ABSTRACT

Historically human societies have built kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities to educate their children and youths. Their children are taught first reading, writing, calculating and other basic skills during their primary schooling ages. After they complete their primary education, they join the secondary education, the college and then university education. Probably some universities have some differences in their aims or goals due to their national and international conditions and demands. However, generally speaking, a university education has four connected goals namely dissemination of knowledge, training of people for the preservation and progress of the society and nation, training of researchers for the preservation and expansion of knowledge, and enhancing of inner potential of individuals. In May 1970, National University of Malaysia (NUM) was established to provide a university education for Malaysians and non-Malaysians. In that historic year, the university opened its doors to the undergraduate degree programs in its three faculties namely faculties of Science, Arts and Islamic Studies. The Faculty of Islamic Studies was the first and pioneering faculty in Malaysian university history since the oldest the University of Malaya had a department of Islamic studies in the Faculty of Arts when it was established in Kuala Lumpur in early 1960s. The initial campus of NUM was located near the oldest university before it moved to its new permanent campus located in Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia in 1980s. This paper presents human capital or human resource contributed by the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS) of NUM through its undergraduate and graduate degrees programs to Malaysian and foreign students. In offering its undergraduate and graduate programs to Malaysian and foreign students, FIS of NUM has to take into consideration the demands or requirements of an international standard organization (ISO) to become an international research and teaching university. NUM has been one of the research universities in Malaysia since 2006.

Key words: Islamic studies, human capital, Faculty of Islamic Studies, National University of Malaysia

Introduction

Based on the topic of this paper, no doubt that it has two main components namely Islamic studies and human capital. The term “Islamic studies” in this paper refers to the academic and university studies of Islamic sources namely the Koran and the Prophetic tradition, the studies of Muslim works in law, theology, ethics, Sufism and mysticism, the studies of Muslim societies and their histories and civilizations in particular periods and areas and the studies of Muslim concepts and institutions.

The term “human capital” has been referred to the development of human knowledge and skills to enable them to become assets, not liabilities, to the establishments, institutions and organizations where they contribute as employees or employers. Derek Stockley who has provided training, learning and performance management consulting services and conducted one day leadership courses in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane or London has defined human capital. According to D. Stockley, “The term human capital is recognition that people in organizations and businesses are an important and essential asset who contribute to development and growth, in a similar way as physical assets such as machines and money. The collective attitudes, skills and abilities of people contribute to organizational performance and productivity. Any expenditure in training, development, health and support is an investment, not just an expense.”. Moreover, according to him, the importance of human capital is very obvious because an organization or a business ceases to exist if it has no people to maintain its existence. (Stockley, 2012). Human capital is about human attitudes, skills, experiences and abilities to contribute an organization, association, institution or business.

Halimah Awang from University of Malaya wrote about human capital and technology development in Malaysia. According to her, “In its effort towards shifting to a knowledge-based economy, Malaysia’s main
responsibility lies with the development of human and intellectual capital to produce adequate supply of, support and sustain a flexible, agile, and mobile workforce with relevant knowledge and skills.” (Halimah, 2004: 239).

In December 2006, Dr. Zeti Akhtar Aziz, Governor of the Central Bank of Malaysia, mentioned about the contributions of the International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance (INCEIF) to human capital for the future growth of Islamic finance. “In this regard, Malaysia has placed strong focus on human capital development through training and education.” (Zeti, 2006: 1). Based on this remark, human capital is developed through education and training. If INCEIF develops human capital through its education and training in Islamic finance, FIS of NUM develops human capital through education and training in Islamic studies.

It is probably better to succinctly explain the history of Islamic studies in Malaysia in general and at NUM in particular before this paper ventures into the contributions of the Islamic studies programs of NUM to human capital in Malaysia and abroad.

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 faculty was found in one of three initial faculties of NUM. The faculty consisted of two departments; one was for Islamic 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 Shari`ah 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 fourth 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 none 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).

Contributions of FIS to Human Capital:

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.

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

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 accordance 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.

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 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 express 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).

Internationalization/Globalization:

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.

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.

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 (FPI, 2010b).

Employment for the graduates of FIS in Malaysia and abroad:

Through the undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the FIS of NUM and the five global standards and criteria implemented by FIS and NUM, the graduates from FIS and NUM are able to see employment in Malaysia and abroad. In Malaysia, the graduates from FIS of NUM have joined the Malaysian Public Service as Islamic religious teachers in primary and secondary national schools, as college and university lecturers in Islamic education, Islamic studies, Islamic history, Arabic and Islamic Civilization, Islamic law, Islamic banking, and Islamic finance. In addition, the graduates from FIS of NUM have joined the Islamic institutions in Malaysia such as Islamic banks, Islamic religious departments, departments for state Islamic affairs and Malay customs, Islamic councils and Malaysian Islamic Development under the Prime Minister’s Department.

In Malaysia, the graduates from FIS of NUM and other universities offering Islamic studies programs in Malaysia and abroad are able to become Islamic religious teachers, imams, lawyers and judges in the Shariah or Islamic courts, Islamic religious departments and other related establishments because the federal constitution as well as the state constitutions have placed the responsibilities of the federal and state governments to spread Islam among the Muslims and Muslim children and youths through the national education system and curriculum as well as through the Islamic religious education system and curriculum for Malaysian Muslims and their children. These two kinds of educational systems, the national and Islamic religious educations employ as their Islamic religious teachers those graduated from Islamic studies programs for the subjects related to Islam such as Islamic theology, law, tradition, worship, history, mysticism at the primary and secondary levels.

The federal and state governments support and finance the Islamic education in the national school system and the Islamic religious school system, the buildings of the mosques and their maintenances because Islam is
the religion of the federation in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, and Islam is under the jurisdictions of the Malay rulers or sultans in the Malay states under the British rule in Malaya until the independence of Malaya on August 31, 1957. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia provides for the religion of federation in Part I, Article 3: (1), (2), (3), (4) and (5). The Article 3: (1) states, “Islam is the religion of the Federation, but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation.” Article 3: (2) is about the Malay sultans or rulers are the head of Islam in their respective states. Article 3: (3) is about the Yang DiPertuan Agong or the King of Malaysia is the head of Islam in the States of Malacca, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak. (International Law Book Services 1988: 2). The King is also the head of Islam for the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan ad then Putrajaya in Malaysia. The Malay sultans or rulers are the heads of Islam in the States of Johor, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu.

As regards the foreign graduates of FIS of NUM, some of them have joined the schools, colleges and universities in their home countries like Indonesia, Libya, Jordan, Thailand, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran.

Concluding remarks:

FIS of NUM has significantly contributed to human capital in Malaysia and abroad; their training and education provided in any of the five departments of FIS have added knowledge, skills and experiences to them and the knowledge, skills and experiences for three years of undergraduate programs, two years of master programs and three years of doctoral programs indeed greatly contributed to their human capital in their lives and employments in Malaysia and in their home countries. In Malaysia, many of them have joined teaching profession as Islamic religious teachers. They have transferred their knowledge, experiences and skills gained or acquired from the programs they studied or learned at FIS of NUM. Many of foreign graduates from FIS of NUM have joined teaching profession in their home countries as college or university lecturers.

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