

The Effects of Qalb with Tawhidic Paradigm in Strategic Planning of Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Strategic planning of higher education institutions requires balanced, holistic and entrepreneurial dimensions for sustainable performance. The presence of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2016-2025 (Higher Education) together with its major playbooks enables higher education institutions in Malaysia to achieve its vision, mission, and goals. The Qalb-component in leadership reinforces the commitment with drive, focus, energy and synergy of higher education institutions with consistency, resilience and perseverance. The personal interview with project managers of higher education institutions argued that qalb-leadership with Tawhidic paradigm enables greater engagement with the stakeholders for profitable and sustainable relationship with internal and external stakeholders. In the Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0 environments with soul and qalb are essential to allow for greater human connection, interaction, and engagement. The informants suggested qalb-ecosystem is necessary to reinforce the qalb-driven leadership into higher education institutions. The effects of Qalb with Tawhidic paradigm are apparent at the strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The dynamic business market induces complexity and difficult to the strategists to comprehend the external factors as part of formulating strategies for the future. The qalb-component is embedded in intuitive decision making process to make sense of the present environment before forecasting for the future. The informants suggested strategists to increase qalb reliability with dialog or focused group study with key stakeholders.

Keywords: *Qalb-leadership; Tawhidic paradigm; Strategic planning*

INTRODUCTION

The business world is getting very dynamic, complex and competitive for every sector to face them. Higher education is not spared from the dynamism, complexity, and competitiveness. The most powerful force to face all the challenges is to have solid and determined heart or qalb. Qalb in human has two components, the soul (nafs) and spirit (ruh) (al-Din, 1980). The driver to the ocean of dynamism is strategic leadership, to influence, motivate, and drive people to achieve excellence, particularly in higher education (Kok & McDonald, 2017). Tawhidic paradigm for qalb that is based on Qur'an and Sunnah provides guidance for strategic leadership. Thus, qalb-leadership in higher education enables stakeholders to work together in achieving the goals of higher education.

In Malaysia, higher education plays essential role to bring wellness and well-being to the economy and people. This component has been included in various national economic policies to recognize the role of higher education. The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia has formulated Malaysia Education Blueprint (2016-2025) (Higher Education) together with a few playbooks to enable the higher education sector in Malaysia sustains its excellence despite the dynamism, uncertainties and complexities. It emphasized on soul, heart, conviction, welfare, wellness, and well-being of people to reinforce commitment, resilient, and perseverant for excellent higher education. Indeed, qalb-leadership has been embedded in its words and actions.

The presence of qalb in the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia is apparent in its vision when it aims to offer high quality education, excellent individual and prosper the nation. Likewise, the mission of MOHE is to sustain the higher education ecosystem in order to develop and enhance individual potential and fulfill the nation's aspiration. The terms 'quality', 'excellent,' 'individual,' 'potential,' and 'aspiration' manifest a few functions and roles of qalb. In doing so, qalb for quality (itqan), qalb for excellent (falah), qalb for individual (insan), qalb for potential (fardi), and qalb for aspiration (izzah).

MOHE as federal regulatory body for higher education shared its vision and mission with all higher education institutions in Malaysia through various meetings, discussion, visits, and audits. While MOHE's vision and mission has a few qalb elements, namely, quality, excellence, perfections, potential and aspiration, it seems some higher education institutions are not fully aligned the qalb aspects of MOHE. Its Academy for Higher Education Leadership (AKEPT) through its Centre for Academic Leadership (CAL) has been active in promoting qalb-leadership for higher education in Malaysia.

This study explores the effects of qalb with Tawhidic paradigm in the leadership of strategic planning of higher education institutions in Malaysia. The study argues that qalb with Tawhidic paradigm into leadership enables for synergy, determination, commitment for higher education institutions in Malaysia to create, maintain and sustain competitive advantage through its excellent higher education programmes. The discussion of the paper is divided into a few parts. The first part is on the literature review, which is to discuss critically the literature related the topic and argument of the study. The second part is the methodology of the paper that describes the research design and methods on how to collect data from the informants. The third part presents the findings and provides critical discussion. The final part of the study is the conclusion and direction for future studies.

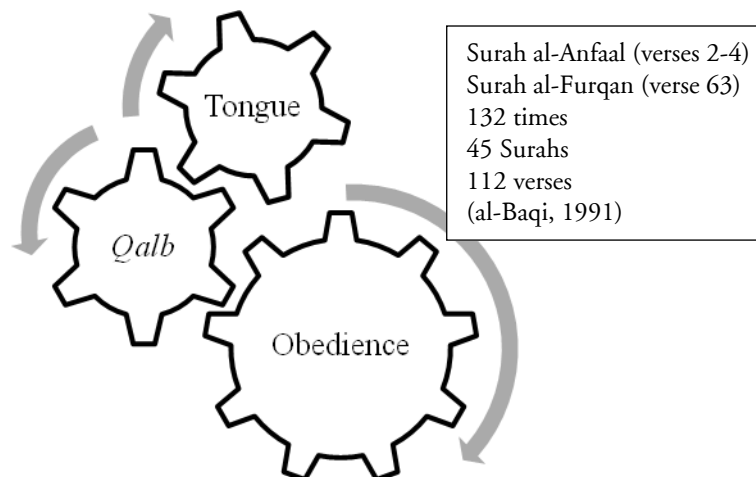
LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education institutions need strong leadership to enable them to achieve goals within the aspiration of nations. There are many challenges within the aspiration of many stakeholders. According to Kok & McDonald (2017), strong leadership with clear vision, mission and goals have the synergy to address uncertainties and challenges. There have been stickiness in strategic planning in Malaysia (Sarif & Ismail, 2012), not just in higher education. While knowledge is recognized as powerful tool to gain and sustain competitive advantage, they are still unconventional in addressing the external challenges within the organizational situation (Sarif & Ismail, 2013). The most challenging part is the deal with different needs of the stakeholders who value sustainability and well-being of people (Dyer & Dyer, 2017). At the same time, strategic planning is lacking of leadership with soul, spirit and practical wisdom (Fry, 2003; Lewis, 2006; Altbach, 2009; Shin, 2012; Sarif, 2015a; Sarif, 2015b; Sarif, 2015c; Sarif, 2016c). Indeed, human need qalb-leadership to give them direction, energy, and drive.

Qalb has many domains to make it uniquely functional to human to face dynamism and uncertainties. El-Geyoushi (1978) argued that qalb can result in peace and full comprehension levels about life and beyond life. These two elements are essential to bring peaceful heart, mind and soul for human to live and strive in any situations. In fact, qalb works closely with tongue. Latif (2016) argued that tongue and qalb are inter-related. For example in Surah Luqman, verse 12, it explains that the good tongue is in the forms of good words to enable people to accumulate wisdom. Indeed, tongue and qalb are related with virtue, behaviour, and approaches. In different verses of Quran, for example in Surah al-Anfaal verses 2-4; tongue has the power to shape the

qalb, especially when reciting Quranic verses, the qalb pounding for submissive and humiliation to Allah. Likewise, in Surah al-Furqan verse 63, a good and peaceful qalb always connected to Allah and make peace with others. Figure 1 depicts the leadership roles of tongue to activate qalb for absolute obedience to Allah.

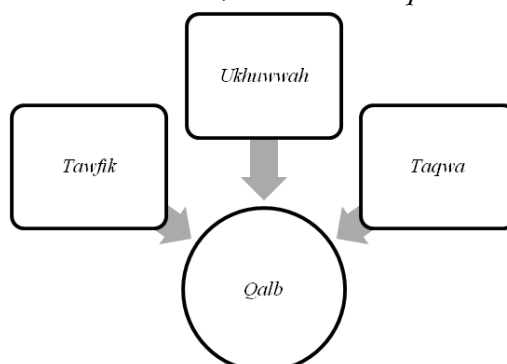
Figure 1: *The leadership roles of tongue for qalb and obedience*



Qalb is powerful component in human existence. According to al-Baqi (1991), Allah mentioned qalb for 132 times in the Quran, specifically in 45 Surahs and 112 verses. In terms of themes, 43 verses are on the important dimensions of iman. In addition, there are 24 reactions of qalb related to anxiety, fear, hope, and peace; 20 verses on determination of qalb to be firm, clean, pride; 5 verses on making zikir to have peace; finally 7 verses on comprehension of qalb to the commandment of Allah. In fact, Muin et al (2015) related qalb with highest tranquility (*mutmainnah*).

Qalb-leadership enables unity and productivity. Qalb with Tawhidic paradigm reinforces the heart to be more determined, firm and care about others. According to Sarif (2016a), the essence of Tawhidic paradigm is to always being reminded about the duties as servants and vicegerents of Allah within the guidance of Allah through Quran and teaching of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Sarif (2016a) argued that *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) allows for functional qalb-leadership to foster unity in organizations. At individual level, the *tawfik* (will-power) stance used by individual and groups allow them to make productive decisions and actions (Sarif, 2016b). The reinforcement of *ukhuwwah* and *tawfik* is sustained by *taqwa* (Sarif, 2016c). The collective work for betterment of society has been driven by *fastabiqul khairat* (Sarif, 2015a) and *ta'awun* (cooperation) (Sarif, 2015b). The wisdom combines with *ukhuwwah*, *tawfik*, *ta'awun*, and *taqwa* to sustain people actively engaging in wisdom, *ulu al-albab* (Sarif, 2015c). Figure 2 shows the contribution of *ukhuwwah*, *tawfik* and *taqwa* for qalb-leadership capability.

Figure 2: *The contribution of ukhuwwah, tawfik and taqwa for qalb-leadership capability*



Qalb-leadership facilitates strategic planning activities with greater and comprehensive perspectives. Ultimately, higher education needs strong leadership to sustain excellence (Kok & McDonald, 2017). The society is knowledgeable and competent to help the society for betterment. The knowledge society demands for sustainability and social well-being (Dyer & Dyer, 2017). Indeed, quality and excellent with qalb-leadership allows the soul of strategy implementation to advance the economy, society, and nation (Lewis, 2006; Altbach, 2009; Bryman, 2007). Seriousness to advanced higher education allows for more creativity and innovation (Yoshuda, Sendijaya, Hirst and Cooper).

The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia has formulated Malaysia Education Blueprint (2016-2025) (Higher Education) together with a few playbooks to enable the higher education sector in Malaysia sustains its excellence despite the dynamism, uncertainties and complexities. There are ten shifts stated in the Blueprint to transform the higher education, namely, (1) holistic, entrepreneurial and balanced graduates, (2) talent excellence, (3) nation of lifelong learners, (4) quality technical and vocational education and training graduates, (5) financial sustainability, (6) empowered governance, (7) innovation ecosystem, (8) global prominence, (9) globalised online learning, and (10) transformed higher education delivery. Figure 3 depicts the ten shifts and the detail under each shift.

Figure 3: 10 shifts to transform the higher education system

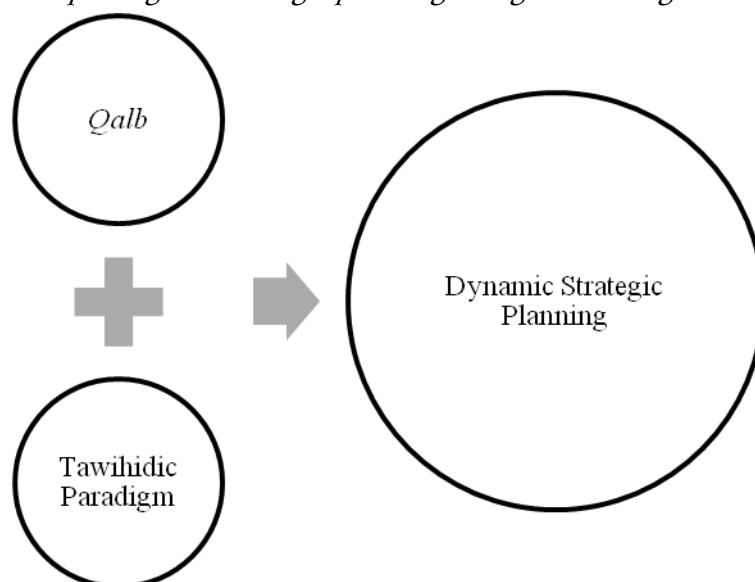


Source: Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia

Qalb-leadership allows for strategic planning to be dynamic. In the Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0 environments with soul and qalb are essential to allow for greater human connection, interaction, and engagement. As such, qalb-leadership influences beyond ranking business (Radojicic & Jeremic, 2012). Indeed, leadership with soul is part of theory of spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003). In certain situation, spiritual leadership is about being authentic (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), ethical (Brown & Trevino, 2006), able to be servants (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Peterson, 2012; Yoshida et al, 2014), and highly responsible (Christensen, Mackey & Whetten, 2014).

The study hypothesizes that Qalb with Tawhidic paradigm enables strategic planning of higher learning institutions to be dynamic. Qalb plays as software element to force from inside to activate strategists to be more proactive, accountable and responsible. As for Tawhidic paradigm, it reinforces the qalb to be consistent, firm, determined and committed to serve the best to please Allah. Figure 4 shows the theoretical framework of this study.

Figure 4: *Theoretical Framework of the Study on the effects of qalb with tawhidic paradigm in strategic planning of higher learning institutions*



METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative method through personal interview with officers-in-charged of strategic planning at higher education institutions in Malaysia to explore the effects of qalb with Tawhidic paradigm in the leadership of strategic planning of higher education institutions in Malaysia. Prior to the interview, the study uses content analysis on vision and mission statements of the higher education institutions (coded as PU). The study argues that qalb with Tawhidic paradigm into leadership enables for synergy, determination, commitment for higher education institutions in Malaysia to create, maintain and sustain competitive advantage through its excellent higher education programmes.

The study uses manual note taking approach in the personal interview sessions with the officers-in-charged of strategic planning. Table 1 summarizes the profile of the informants from 10 higher learning institutions that coded as PU.

Table 1: *Profile of Informants*

University	Informants	University	Informants
PU 1	Senior Officer	PU 6	Deputy Director
PU 2	Administrative Officer	PU 7	Senior Officer
PU 3	Officer	PU 8	Officer
PU 4	Officer	PU 9	Officer
PU 5	Officer	PU 10	Officer

Each interview is held between 20 to 30 minutes at the Ministry of Higher Education. The interview results were sent to the informants for verification. The study has conducted validity, reliability and consistency tests for the interview questions and interview feedback.

FINDINGS

There are two parts of findings. Firstly, the study presents the results of the content analysis of the vision and mission statements of the higher learning institutions. Secondly, the study provides the interview results.

The content analysis on vision and mission statements argued that the vision and mission statements are broad, directional and global. Table 2 summarizes the vision and mission statements of higher learning institutions.

Table 2: *Summary of Vision and Mission Statements*

University	Vision	Mission	<i>Qalb's aspects</i>
PU 1	To be an internationally renowned institution of higher learning in research, innovation, publication and teaching	To advance knowledge and learning through quality research and education for the nation and for humanity.	Quality Humanity
PU 2	Transforming higher education for a sustainable tomorrow	To pioneer transdisciplinary research intensive university that empowers future talents and enables the bottom billions to transform their socio-economic well-being	Sustainability Empowerment Talents Well-being
PU 3	We are committed to ahead of society and time in leading the development of a learned, dynamic and moral society.	To be the learning centre of choice that promotes the sovereignty of Bahasa Melayu and internationalises knowledge rooted in the national culture.	Moral Sovereignty
PU 4	To become a university of international repute.	To make meaningful contributions towards wealth creation, nation building and universal human advancement through the exploration and dissemination of knowledge.	Human Reputation

PU 5	To be recognised as a world-class centre of academia and technological excellence.	To be a leader in the development of human capital and innovative technologies that will contribute to the nation's wealth creation.	Leader Human
PU 6	We aim to become a leading international centre of educational excellence which seeks to restore the dynamic and progressive role of the Muslim Ummah in all branches of knowledge and intellectual discourse.	We strive to achieve Integration; Islamization; Internationalization; and Comprehensive Excellence.	Ummah Islamization
PU 7	to be an eminent management university	We educate leaders with holistic characteristics to serve the global community	Eminent Leaders Holistic
PU 8	To become an exemplary university of internationally acknowledged stature and a scholarly institution of choice for both students and academics through the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research and scholarship.	To generate, disseminate and apply knowledge strategically and innovatively to enhance the quality of the nation's culture and prosperity of its people.	Exemplary Quality
PU 9	We strive to be an innovative university of global standing	We strive to achieve academic excellence and international recognition through its attention to learning and teaching, research and publications, social services and balance in knowledge specialisation. The university also prioritises the personal growth of its students, resulting in greater innovation and productivity for the benefit of society and the nation as a whole.	Innovative Excellent Personal
PU 10	To be a prestigious university providing exceptional leadership in education, based on the advantage of broad experience and high level of competency in meeting global changes.	To generate and foster knowledge through teaching, research, publication, consultancy and community services to achieve the vision of the nation.	Leadership Prestigious

Based on Table 2, the study found out that each of them has unique qalb's aspects. While PU 1 is on "quality" and "humanity" qalb-aspects, PU 2 expresses on "sustainability," "empowerment," "talents" and "well-being." In a more subtle way, PU 3 emphasises on "moral" and "sovereignty", which is encompasses PU 4's "human reputation," PU 5's "human leaders,"

and PU 6's "ummah" and "Islamisation." PU 7 on "eminent," "holistic," and "leaders." PU 8 on "exemplary" and "quality" PU 9 is with its "innovative," "excellent," and "personal." PU 10 is "leadership" and "prestigious"

PU 1 has positioned itself to be leading higher education institution in Malaysia, regional and international. The main qalb-leadership aspects emphasized in its strategic planning are into quality and humanity. As for PU 1, its emphasis is more on sustainable education to serve the stakeholders for their well-being. In doing so, the qalb-leadership on strategic planning emphasized on sustainability, empowerment, talents and well-being. In PU 3 situation, it echoed the aspiration of PU 1 and 2, but in the forms of morality and sovereignty. Table 3 compares the qalb-leadership aspects in strategic planning of PU1, PU2 and PU3.

Table 3: *Comparison of Qalb-leadership aspects in strategic planning of PU1, PU2 and PU3*

University	Vision	Mission	Qalb's aspects
PU 1	To be an internationally renowned institution of higher learning in research, innovation, publication and teaching	To advance knowledge and learning through quality research and education for the nation and for humanity.	Quality Humanity
PU 2	Transforming higher education for a sustainable tomorrow	To pioneer transdisciplinary research intensive university that empowers future talents and enables the bottom billions to transform their socio-economic well-being	Sustainability Empowerment Talents Well-being
PU 3	We are committed to ahead of society and time in leading the development of a learned, dynamic and moral society.	To be the learning centre of choice that promotes the sovereignty of Bahasa Melayu and internationalizes knowledge rooted in the national culture.	Moral Sovereignty

Staff of PU 1 argued that commitment for quality has been practiced as part of their life service. The officer PU 1 said: "Everyone has a heart in each project. Everyone does thing with passion. The ultimate aim is the overall success."

Nevertheless, officer of PU 2 contended that human has dynamism quality that is sustainable for them to sustain the success. Staff of PU 2 mentioned: "When everyone understands it as part of life, there will be less complaining. Our approach is people-based in every process. We can't resemble people with robots. Robot is on mathematical programming."

In a more serious mode, staff of PU 3 made a point by saying: "Our presence is to help the society to be better off, not the other way round. All branches of knowledge are useful for us. Take our time to acquire knowledge on life-long basis."

As for PU4, it aims to be university with internal reputation manifests the pride aspects of qalb in human for reputation. According to staff of PU 4, reputation for higher learning institutions is essential. Staff PU 4 said: "People will ask us what is our QSWUR Ranking? They have to abide by the sponsors requirement to study at Top 200 universities ranked by QS World Ranked Universities. If not in the list, sorry to say, we could not study at your place although we love your place."

The uniqueness in PU 3 and 4 is being combined by PU 5 as leader for human, which is about taking care or feeling of responsible for the stakeholders. Staff of PU 5 has different views about the excessive reputation business and said: "Our core business is to train our people to be professional, qualified and recognized in the technological areas. At the same time, they must be able to be leaders for the people and bring them to the goodness of human society."

The feedbacks from PU3, PU4 and PU5 can be combined by saying that qalb influences strategic planning to be dynamic and safeguard the interests of the stakeholders for morality, sovereignty, human reputation, and human leadership. Table 4 shows the comparison of the vision, mission, and qalb's aspects of PU3, PU4, and PU5 based on the content analysis and interview feedback.

Table 4: *Comparison of Qalb-leadership aspects in strategic planning of PU3, PU4 and PU5*

University	Vision	Mission	Qalb's aspects
PU 3	We are committed to ahead of society and time in leading the development of a learned, dynamic and moral society.	To be the learning centre of choice that promotes the sovereignty of Bahasa Melayu and internationalises knowledge rooted in the national culture.	Moral Sovereignty
PU 4	To become a university of international repute.	To make meaningful contributions towards wealth creation, nation building and universal human advancement through the exploration and dissemination of knowledge.	Human Reputation
PU 5	To be recognised as a world-class centre of academia and technological excellence.	To be a leader in the development of human capital and innovative technologies that will contribute to the nation's wealth creation.	Leader Human

As for PU 6, it aims to be progressive and proactive in championing the interests of stakeholders at global scale. It is apparent when its mission has been specified into four areas, which bringing qalb of the strategists to the nation guided by Islamic teachings. Likewise, PU 7 strives to be the best to serve the global community within the holistic leadership qualities of qalb. The Qalb of PU 6 and PU 7 are similar in terms of serving the global stakeholders.

The feedbacks from PU 6 and PU 7 can be combined by saying that qalb influences strategic planning to be dynamic and safeguard the interests of the stakeholders for ummah realization, enhancing Islamisation, producing eminent leaders and managers, and nurturing for holistic leaders. Table 5 shows the comparison of the vision, mission, and qalb's aspects of PU6 and PU7 based on the content analysis and interview feedback.

Table 5: *Comparison of Qalb-leadership aspects in strategic planning of PU6 and PU 7*

University	Vision	Mission	Qalb's aspects
PU 6	We aim to become a leading international centre of educational excellence which seeks to restore the dynamic and progressive role of the Muslim Ummah in all branches of knowledge and intellectual discourse.	We strive to achieve Integration; Islamization; Internationalization; and Comprehensive Excellence	Ummah Islamization
PU 7	to be an eminent management university	We educate leaders with holistic characteristics to serve the global community	Eminent Leaders Holistic

As for PU 8, the vision and mission statements contain qalb's aspects through exemplary and quality. The qalb is pure and willing to work extra mile for the sake of being exemplary. In the case of PU 9, its qalb strives for innovative, excellent and personal achievement, which is similar to PU 10. Table 6 shows the comparison of the vision, mission, and qalb's aspects of PU8, PU9 and PU10 based on the content analysis and interview feedback.

Table 6: *Comparison of Qalb-leadership aspects in strategic planning of PU8, PU9 and PU 10*

University	Vision	Mission	Qalb's aspects
PU 8	To become an exemplary university of internationally acknowledged stature and a scholarly institution of choice for both students and academics through the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research and scholarship.	To generate, disseminate and apply knowledge strategically and innovatively to enhance the quality of the nation's culture and prosperity of its people.	Exemplary Quality
PU 9	We strive to be an innovative university of global standing.	We strive to achieve academic excellence and international recognition through its attention to learning and teaching, research and publications, social services and balance in knowledge specialisation. The university also prioritises the personal growth of its students, resulting in greater innovation and productivity for the benefit of society and the nation as a whole.	Innovative Excellent Personal
PU 10	To be a prestigious university providing exceptional leadership in education, based on the advantage of broad experience and high level of competency in meeting global changes.	To generate and foster knowledge through teaching, research, publication, consultancy and community services to achieve the vision of the nation.	Leadership Prestigious

DISCUSSION

There are a few observations has been explored from this project. Firstly, the scope of qalb with Tawhidic paradigm creates qalb-driven leadership to enable long term synergy, determination, and commitment for higher education institutions in Malaysia to create, maintain and sustain competitive advantage through its excellent higher education programmes. In general term it is about being sensible and could make sense. When qalb elements are embedded into believe, understanding and attitude, they could harmonise the organizational environment.

Secondly, the qalb Tawhidic paradigm enables dynamic strategic planning for higher education institutions due to the nature and inclination of qalb itself. This is logical in determining the direction in the contexts of dynamic situation of higher education. The contexts are embedded with a few qalb's driven traits and behavior in the vision and mission of higher education, namely quality of humanity, sustainability of talent excellence in the forms of empowerment, talent development and well being, moral sovereignty, human reputation, leadership in human, ummah with Islamisation, eminence of leadership with exemplary quality, and innovative leadership. Finally, these qalb aspects in the vision and mission have incorporated the faith (iman) dimensions and its reactions (al-Baqi, 1991; Muin et al, 2015).

Finally, the position of higher education into qalb-leadership aspects is related to the scope of strategic planning which emphasizes on well-being of stakeholders. The quality on humanity enables quality teaching, research and learning activities which leads to very good reputation of higher education institutions. The qalb-leadership leads to sustainability, empowerment, talents and well-being together with morality and sovereignty. qalb influences strategic planning to be dynamic and safeguard the interests of the stakeholders for morality, sovereignty, human reputation, and human leadership.

CONCLUSION

Based on the feedback of informants, the effects of qalb with Tawhidic paradigm for strategic planning of higher learning institutions in Malaysia are into the orientation, standardization, practices, conviction and commitment. In fact, the informants suggested for qalb-ecosystem to reinforce the qalb-driven leadership into higher learning institutions. The effects of Qalb with Tawhidic paradigm with suitable ecosystem reinforce comprehensive, holistic and entrepreneurial process of strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation. This approach allows the institutions to face with readiness the dynamic business market that is full with complexity and difficulty to the strategists. The qalb-component is embedded in intuitive decision making process to make sense of the present environment before forecasting for the future. The informants suggested strategists to increase qalb reliability with dialog or focused group study with key stakeholders.

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