

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM: SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES REVIEW OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC SCHOOL MALAYSIA (IISM)

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the most influential social systems that man was able to create. In most western societies, education turned into a driving force that is contributing to nation building. Education in Islam however, has a much wider spectrum. Every positive action a Muslim does or seeks, including seeking knowledge, is regarded as an act of worship (*'ibadah*), which brings God's blessing and deserves reward. The Islamic educational experience witnessed several periods of tide and ebb. It reached its peak during the medieval ages, but an extreme tide of regression in Islamic intellectualism and intelligentsia, and ultimately Muslims ceased to produce any kind of useful knowledge. The task shouldered by Muslim educators, academics and activists to annihilate the negative effects of decades of foreign intellectual domination, rejuvenating Islamic intellectualism, and developing a valid model of Islamic education, is a daunting task, particularly in a Muslim world which still suffers from several forms of decadence and deterioration. One major contemporary challenge that needs to be addressed seriously and found effective remedies to is the issue of dualism in most of the educational systems in the Muslim countries. It is manifested in a form of religious versus secular curriculum. A more pragmatic approach in dealing with the issue is required, in order to create a balance between the acquisition of revealed and western sciences in one educational package. This approach gained immediate appeal, and made a positive impression among middle class Muslim intellectuals in particular. Seeing it as a good business opportunity, many businessmen –especially in developing Muslim countries– ventured into this project by establishing several educational institutions and projects based on the concept of integrated curriculum. Through the analysis of curriculum, teachers' background, students' population background and other official documents, this paper tries to review the idea of school integrated curriculum through the experience of one leading educational institution in Malaysia, which is the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM). The school which started its business in 1998 was the result of several years of planning and projection by the International Islamic University Malaysia. After reaching 16 years of operation, and with many phases of success and disappointments, the researchers think that it is a ripe time to conduct this review.

Keywords: Curriculum, Integrated, International Islamic School (IISM)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important aspects of the human life, perhaps the most influential social system that man was able to create. The future of any nation rests on its educational system. In most western societies, education turned into a driving force that contributed and is still contributing to nation building, by providing individuals with necessary skills and knowledge, and preparing them to enter job markets, compete for better opportunities, and meet the demands of life in the modern age. Education in Islam however, has a much wider spectrum. Every positive action a Muslim does or seeks, including seeking knowledge, is regarded as an act of worship (*ibadah*), which brings God's blessing and deserves reward. Another dimension of education in Islam is the fact that it is considered as a mean to protect the faith and its tenets, as well as to preserve the tradition and the Islamic way of life. The launching of Islamic education in a very early stage, simultaneously with efforts of the Islamic call (*da'wah*) -which, in its essence, seeks to spread the principles of faith and gain Allah's favors by living according to his commands in this world and preparing for the day after- such simultaneousness symbolizes the importance of education, even for the survival of the faith itself.

The Islamic educational experience witnessed several periods of tide and ebb. It reached its peak during the medieval ages, with outstanding scientific and intellectual accomplishments, and leading roles which rendered the Islamic orient as one major center for knowledge and innovation. However, new conditions -primarily political, and intellectual- which began to accumulate in the tenth century BC, led to an extreme tide of regression in Islamic intellectualism and intelligentsia, and ultimately Muslims ceased to produce any kind of useful knowledge. Meanwhile, Europeans were shaking off the dust of decades of clergy dogmatic dominance, and engaged in a revolutionary intensive rational, philosophical, educational, scientific, industrial and pragmatic exploits, which ultimately revitalized, transformed and reinstated them to their leading role. The new order was not all humane, western European powers had a huge desire for expansion and an endless appetite for wealth. Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and later, British and French, embarked in a huge wave of military and economic colonial offensive against weak dominions in Asia, Africa, and South America. The Muslim world was not spared, and by the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries practically most of it was colonized.

It remains to say that incapacitating Muslims' role in the making of civilization, and relegating their influence was not solely because of the western domination, the domestic intellectual malaise and internal educational decay among Muslims was a prime culprit which allowed such a situation to exist.

The task shouldered by Muslim educators, academics and activists to annihilate the negative effects of decades of foreign intellectual domination, rejuvenating Islamic intellectualism, and developing a valid model of Islamic education, is a daunting task, particularly in a Muslim world which still suffers from several forms of decadence and deterioration.

One major contemporary challenge that needs to be addressed seriously and found effective remedies to is the issue of dualism in most of the educational systems in the Muslim countries. It is manifested in a form of religious versus secular curriculum. There were many conflicting views among scholars, decision makers and even parents about the best solution to tackle this issue. Some of them, driven by philosophical and economic incentives, favored the western secular system. According to them, the western secular model of education is

modern, progressive and highly demanded in the job markets. Others, mostly driven by religious and national motives, preferred the traditional Islamic education model. For them, the Islamic system has helped and will continue to help preserving the Islamic identity of the new generation. Between these two conflicting views, a third opinion emerged. It rejects the equation of adopting one model on the expense of the other. It claims moderation and calls for a more pragmatic approach in dealing with the issue by creating a balance between the acquisition of revealed and western sciences in one educational package; in other words, it adopts the approach of teaching an integrated curriculum. This approach gained immediate appeal, and made a positive impression among middle class Muslim intellectuals in particular. Seeing it as a good business opportunity, many businessmen –especially in developing Muslim countries- ventured into this project by establishing several educational institutions and projects based on the concept of integrated curriculum.

Through the analysis of curriculum, teachers' background, students' population background and other official documents, this paper tries to review the idea of school integrated curriculum through the experience of one leading educational institution in Malaysia, which is the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM). The school which started its business in 1998 was the result of several years of planning and projection by the International Islamic University Malaysia. After reaching 16 years of operation, and with many phases of success and disappointments, the researchers think that it is a ripe time to conduct this review.

2.0 EDUCATION IN ISLAM AND THE WEST: AN OVERVIEW

It is probably important to revisit the concept of education, from both Islamic and western perspectives, before discussing the issue of integrated curriculum. The philosophy of Islamic education is an integral part of the comprehensive philosophy of Islam.

Man according to Islam is composed of soul and body... he is at once spirit and matter... man possesses spiritual and rational organs of cognition such as the heart (*qalb*) and the intellect (*'aql*) and faculties relating to physical, intellectual and spiritual vision, experience and consciousness. His most important gift is knowledge which pertains to spiritual as well as intelligible and tangible realities. (Al-Attas 1979: 157)

In Islam education is ought to prepare good, dutiful and wholesome individuals who are physically, mentally and spiritually balanced. The framework in which these individuals are prepared is clear and simple: it begins with the Muslim individual, then the Muslim community and ends up with the entire humanity. From another dimension, education is principally a process which strives to prepare man to play his role in this life. Such a role will eventually qualify him for success in the hereafter. The pursuer of knowledge accordingly in his quest strives for the good will of Allah, the future life, the removal of ignorance, the conservation of the religion, and ultimately the survival of Islam. Education in Islam thus strives to produce men who have faith as well as knowledge, the one sustaining the other. Islam does not think that the pursuit of knowledge by its self without reference to the spiritual goal that man must try to attain can do humanity much good. Knowledge divorced from faith is not only partial; it can even be described as a kind of new ignorance. (Hussain & Ashraf 1979)

Education in Islam is a two-fold process, intellectual knowledge (*'aqliyya* or *hikmiyya*) and the so-called spiritual knowledge. The first is acquired through the application of reason and logic, and the latter through the divine revelation. Islamic education regarded both as

legitimate. However, acquiring knowledge in Islam is not meant to be an end itself, but only a means to stimulate a more elevated moral and spiritual consciousness leading to faith and righteous action. Islam value prized knowledge and learning. It was made an incumbent assignment upon every Muslim, including the prophet of Islam (pbuh) himself to whom the first inspiration addressed: “Proclaim in the name of thy Lord and cherisher, who created...” Al-‘Alaq: 6/1. Although, he himself was an illiterate, Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) was the first Muslim educator and an indefatigable promoter of education.

However, education in the west is considered as a preliminary preparation for the duties of life. Beside building the national political consciousness and consolidating national unity as two major aspects of nation building, education constitutes the main source which supplies the labor market with skilled and viable work-force. By transmitting the necessary productive skills to the children as they grew up, along with the cultural content that is given in parallel to those skills is exactly what every nation would seek from educating the younger generation. What we should aim at producing, is men who possess both, culture and expert knowledge in some special direction. Their expert knowledge will give them the ground to start from, and their culture will lead them as deep as philosophy, and as high as art. (Whitehead, 1970)

Thus, the formation of a balanced individual in both culture and skills is a prioritized general goal among all nations, whether industrialized or developing, democratic or totalitarian, because a wide variety of functional considerations –economic, cultural, political, aesthetic, and moral guides the formation of educational goals. Education is variously concerned with producing literacy, providing knowledge and skills’ requisite for assuming a useful occupational role, maintaining a foundation for artistic and cultural cultivation that will sustain and renew elements of refinement in society, and socializing people in a rule governed, law-abiding, bureaucratically run community. (Rao & Reddy, 1992)

In the Muslim world however, the debate is still on how to revive our Islamic traditions of learning, and develop them to become an alternative model that can compete and ultimately replace the western model of education inherited from the times of direct colonization. In fact, the Muslim countries like the rest of developing nations suffer from deep rooted cultural deficiencies, and acute dependence on the west. Slogans of globalization, open markets, and human rights, made these deficiencies and dependence more visible, and the dominant western culture cemented its position in the east. Hence, Muslim educators and thinkers need to come to terms with such reality and work harder in order to find new educational remedies, which may create some resistance to the already leaned and unbalanced relationship.

3.0 DILEMA OF EDUCATION IN THE MUSLIM WORLD: INTEGRATED CURRICULUM AS AN ALTERNATIVE

Muslims in general live in constant dualism, in terms of their thoughts and convictions. They carry nostalgic feelings towards their religious heritage, and interact with traditional social and religious institutions, such as immediate families, local communities and schools...etc. However, these feelings of empathy are unconsciously mixed up with secular intellectual concepts which are consistently consumed by Muslims through a powerful western influence in politics, economy, culture and media. Facing the facts of real life, reciprocated with such western secular culture’s dominance, the majority of Muslims –including educators- find themselves in favor of the imported western models and styles. The Muslim educators feel

proud when their academic credentials are obtained from western educational institutions, and would certainly not exchange that with any qualification from the east. The norm in the Muslim mind is that the west remains the sole term which identifies success, growth, and everything that is modern, progressive and prosperous. Accordingly, the western educational experience has for a long time and it remains as the best form of learning. At the meantime, the majority of Muslims, individuals and groups are keen to inculcate the norms of faith, Islamic personality and character, and rituals in the minds and hearts of their children. Such legitimate aspiration motivated Muslim reformists and educators to come up with several alternatives that seek to modernize the inherited traditional system of Islamic education - which has long been labeled as backward, unproductive, and most recently breeding places of religious intolerance, to a modern, progressive, and a moderate system of education based on the idea of integration of curriculum – revealed with acquired knowledge- which eliminates conflicts with western educational theory of education and harmonize the two educational experiences in one coherent amalgam.

4.0 INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC SCHOOL MALAYSIA: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In a conference organized by King Abdul Aziz University and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Makkah from 31 March to 8 April, 1977, leading Muslim educators and thinkers addressed the education crisis in the Muslim world. The problems stemmed from the dual education system inherited from the colonial masters, i.e., the national type system and the religious system (Adebayo, 2007). Among the outcomes of this conference was the call for fundamental educational reform in the Muslim world. The conference proposed a critical review, reform and integration between modern knowledge and Islamic heritage. Hence, recommendations were made to improve the teaching, learning and research of Islamic heritage by establishing Islamic universities; i.e., universities with an integrated curriculum where both modern disciplines and Islamic heritage were taught to provide students in the Muslim countries with a better education, utilizing the epistemological sources in Islam (Amin and Haneef, 2011). As a direct result of the recommendations of that conference the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) was established in 1983 by the Government of Malaysia. The university's ultimate aim was to produce well-rounded professionals imbued with Islamic values and ethics who would develop the Muslim *ummah* and achieve progress that is in harmony with Islamic ideals. (Amin, Yusof and Haneef, 2011). The mission of the University is to integrate, islamize, internationalize, and engage in a comprehensive excellence (IIICE), an effort that is an integral part of the modern Islamic revival movement which tries to reinvigorate the Islamic heritage and integrate it with western scientific achievements.

Convinced that this project cannot attain its objectives without encompassing it to lower education, and sparked by Dato Dr. Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, then the Rector of IIUM, the International Islamic University Malaysia decided to embark in a project that aimed to establish an International Islamic School, which would follow in the same philosophy and adopt a similar concept of integrated and holistic curriculum guided by the principles of Islam, whereby Islamic revealed knowledge will be taught to the children of IIUM Muslim expatriates side by side with the most sophisticated western knowledge that could be found in any international school. Experts from IIUM and from other parts of the world engaged in a preparatory and planning phase, which involved the objectives, content and methods of that integrated curriculum. The International Islamic School opened its doors to students for the

first time in September 1998. It has grown from a humble beginning of 30 students to an enrolment of approximately 900 students today, ranging from the primary level up to A-levels. (Merah, 2013)

4.1 Why IISM type of school is important today?

As stated earlier, in the majority of the Muslim countries there are two prevalent systems of education: governmental, that is modern but secular, and, traditional, that is religious but backward. The first is deeply rooted in Western conceptual educational theories and practices, and partially or completely rejects popular educational doctrines vindicated by the theories of Islamic education. The governmental system of education is satisfied in the best circumstances with the inclusion of some isolated Islamic studies courses to its curriculum, as traditional subjects, taught in the late hours of the school day, and do not go beyond the religious rituals, celebrations and general manners. The second system of education however lacks proper infrastructure, comprehensive and well-structured curriculum, and focus of study and methodology. In other words, it is backward, unproductive, and unable to meet the challenges of the present time.

Muslims are also unhappy with the Islamic educational system. First, they claim the content of the curriculum is limited and outdated. It over-emphasizes the Arabic language, grammar, rhetoric, and religious knowledge. The curriculum is designed to turn every graduate into a *'alim* (religious teacher), a *qadhi* (Islamic jurist), or a *mufti* (Islamic legal scholar). Religious schools do not prepare students to be doctors, engineers, architects, or scientists, nor does the limited curriculum help students to understand contemporary social, political, or scientific issues (Rosnani, 1996). The integrated curriculum that the International Islamic School offers attempts to fill in the gap between these two systems.

4.2 Is the model offered by iism different?

IISM is the first private and International school in Malaysia which adopted an integrated curriculum approach. Another major character of IISM which distinguishes it from other schools in Malaysia is the fact that it is fathered by IIUM, a renowned institution of higher learning which in itself is a model of curriculum integration. Through the Faculty of Education, IIUM provides academic supervision in terms of designing the curriculum, training of teachers, and other services.

The vision of IISM is that it aims to develop a Muslim generation capable of critical, creative and ethical thinking who are Muslims by conviction and who will strive to fulfill their role as Allah's vicegerents on earth. (IISM Student Handbook, 2010)

Like the parent university, the philosophy of IISM implies that all educational processes and activities shall be built on the idea of *tawheed*. As for the mission of the school, it aims to:

Develop strong and highly educated Muslim persons for whom Islam is a complete way of life.

This is achieved by developing a balanced and wholesome Islamic personality whereby one's behavior and attitude are guided through training of the spirit, intellect and emotion as well as developing sound and healthy body. (IISM Student Handbook, 2010)

The philosophy, vision and mission of IISM were demonstrated in the following:

1. Considering that IIUM is adopting concepts of *wasatiyyah* (moderation), tolerance and academic excellence, and embarking in the efforts of islamizing knowledge, these approaches are emphasized, nurtured and reflected in IISM curriculum.

2. The component of *wasatiyyah* is demonstrated in the fact that IISM is open for all students from all over the world, regardless of racial or religious background. Interestingly, the school exercises a high level of tolerance towards non-Muslim students as well as towards Muslim students who belong to other *madhabs* (religious sects), a policy that is evident in the case of *shia* students who joined the school. Such practices reflect a high level of moderation and tolerance, unlike other traditional religious schools which are usually perceived as extremist and hostile towards the other.
3. The pragmatic academic choice of IISM by offering Cambridge International Programs and Examinations, which are among the most popular choices in South East Asia. Cambridge qualifications (IGCSE and A-Levels) permit students to gain entry into local and international universities.
4. To maintain its Islamic identity, and on top of the aforementioned point (adoption of Cambridge qualifications), IISM offers an Islamic curriculum package which, aside from the academic objectives, it strives to achieve the following:
 - a. Creating an Islamic awareness and strengthening the Islamic faith.
 - b. Instilling Islamic *adab*, values and ethics.
 - c. Inculcating familiarity and adherence to Islamic practices and traditions.
 - d. Inspiring students to love Allah, prophets and Islamic teachings.
 - e. The awakening of the spirit of vicegerency.
5. Well-structured school curriculum programs that cover all instruction levels:
 - a. IISM pre-school program (enrolls students from: two and a half years up to five). It offers the following subjects: English, Arabic, Quran, Basic Social studies, Art and Crafts, Physical Education and Games.
 - b. IISM Primary (five-eleven years). It is divided into two levels; Lower Primary Level, which consists of Grade 1, 2, and 3. The main subjects offered for this level are: English, Arabic, Bahasa Malaysia, Islamic Studies, Social Studies, Math, Computer, Qur'an, Art and Crafts and Physical Education. The Upper Primary Level consists of Grade 4, 5 and 6. Subjects taught at this level are similar to those taught in the Lower Primary Level, in addition to the subject of Science. (IISM Brochures, 2013)
 - c. IISM Secondary (twelve-nineteen years). It consists of three levels: Lower Secondary which consists of Grade 7, 8 and 9. The academic subjects taught in this level are: Islamic Studies, Islamic History, Arabic, Qur'an / Ethics (for non-Muslim students), Mathematics, Science, ICT, Geography, History, Art & Design, Physical Education, English & English Literature, Malay/ French and the *hikmah* program (philosophy for children) (IISM Brochures, 2013). The Upper Secondary, which consists of the Cambridge IGCSE years, covers Grade 10 & 11. These grades are divided into two streams; Sciences and Humanities. There are certain mandatory subjects offered at this level, which consist of *tilawah* / Ethics (for non-Muslim students), Islamiyat/ Ethics, *hikmah* program, ICT, Malay/Arabic/French, English, Mathematics and Physical Education. As for the specific subjects they are as follows: for Sciences the students must take Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Additional Mathematics/Business Studies/Arts. Meanwhile, students in Humanities must take Geography/ Arts, Business Studies, Combined Science and History/ Accounting. (IISM Brochures, 2013) The third and final Level is the pre-University (Cambridge A-Levels: Junior and Senior). This level lasts for 2 years and the school offers three related streams; Sciences (includes the following subjects: Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and Chemistry), Humanities (includes Economics, History, and English) and Businesses (includes

Mathematics, Business, Economics, and Accounting). Besides the subjects of specialization, students must attend *tilawah* classes (Qur'an recitation), and Islamic Studies / Moral Education (for Non-Muslim students) (IISM Brochures, 2013)

6. Intensive English Program. This is an additional program specially designed for students who joined IISM from non-English speaking backgrounds. It aims to enable them to master English before joining their formal grades. It is divided into two levels; Beginner and Intermediate. The subjects taught in this program are English and Technical English, Qur'an/ Ethics (for non-Muslim students) Arabic, Mathematics, Physical Education and Art and Design. (IISM Brochures, 2013)
7. Future academic prospects: Because the Cambridge certificates are internationally recognized, students who graduate from IISM, with either IGCSE or A-Levels certificates can get admission in western universities or their counterpart universities in Muslim countries.

As stated above, the core Islamic courses are implemented throughout all IISM's levels. These courses, which include Quran/Tilawah, Islamic Studies, Islamic History and Hikmah program, are designed in a way to help maintaining the Islamic identity and instilling Islamic morals and ethics in the students' minds and hearts. For example, the aim of Islamic Studies subject is to enable students to build an Islamic character based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (tradition) of prophet Muhammad (pbuh), acquire the knowledge of the major sources of Islam, its main beliefs and its early history, develop an enquiring approach to the study of Islam, and to familiarize the students with their Islamic rights and duties/obligations and present the authentic way of how they may be fulfilled. As for Hikmah program, an exclusively philosophical method introduced for the first time in IISM and designed by the Faculty of Education (IIUM). This program aims to train students to think critically and ethically. Our aim is not just to promote critical and creative thinking but also to give meaning to our children's lives. We want to teach our young generation universal values to live by as responsible human beings. In other words, critical and creative thinking should be inculcated as a very early stage to enable children find the best solution within the social context of their lives and for the common good of all (Rosnani Hashim, 2010). The Hikmah Program does not present critical and creative thinking as it is practiced in other schools, but it emphasizes the nurturing of wisdom from all sources of knowledge, especially from the Holy Qur'an and Islamic Traditions.

5.0 CHALLENGES

IISM faces several challenges, among them:

1. The search for accreditation and social recognition: due to its religious symbolism, Islamic educational institutions enjoy great respect and moral support from Muslims. However, the painful reality remains; they suffer from isolation and the stigma of stereotyping from the official authorities occasionally, and from the same sympathizers (the public) in terms of enrolment and preference for formal education choice. In fact, in the present day, few people are prepared to take the risk of enrolling their children at an Islamic educational institution of learning. The threat of slimmer job opportunities and the limited chances for future higher education stands as an obstacle against the thriving and dissemination of such institutions. Facing such difficulty, some Islamic schools in Muslim countries tried to gain recognition by linking with some renowned international educational institutions and adopting their curriculum. IISM was an example of such model when it adopted the British

International Cambridge Curriculum in the year 2000. Though it was a good tool to market the school internationally, it is still regarded by some critics as a kind of reproduction of western educational dominance in modified Islamic colors.

2. Clients' background and expectations: The school has a tendency to become vulnerable to pressure from its clients. Clients of modern and profit making Islamic institutions of learning like IISM are normally rich. They are able to pay the relatively expensive cost of their children's education. These kinds of clients normally espouse a blend of traditional religious values and western cultural trends. They expect the modern Islamic school to be a sort of replica of what is practiced in western schools in terms of subject content, methods of teaching, activities and, more importantly, the facilities of the school. According to an IISM customer survey conducted in the year 2013, about 70% of parents' complaints were about the school facilities (canteen, toilets, sports field, etc.) and the need to upgrade them. They maintained that the condition of these school facilities were not up to the standard if compared to other international schools, and they felt that they are actually paying a sizeable amount and their children deserve better services (IISM Brochures, 2013)

In IISM however, there is another category of parents, mainly Muslim expatriates working at the International Islamic University, who have a different kind of expectation. Most complaints of this category are about academic matters or religious controversies. It is probably worth it to give an example to further clarify what is meant by religious controversies. In 2011, the school decided to introduce a new set of students' uniform for both male and female students, and consequently a small group of parents (mainly IIUM staff) took the lead in criticizing the school and complaining that the new school uniform for female students was not suiting some parents' religious convictions. They insisted that some freedom and tolerance must be given to those who prefer to dress up in a more conservative style. (IISM Secondary, 2011-2012) According to the latest figures 77% of parents of children enrolled at IISM are businessmen, 11% are academicians at IIUM, and the remaining 12% are professionals who work as engineers, architects, medical doctors and so on. (IISM, 2014) This pattern may raise criticism and claims of involvement in reinforcing social inequality by Islamic institutions of learning, in contrary to the spirit of Islamic education that encourages all Muslims to seek knowledge for the sake of God and to preserve the religion.

3. Textbooks content and quality: Since its establishment, IISM has tried to cater for the academic needs of its students through the acquisition of the latest and best books available in the international market, usually recommended by Cambridge Program. The content of the textbooks may contradict with some Islamic convictions and create controversies in the minds of the students. For example, in the science textbook for Grade 9, the first chapter talks about alcohol consumption, another chapter talks about test tube babies and a third chapter is about natural clones. (Greenway, Oliver & Taylor, 2008) While some would argue that these are purely scientific matters, the question that arises is about the ability of IISM teachers to clear the controversy from and explain the Islamic point view vis-a-vis the issue into question!
4. Cultural background of students: IISM's doors are opened to students from all over the world, also known as "the international mobile youth", "global nomads" and "third culture kids" (TCK). Considering the actual large number of countries from which IISM students hail from (presently 42 countries) (IISMS, 2014) we can imagine how challenging keeping order in the school is. The experience of being a TCK is unique because the children are exposed to three cultures before they realize their own identity. The first refers to the culture of the country from which the parents

of the students originated, the second culture refers to the culture in which the family currently resides, and the third culture refers to the amalgamation of these two cultures. The third culture is further reinforced with the interaction of the third culture individual with the expatriate community. (Pollock & Reken, 2001)

5. Teacher qualifications and turnover: Like any other private school, IISM was and is still facing the problem of teachers' turnover. This issue is primarily due to the mobility of international teachers who are constantly searching for greener pastures. The cultural and academic background of IISM teachers could sometimes pose another challenge to the realization of its vision and mission. According to IISM's teachers data, about 54% are non-IIUM graduates. These are the teachers who graduated from other institutions. Thus, there is a high chance that they may not know much about IISM's core values of islamization, *wassatiyah* and integrated curriculum. The cultural backgrounds of teachers who are 57% locals and the rest are internationals present another challenge for the implementation of school's vision and mission. It is highly possible that the international staff's –especially those teaching religious subjects- understanding of Islam, opinions, and interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence wont rhyme with the school's philosophy as well as the views of local colleagues.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Regardless of the many challenges the integrated curriculum in general or IISM in particular are facing, it is rewarding to see young Muslim students joining world class universities pursuing their careers in different fields of knowledge, and at the same time maintaining their Islamic identity. IISM may have not achieved all of their planned goals, but regardless it still carries the honor of being the pioneer, and it is a sign that there is a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Governments have to extend its help to such projects in terms of developing the curriculum and writing relevant text books.
2. Reviving Islamic education glory will not be realized based on borrowing certain practices from the past, but through serious efforts in developing Islamic educational practices which suit the modern way of life and cater to the needs of the *Ummah* to be self-reliant.
3. The educational system in Muslim countries is a reflection of the socio-economic and political realities of these countries. Thus, collective effort is needed from all active institutions in Muslim societies.

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