Compulsory Courses in University: The Relevance of Their Objectives and Integration With *Siasah Syar'iyyah*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to discuss the relevance of the objectives for compulsory courses offered at institutes of higher education in Malaysia to siasah syar'iyyah. The curriculum of these courses is drafted as an integrated, but at the same time separate, multi-course. This research uses document analysis, interviews and the writer's personal experience as a lecturer. Research finds that the objectives are very interrelated but implementation results in separateness because of differing epistemology, in addition to the challenge of providing trained teaching staff and the lack of a combined curriculum between the concept of siasah syar'iyyah and modern political science. As a whole, siasah syar'iyyah is perceived less as a complementary curriculum whether as a component of curriculum or of teaching and learning. Research also finds that the discipline of governance in the glorious Islamic history is also void even though Islam is one of the identities enshrined in the Federal Constitution. The writer suggests that the curriculum of siasah syar'iyyah be strengthened in existing compulsory courses or a new course of "Introduction to the Sultanate" be introduced at an appropriate level.

Keywords: Curriculum integration, Compulsory course, Siasah Syar'iyyah

INTRODUCTION

Institutes of higher learning play an important role in educating the younger generation to be knowledgeable people in preparation for a progressive, harmonious and prosperous society. However, a student should not only be knowledgeable and multi-skilled but must also be strong in core knowledge to establish his identity and personality. The discipline of Islamic studies is generally separated from the mainstream of modern science scholarship due to the influence of modern thinking, including the disciplines of political science and *siasah syar'iyyah*. *Siasah syar'iyyah* needs to be studied by every student so as to capture an accurate picture of the Islamic political aspect from the *tasawwur* perpective in order to be a good citizen.

The cohesiveness of Islamic knowledge and philosophy based on *tawhid* or monotheism needs to be framed so that curriculum, teaching methodology, textbooks and teacher training may be restructured to restore the supremacy of Islamic education which had proven successful in developing a superior human civilization in the glorious history of Muslims. The offer of compulsory courses needs to take into account the elements of patriotism, spirit of unity and positive values such as love for the country and ethical conduct and moral character in the curriculum of higher education according to the suitability of the discipline pursued by the student.(KPM 2013).

ISSUES

But however, the issue is that university compulsory courses continue to be separate from *siasah syar'iyyah*. Why is there no cohesiveness between Malaysian politics and the discipline of *siasah syar'yyah*? Likewise in discussing Malaysian politics, the status of Islamic religion, Rulers' Council, State Sultanates, Malay-Islam identity, the main elements of tradition in the Federal Constitution, are not integrated in *siasah syar'iyyah*, particularly in the implementation of policies. This occurs because discussion of Islamic politics mentioned developed within the framework of the nation state concept which makes Islam as part of the historical journey of the Malay race and culture but not the Islam *al-din* as understood by scholars and intellectuals of *siasah syar'iyyah*.

Discussion in this article answers the following two main issues:
i.   To what extent does the content of core university courses relate to the objective of *siasah syari'yyah*?
ii. What is the most suitable mechanism to achieve integration of the *siasah syar'iyyah* discipline which is now in a state of separation?

METHODOLOGY

This article uses wriiten documents from the National Accreditation Board which designs university core courses, interviews with curriculum designers and teaching staff involved. In addition, the writer also uses his 14-year experience as a lecturer at public and private universities and as a product of *siasah syar'iyyah* bi-discipline bachelor degree. Document analysis focuses on the four main courses, 3 at Public Universities, namely Malaysian Nationhood, TITAS and Ethnic Relations, and 1 course, Malaysian Studies, at Private Universities. These four courses are selected generally because of their strong connection to *siayasah syar'iyyah*. The course TITAS has been implemented at Public Universities since the year 1983 for the purpose of introducing Islam as a superior civilization to students of diverse race and religion (KPT 2010). It is then followed by the Nationhood course. The course Ethnic Relations was first offered in the year 2005. The compulsory course Malaysian Studies at Private Universities has been implemented from 1ˢᵗ January 1999 based on the National Accreditation Board Act 1996. This course does not include Islamic Studies since the restructuring of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) in 2013.

DISCUSSION

Meaning of *Siasah Syar'iyyah*
Siasah syariyyah is good governance by a ruler which brings benefits to society, based on Al-Quran, Sunnah, Ijma' and Qias as sources of reference (Abdullah Muhammad 1989). According to Al-Qardhawi (1989), *siasah syar'iyyah* refers to what is seen and directed by a leaderr, derived from Allah's laws in order to prevent damage through certain ways. Based on these two scholarly opinions, *siasah syar'iyyah* may be regarded as a a component of knowledge or science concerning matters of politics, rule or reign, leader's behaviour and his influence in preserving social harmony. It may be deduced that the objectives of learning *siasah syar'iyyah* is to analyse political issues from the Islamic perspective, understand social responsibility in Islamic politics and administration with positive values, praiseworthy attitude and professsionalism as well as demonstrate leadership qualities when involved with society.

Combination of Course Objectives and Learning Outcome

Kerr J.K (1991) defined curriculum as all planned learning guided by an institution whether implemented by a group or individually in or outside a lecture room. According to Warwick D. (1975) in his book "*Curriculum Structure and Design*", there are two types of curriculum, formal and ideal. Both are likened to earth geological content which has various interconnected layers.

Curriculum consists of lesson topics, activities, theme, syllabus, teacher and time table. The structuring of a curriculum according to the Islamic perspective should be based on a knowledge scheme according to Islamic scholarship tradition. This makes a study curriculum hierarchical, continuous, holistic and leading to unity as characteristic of Islamic knowledge which is hierarchical but nevertheless harmoniously integrated.

In Public Universities, at bachelor degree level only, the compulsory course of Malaysian Nationhood is generally about history of politics and current administration with focus on Malaysia. The other course TITAS, provides students with a comprehensive understanding of history, principles, values and the main aspect of studies on issues of civilization and culture. Its purpose is to strengthen the Malaysian national identity as a multiracial nation which practises tolerance towards diversity of culture and religion as enshrined in the *Rukun Negara* (National Principles), that is, belief in God (Osman Bakar et.al. 2009).

Table 1, which contains 22 items closely related to politics, shows that the courses Malaysian Studies and Malaysian Nationhood have the most political items. Hence, it is reasonable that the said items be highlighted according to the perspective of *siasah syar'iyyah* discipline. Political concepts have various methods for integrated development of a country. The discipline of political science will touch on model institutions, topically study thoughts by taking personalities or streams as models, sources of thoughts, history of reformist approach including explaining the concept of external relations. In the context of siasah syar'iyyah, priority will be given to topics related to the Islamic political concept such as the aspects of policy, objective, scope of study, and specific terminology such as *daulah (*sovereignty), *khilafah* (caliphate)*, wizarah* (ministership) and *imamah* (leadership) (H.A.Fuad Said 2002).

Table 1: *Siasah Syar'iyyah* items in objectives and learning outcomes
of compulsory courses

COURSE	LEARNING OBJECTIVE	LEARNING OUTCOME
TITAS	-Furnish student with <u>history</u>, principles and values. -Establish <u>Malaysian National Identity as a multiracial country practising tolerance of diversity.</u> -Reinforce <u>Principle enshrined in Rukun Negara</u> of Belief in God.	Able to express in detail the <u>important roles of religion and culture</u> in life.
Malaysian Nationhood	Emphasizes on <u>aspects of nationhood</u> in Malaysia<u>. This covers history and development of civilization, constitution and government policies in</u> the process <u>of nation-building.</u>	- Able to explain <u>concept</u> and <u>characteristics of nationhood</u>. - Able to explain the process of <u>nation-building</u> in Malaysia. - Able to practise the attributes of <u>accountability as citizen.</u>
Ethnic Relations	-Foster National Unity	-Able to define concepts of society, culture, <u>unity, integration</u>, assimilation and amalgamation.
Malaysian Studies	Produce students who understand <u>nation-buiding</u> and <u>spirit of patriotism</u> in facing challenges.	-Able to analyse process of <u>nation-building</u>. - Able to describe <u>national system and administrative machinery</u>. -Able to explain <u>political process</u> and <u>give meaning to independence</u>. -Able to explain <u>main government policies.</u> -Able to practise values of <u>patriotism and identity</u> as <u>nation-loving citizens.</u>

Based on the abovesaid premises, the categorization of *siasah syar'iyyah* as *Fardh ain* (personal obligation) basic knowledge would have a significantly different impact in comparison to it being only as a compulsory course in university (currently) or elective or specialized course. An accurate positioning is essential to mobilize a genuine integration process suiting the selected curriculum design. The process of developing a curriculum in Islam heavily emphasizes on the principle of continuity and reciprocity for each of the course content which ultimately must submit to the paradigm of *tawhid* (Ali Ahmad Madkur 2004). That is the requirement for curriculum development of *siasah syar'iyyah*. Horizontal and vertical stucturing of content must be intertwined for a clear understanding of the siasah syar'iyyah concept within the framework of a holistic and integrated Islamic worldview.

Static and Changing Curriculum
Razali Arof (1996) states that curriculum is only static for a short or temporary time period as it needs to change and develop. Maximum learning requires careful planning to guarantee individual spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual development (Ee Ah Meng 1994). Simultaneously, curriculum as a basis for learning should make achievable the desired objective.

Based on the above, the writer is of the view that although this course has almost similar purpose and objective, it is taught separately as if it there is no relation between heritage of revealed knowledge and modern history. In fact, sometimes Islamic history in Malaysia is seen as submerged within the discipline of *aqliyyah* (intellectual). This separation has created a gap between the sultanate institution and the discipline of history it self.

Analysis shows that the role of political Islam in the content of the said courses is strongly tied up with the discipline of local history which in turn is tied up with the formation process of the nation according to the mould of the government's wishes. The role of religion is still important and prominent but within its own framework and limits. Sometimes, it has fundamental and basic attributes. At other times, it seems cornered in a certain position, as if patched on, supplementary and symbolic. For this reason, its content seems fragmented, ritualistic, clinging onto the interest of identity and separated from the discipline of Islamic heritage (Noor Hisham Md. Nawi 2011).

Need for Curriculum Integration
The reality of current development shows obscurity in this aspect causing the birth of a new generation who do not properly appreciate aspects of nationhood and ethical conduct of citizenship. It would be more accurate and better if the *siasah syar'iyyah* course were to be grouped in the university core curriculum category based on its position as *fardh ain* knowledge (personal obligation) at that level rather than the category University Compulsory Course based on pragmatic considerations of current national needs.

It is immaterial whether the said separateness was specifically planned by colonial authorities or otherwise, the tradition of Western education is indeed secular and dualist. Even though secularism and dualism are slightly different, the implication for the education system is the same. Among the effects are that the discipline of religious education will only develop in its own box and the basic principles in it are never connected to, what more become the core and reference for, acquisition of knowledge (Rosnani Hashim 1999). The issue of separateness has been raised in the year 1977 in the World Congress of Islamic Education at Mecca but has met with not much success since other than the establishment of some Islamic universities and institutions which continue to champion the agenda.

SUMMARY

Based on the abaove discussion, the writer summarizes the following important points:
All compulsory courses have almost similar purpose and objectives as *siasah syar'iyyah*. Nevertheless, the approach to selection of content is seen as separated between revealed and modern political sources.The three compulsory courses, Malaysian Studies, Malaysian Nationhood and Ethnic Relations are current in content with their own historical values and required social relations; whereas, the courses TITAS and Islamic Studies are seen as separated between concept and practice. Current issues related to *siasah syar'iyyah* such as the position of the Islamic religion and status of the Ruler/Sultan are explained as sub-topics under other major disciplines.

PROPOSALS

Introduce a compulsory course "*Pengantar Kesultanan*" (Introduction to the Sultanate) at higher education level appropriate to the level of student maturity. The main source of reference for this course is '*Ahkam AlSultaniyyah*', written by Imam Mawardi. As an initial step, all teachers of compulsory courses need to be encouraged to audit a *siasah syar'iyyah* course. Form a group of experts to design the content of the said course in terms of its objectives, learning outcome and interesting teaching approach. The basic framework of course content is as outlined in Table 4 below:

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Table 4: Content Illustration of Course "*Pengantar Kesultanan*" (Introduction to the Sultanate)

PART	MAIN TOPIC	TOPIC
I	Introduction	i. Concept of *siasah syar'iyyah*
		ii. Concepts of *Khilafah, Imamah, Wizarah, Imarah, Malik, Sultan*
		iii. Philosophy of *Hijrah*, Opening of Mecca & Independence
		iv. Model of Drafting the Medina Constitution
II	Main Policies according to Epoch -The Righteously Guided Caliphates (*Khulafa' Rasyidin*) -Umayyad -Abbasid -Ottoman	i. Government Policy
		ii. Judiciary Policy
		iii. Education Policy
		iv. Economic Policy
		v. Political Policy
		vi. Social Policy
		vii. Policy for non-Muslims
		viii. Policy for Wome
		ix. Military Policy
		x. Culture Policy
		xi. Health Policy
		xii. Agriculture Policy
		(Select Suitable Policies for Requirement in Malaysia)
III	Muslim World Politics Politik	i. External Policy and Function of OIC
		ii. Ottoman Caliphate, Missionary Bodies & Islamic Movements
		iii. Muslim Countries & Muslim Minorities
IV	Islamic Politics in Malaysia	i. Islam & Malay Sultanates (Malay World, Pattani & Malacca)
		ii. Islam, Council of Rulers & Constitution
		iii. Islam, State & Federalism
		iv. Role of Government & Islamic Institutions

CONCLUSION

The problem of integration and separateness of the *siasah syar'iyyah* component in core courses needs to be resolved. Any solution has to be steadily and systematically implemented depending on the purpose and objective of offering the course. The teaching and learning aspect needs to play a bigger role so that students may experience it and appreciation may be properly fostered. Those who uphold the philosophy of Islamic education should continuously make improvements by utilizing new discoveries in various disciplines in order to establish teaching methods which ultimately should not seem like ineffective patched on subjects. The aspiration of all parties is to ensure the effectiveness and success of a new or old discipline and to produce excellent humans. The proposed course may give a positive effect on students in the future in the strengthening of government institutions and in formulating useful policies relating to community life.

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