which are capable of resuming Islamic life and constructing a viable human civilization (Taha Jabir al-Alwani 2006:47-48).

could not be hoped to benefit the Muslim ummah, let alone to develop a civilization for the whole mankind.

The next strategy to be undertaken in advancing Islamic education therefore is to emphasize on the 'heart-to-heart' method, with of course a balance with the 'mind-to-mind' method. The former will enhance spiritual empowerment while the latter enhances scientific empowerment. But the 'heart-to-heart' method would not be possible unless one's heart is purified. The Islamic education thus should also strategize the techniques and processes of the purification of the hearts of all members of its institutions – administrators, teachers and students.

3.3 Strategy for Islamic Education

The third element to be considered in strategizing the Islamic education is the strategy itself. In formulating the strategy, consideration on as many aspects as possible would be inevitable. Among them are, for instance, firstly, the reality of the existing education orientations as a whole, such as the secularist orientation, the traditionalist orientation, the modern/liberal orientation, and the fundamentalist orientation¹⁶; secondly, the different strategies in realizing the Islamic education undertaken by various Muslims in different states, especially in the 'core areas' and the 'minorities' area¹⁷; thirdly, the perception and treatment of the states towards Islam, Muslims and the Islamic education and the respective adjustments that have been made to maximize the realization of the Islamic education¹⁸; and fourthly, the opportunities available and how they have been taken by Islamic educationists to advance and disseminate the Islamic education¹⁹.

¹⁶ These four education orientations have been categorized by Sherin Sadaalah (2004).

¹⁷ Daun & Walford (2004:1) for example has written a book on different strategies of education in both Muslim and non-Muslims countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, Somalia, West Africa, Sweden, England, Germany, Berlin, the Czech Republic.

¹⁸ Religious Islamic schools/*madrassah* for example have been regarded by some as being playing a major role in spreading Islamist ideology and maintaining radical nexuses, and a breeding grounds for militant Islam (Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid 2010:2). In Afghanistan, education has become one of the important agenda in developing a pluralist Islamic state (after late 2001 emerged as devastated state and people – physical, institutional, human and social capital), but the designation of the educational plan was given to International Monetary Fund (see International Monetary Fund 2008).

¹⁹ Nadwat al-'ulama' in India for example, disseminate its educational program via integration of its renowned graduates into the teaching staff and administration of state-administered universities, as well as applied on the transnational level, by having permanent teaching positions at institutions of higher Muslim education in Middle Eastern countries. For a list of those Nadwa scholars involved in such a strategy by holding the teaching and administrative positions outside the Nadwat al-'ulama' in India and abroad, see Hartung & Reifeld 2006:148-149. The Islamization of Knowledge movement too, particularly through one of its thinkers based at the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in the United States of America, accepted invitation by the then Malaysian Minister of Education Anwar Ibrahim to take charge of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) between 1988-1999 to put the concepts of the Islamization of Knowledge into a university educational plan that expectedly would serve Islam and support the reform and development efforts in Malaysia (see Abusulayman 2007:16).

Such considerations manifest the backdrop and the state of the existing Islamic and other education systems, so as a pioneering and leading Islamic education system vis-à-vis the other prevailing systems could be launched. Indeed it has to be the objective of all Islamic educationists that their respective institutions become the innovative institutions, leading the others to follow suit. Innovative here refers to the creation of new ideas and methods, not, as is normally understood, just the modification of the existing ones.

In order to realize this objective, Islamic education institutions have to do away with three normal beliefs, that is the necessity to imitate, to benchmark, and to compete with those regarded as already successful endeavors. All the three beliefs have so far put many Islamic education institutions at the level of merely followers, not leaders. Imitation of others would mean replicating what others have done, while benchmarking would mean limiting oneself to a defined level that have been accomplished by particular party, and competition would mean contending with other established parties in their own created arena, not ours²⁰.

All the three beliefs entail with at least three implications on the endeavor to enhance Islamic education. Firstly, they will limit and simultaneously under-utilize one's own creativity; secondly, they will push 'imitators' at a level that would not enable the 'imitators' to overtake the imitated ones; and thirdly, they will ascertain the 'imitators' losing position as the arena and rules of the games are the imitated. In such a situation, Islamic education would not be able to be glorified as is supposed to be, let alone to trickle-down its benefits to the ummah, moreover to the whole mankind.

It is because of this that the conviction of this paper lies in generating one's own innovations, formulating one's own standard, and constructing one's own arena. This would become a dynamic strategy which, this paper firmly belief, would be able to liberate Islamic education from confining to Muslims *per se*, but instead, while nurturing and giving birth to civilizations which are capable of resuming Islamic life, also constructing a viable human civilization, fulfilling the concept of *rahmatan-lil-alamin*.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, Islamic education has attracted many Muslims to deal with and endeavour its realization. Certain aims of the Islamic education, to some extent, have been accomplished. However, refinement of the existing achievements must be a continuous exercise. A certain kind of

²⁰ In fact, it has been argued that one of the two major afflictions which have resulted in the failure of higher education in the Muslim world to perform its role successfully whether in religious or secular studies, humanities, or in science and technology, is the imitation and replication, in education systems and philosophies which is Western in character, and alien to the Ummah's conscience and cultural goals. The other affliction is the distortion of the comprehensive Islamic vision, together with the blights, superstition, and charlatanism that lead development to a stop, distorting their mentality, spoiling their mentality, spoiling their knowledge, daily life practices, and educational methods (Abdulhamid A. Abusulayman 2007:10-11).

strategy has to be designed and regularly improved. This paper therefore suggests three aspects that should be given into consideration in improving the strategy. The first is the adoption of an Islamic management method in the Islamic educational institutions; the second is the emphasis on the teaching-learning method that is named 'heart-to-heart' method; and the third is the creation of one's own innovation, standard and playing arena. Through this, this paper believes, Islamic education could be a leading endeavor for the sake of a harmonious and safe living for all mankind, irrespective of ethnic and religious orientations. Through this too, the Islamic education even in the West has a conceivable and justifiable future in the current modern western context, achieving the educational balance between tradition and enlightenment as is believed by a famous Dutch education philosopher, Wilna Meijer (Meijer 2009:16).

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