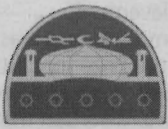




The Chancellery



UNIVERSITI SAINS ISLAM MALAYSIA
 جامعة العلوم الإسلامية الماليزية
 ISLAMIC SCIENCE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA

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USIM'S

UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Vice Chancellor of USIM, Prof. Dato' Dr. Abdul Shukor Hj. Husin spoke with Prof. Dr. Mohammad Haji Alias, Director Centre for Strategic Development and Corporate Relations and Puan Norrifilzah Public Relations Officer about USIM's Vision, challenges faced and his expectations.

Q: How did Dato' come up with USIM's vision that is unique differentiating it from other Public Institutions of Higher Learning offering Islamic studies.

The idea has been based on my observation on the situation prevailing then relating to Islamic education. In particular, access to higher education to students who were in the religious stream was limited. If they wanted to further their studies, their choice was limited to Islamic studies only such as Syariah, Usuluddin etc.

Secondly, there was confusion or problem relating to what was understood about education and Islamic studies. Even though we have achieved Independence for 50 years, we still have a different understanding on what the true teachings of Islam are. Understanding on what constitutes Islamic studies among parents, students and society was limited. Therefore I saw the need for a paradigm change on what Islamic studies truly is, its scope and whether it transcends other fields or not.

This requires an approach not just in theory but also the need to establish an institution in order to realize what we wanted. Having thought on this, I saw the need to establish a university or university college or an institution based on Islam that transcends all fields of knowledge and in accord with what we wanted.

We also observed that Islamic studies are not widely based on research or acquisition of new knowledge. What is available is just repeats of what have been written by past scholars. If we were to study fiqh, we would read traditional kitabs. This is true for other fields. We need changes because, aqidah as we know is immutable, but for other fields such as Syariah and Fiqh do change as our lives too. The new approach should be research oriented. Without research there would not be a new knowledge discovery.

Islamic studies have been alienated from the national education mainstream. This is not a tenable situation. A significant number of students are in the religious stream. If they are alienated from the national education mainstream, they may in future be alienated from national programs as they have not been equipped with the required knowledge and skills. Together with some friends, I put forward the view to Hon. Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, the Minister of Education then, and explained the need for the establishment of an institution based on Islamic studies. This has the added advantage of reducing the sending of students to foreign universities such as Al Azhar, saving foreign exchange. Hon. Dato' Sri Mohd Najib accepted the idea and formed a committee at the ministry level to prepare a Cabinet paper.

Q: What is your assessment on USIM's achievements?

Our assessment should be based on whether we have succeeded in establishing the foundation or not. Have we succeeded in establishing an institution based on Islam? Have we succeeded in building an integrated and contemporary campus? Are we offering competitive and 'hands on' courses? I considered that we have succeeded in establishing the foundation. The Government had agreed on the location of the campus and provided the funding to build it. Academic programs that we offer are integrated, Islamic based and transcend all fields of knowledge. We offer programs that are competitive such as medicine, dentistry, science and technology, accounting, syariah and law, counseling, communication, major languages etc.

With the above programs we are able to produce graduates who are well rounded and imbued with breadth of knowledge. This is consistent with one of the strategies outlined in the recently launched National Higher Education Strategic Plan. By offering the various programs, we provide access and openings to students from religious stream to further their studies in competitive programs besides having a deep understanding of Islam.

Q: What challenges have Dato' faced in realizing the University's Vision? How were they resolved?

The biggest challenge is to achieve the objective of effecting paradigm shift with society on Islamic studies. The next challenge is to widen access. But the biggest challenge is in terms of quality of programs offered at USIM. The programs that we offer are not available elsewhere. For example, programs that we offer are not available at Al Azhar.

The challenge is how to ensure the programs are accepted by academicians and the society. It is therefore imperative to maintain quality in terms of program, the faculty, management, and above all the quality of the graduates that we produce. We are exposing the students to knowledge that transcends various fields. We want to produce human capital imbued with knowledge and skills first class mentality, which have effective communication skills that enable them to excel at the national and global level. We don't want our students to remain static. In the past, society held the perception that students from the religious stream have limited knowledge and communication skills. In order to realize our vision, we want our students to be very proficient in the Arabic and English languages, in addition to Malay. Without language proficiencies they would not be able to fare well in the job market.

We need to have quality teaching staffs. We require members of faculty who are not only highly qualified but also share and help to implement our strategies and plans. That is why we provide facilities and resources for them to further their studies at the PhD level, in areas that we need and planned for. We are also thinking on how to assemble a management team which can deliver. This is important.

In addition to that we require students who can be nurtured and orientated to this new approach, an integrated approach that transcends all fields of knowledge. With this approach we want to produce graduates with first class mentality, who are dedicated and 'hands on'. That is why we have established the

TAMHIDI program, a one year program, firstly with a view to nurture students' attitudes and mindset.

Secondly we want to give them a strong foundation. Thirdly, we want to motivate and to provide them with the proper understanding on Islamic education and studies. When the student registers for the bachelor degree program, the student already has the required foundation.

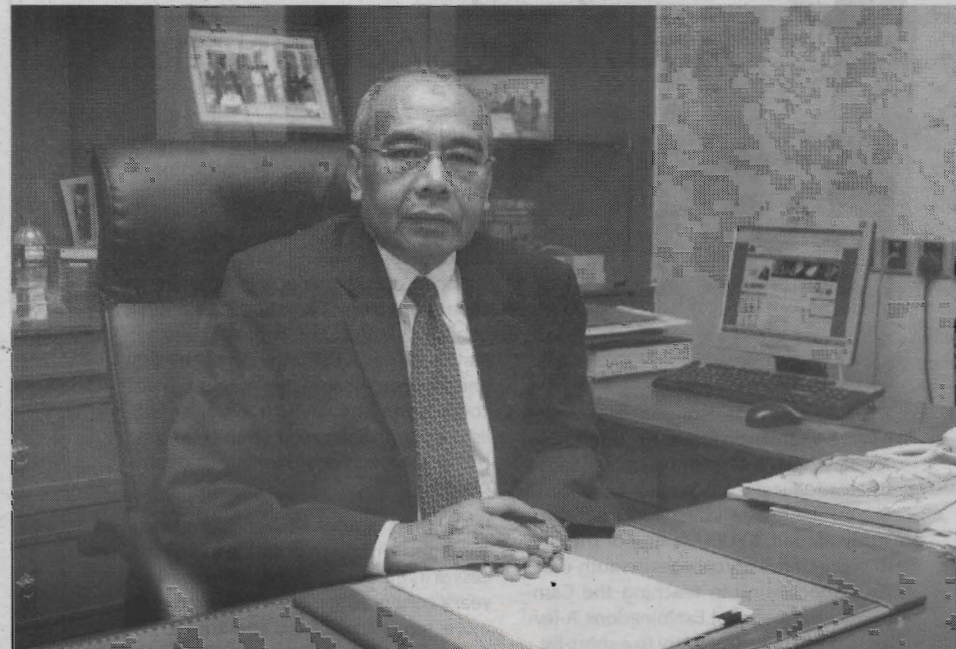
A greater challenge is how to compete with the more established universities, local or foreign.

We must have the strengths in all the following areas: management, faculty, the academic programs offered, research and quality students. All these elements must be developed simultaneously. We will not succeed if the faculty is not prepared or the students do not have the foundation.

Q: What are Dato's expectations from USIM?

Firstly I would like to see what we have planned become a reality and that this reality is well received by the society whether at the local or global level. The reality is in terms of publications and research, and most importantly the graduates that we produce. I fervently hope that the graduates we produce have strong hard skills and soft skills, and have positive attitudes towards global changes that are occurring now. We also hope that they are as what is required by the nation, human capital with knowledge and skills. We want to produce high quality human capital in line with national needs. Therefore, in whatever we do, we must take cognizance of the strategies under the National Higher Education Strategic Plan.

I also see the need for the existence of a strong team consisting of the faculty, management and student body. We hope that each individual and all parties contribute towards the realisation of our mission. If this is achieved, we succeed in producing human capital as envisaged in the National Higher Education Strategic Plan.



USIM's Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dato' Dr. Abdul Shukor Hj. Husin

ROYAL DEBATE: USIM'S DEBATERS ARE READY

"USIM is ready to achieve better results in the forthcoming Royal Debate Competition". That is the hope of USIM's debaters. They will represent the university in the Royal Debate Competition, the most prestigious debating competition organized among Public Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia. The competition will be hosted by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) from 24-29th November 2007. The university is sending 3 teams for the Bahasa Melayu category, 2 teams for English and 2 teams for Arabic.

This year the university will be competing under the name USIM. In the last edition of the Royal Debate held in Kuching Sarawak in November 2006, the university competed under the name Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia (KUIM). With the name change, the debaters have promised to excel in the competition thereby also enhancing USIM's image in the debating arena.