



Religion Cooperation in Good Governance Ethics and Justice In Vision 2020

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ABSTRAK

Kerjasama di antara institusi-institusi pengajian tinggi di peringkat rantauan perlu dipertingkatkan lagi akibat daripada globalisasi. Artikel ini membincangkan ruang lingkup kerjasama yang boleh diperkasakan di antara institusi-institusi yang menganggotai organisasi Asians Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL), sebagai contoh usaha sama di peringkat rantauan dan antarabangsa. Kerjasama yang di teliti itu berdasarkan kepada panduan-panduan yang disarankan dalam Wawasan 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION

Regional cooperation in specific popular areas in socio-economic and cultural aspects is common between neighboring countries in many parts of the world. The idea has also been adopted for similar extent of cooperation in the field of science and technology. Rarely we find, however, the same mode of collaboration in fields of governance, ethics and justice among the countries in the same region. Perhaps the difference in value systems may contribute towards disintegration of governance, ethics and justice policies among different nations. Governance and its related foundational issues may be perceived as an individualized, localized and internal issues. The isolation period may come to an end if issues of governance, ethics and justice are thoroughly discussed.

The concern for an ethical and progressive society and later on, the

development of good governance has been a topic of discourse since the inception of the Vision 2020. The Vision is now a strategic plan for Malaysians to go forward in diverse aspects of life. One of the challenges is indeed on breeding and then producing society with ethical concern, a just society for development of the country. Our thesis is that universities have their roles to play in ensuring the greater consciousness of the importance of ethics and justice and later, good governance in the campus and the state. In doing so, we realize that universities should begin by implementing a good governance practice in its own settings and become social leaders in the ethical realm for the mass of the society. Ultimately, the implementing phase is not a totally isolated business in view of regionalization and globalization. A cooperative work is therefore recommended among universities in this region.

The aim of the paper is to explicate the very essence of the regional cooperation in the realm of governance, ethics and justice. To address the issues in a comprehensive manner, four major areas are identified as fundamental.

1. The good governance of universities.
2. Teaching ethics and governance in universities
3. The social role of universities in good governance, ethics and justice
4. Areas of regional cooperation

2. GOOD GOVERNANCE OF UNIVERSITIES

Universities are public owned institutions, which hold the cumulative aspiration of the nation. The people at large expect university as a role model, not only in their academic excellence but also for their well-managed governance. Thus, good governance of university is about good management from the managerial, ethical and justice point of views. Ideally, university is a place where the original business of finding and upholding the quest for the truth by promoting the expansion and development of knowledge is carried out. This re-

quires the participation of the university employees to propaget an idea of university being a place to obtain scholarship and character building simulatenously.

In the other words, when we say about good governance of univer- sity, it implicates two major aspects. First, university as a micro- government run by a systematic and just administrative protocols. Secondlu, it assumes the role of the university to produce students with greater awareness of ethical and justice issues. Thus, the sig- nificant interest in the development of the ethical and just society in a particular state actually stems form the need to overcome any deterioration of moral and ethical values and vulnerability of the moral decadence which has impact on our life.

Development of an ethical and just society is also about combining economic, environmental and social goals. For a university, this mis- sion is implicity indicated in its philosophy, among others, to help producing well-balanced, educated individuals in all facets of life. The concern and hope is vividly expounded in the challenges out- lined in the Vision 2020, Establishing a matured and liberal society with designated ethical and moral values is a prerequisite for a good governance. One of the key aspects of this development is thus the need to design effective, integrative mission with respect to national and social needs, to be inculcated during their studentship at the university. As such, we are talking about restructuring the univer- sity as the custodian of learning and also as an independent adminis- trative entity. This often requires the active involvement of all levels of management within the university, and there are good reasons to believe that, if the university's management are not carefully de- signed and coordinate, the philosophy of the university will easily become ineffective and ignored.

Good governance of university would help identified the right issues and the right balance of action through a well-organized administra- tive structure. The key for a good governance of the university is to make proper identification of the machinery in place for coordinat- ing the task-oriented personnel to work accordingly. The major role

of top executive personnel is to examine how university can keep in pace with the rapid changing nature of educational enterprise. This can be done by a pro-active stand by the university to allow the necessary changes to policy-making and policy delivery mechanisms that are necessary for sustainable development of the university and their students. Universities in Malaysia, therefore, are focusing on how to create an environment conducive to the development of affective, cognitive, and also spiritual domain of student as well a their own staffs. The combination of broad and sometime ill-defined issue with a multitude of factors and competing interest suggest that neither authoritarian nor loose consensus may achieve effective decision at university level. Innovative ways of making choices are being envisaged and applied along with their foreseeable consequence in terms of university decision-making.

For ensuring that the above good governance of university to come into reality, some of the basic ethical values are of importance: Integrity, accountability, and capability. Integrity is a fundamental precondition for university seeking to provide a trustworth and effective framework for the social and economic life of their students and staffs. Accountability procedures can constitute the basic formation of concerned individuals – one of the examples must ensure the accountability of research funds allocated by the university. Research money tends to be allocated according to specific program, and must be accounted for in the same way. There is a need to develop more flexible requirements without undermining the essential rules of accountability. Capability is about public expectation that university is capable of producing graduates with adequate skills, knowledge and with a sound moral judgment.

Integrity, accountability and capability bring the University vision of interest: streaming of the accountability system and assurance and ensuring quality education through well designed course and qualified teaching staffs. It is the responsibility of the Quality Control Group to prepare, operate under, and furnished report aligned with a more comprehensive and integrated from of strategic plan, designed to produce better approach towards solving problems and enhanced

the activity which correspond to the the University strategic objectives.

In similar vein, equipped by these same fundamental values, the decision-making process at the management level and faculty level, must be organized to achieve an effective reconciliation between policy priorities and budgetary imperatives outlined by the University. This is to ensure the appropriate use of financial allocation for the prioritized projects within the university, and thus another elements of good governance of university.

Commitment by the university official ato the abovementioned values is a necessary precondition to the development of an ethical and just society. Establishing a strategic policy framework helps ensure that individual policies are consistent with the government's goal and priorities. One of the major concern is the protection of any wrongdoing and transparent administration. One example is the obligation for senior officials to report received gifts, favours, and other. The establishment of a Committee of Disciplinary Board within many of local universities for example, will become the authority responsible for maintaining ethical affairs, e.g. traning, reviewing the reports, investigating and punishing unethical conduct. Promoting the disclosure of administrative information is important for making the administration open to and trusted by the people.

3. TEACHING ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE IN UNIVERSITIES

One of the ways in which Malaysian universities are helping students to learn about the importance of ethics is by offering the relevant subject for all students. Ethics is considered as one of the core subjects for all students of different areas of specialization. Ethics allow students an opportunity to understand the nature of good and evil, which have influence on interpersonal and psychological phenomenon. Laudan et.al (1996) states that:

'...ethics are moral standards that help guide

*behavior, actions, and choices. Ethics are grounded in the notion of **responsibility** (as free moral agents, individual, organizations, and societies are responsible for the actions that they take) and **accountability** (individuals, organizations, and society should be held accountable to others for the consequences of their actions). In most societies, a system of laws codifies the most significant ethical standards and provides a mechanism for holding people, organization, and even governments accountable.'*

The above definition highlighted two main issues on ethics which are responsibility and accountability. It is a normal practice that the issues are not limited to the these issues alone. Major emphasis on the following themes are also discussed in ethics; toleerant, justice transparent, environmental concern, mutual respects, human rights and freedom of thought.

The UKM, for example offers a number of courses exposing students with different aspects of ethics such as ethics and values in science, ethics and moral, comparative ethics, and medical ethics. In addition to that, core courses on civilization also invite students to analyses the elements in the form of universal values constitute the very aspect of the subtle part of human civilization to prosper. This is where students apply their open-mindedness attitude in order to appreciate the existence of ethical teachings of other cultures and traditions. In addition, the involvement of students in the course as such, will indirectly, promote the inter-racial and inter-religious mutual understanding in the cross-cultural civilizational enterprise. Among conventional methods used to spur the understanding of ethical principles and others are teaching and seminars, theoretical explication, actual cases on ethical dilemma and solutions. Students were also taught on how to make a sound, and ethically wise decision. They learn how to work with others and appreciate individual differences in their approach towards ethical issues.

4. THE SOCIAL ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

As role models, universities have social role that they must ensure to fulfill. One of the social roles is the development of people who can understand and appreciate diversified positions in determining the good and evil. The challenge is how people can arrive into a higher level of understanding, appreciation, and mutual respect. Universities become the avenues where these understanding and appreciating others are taught by looking for the goodness on a common, universal platform. It is here that the culture of open mindedness and experimentation is cultivated.

Nevertheless, in society that uphold religion as the ultimate source of Truth, we remain consistent in believing that in order to progress, the need to maintain the religious orientation of life and belief in what is immanence is not to be superseded. Metaphysical dimension in human life is the kernel for giving the values of human life. This is another point mentioned in the Vision 2020 in producing the matured and liberal society -that religious flavor contributes to the very essence of ethical society, justice and thus, good governance. Good governance of behavior and thinking means tolerance and respect for diversity in every facet of life. Again, we maintain that these pursuits are within university's indispensable role.

One of the functions is the dissemination of work related to the good governance, ethics and justice to the public. This includes, among others;

- o Publishing relevant research findings
- o Seminars to expose the public to the issues of good governance, ethics and justice
- o Report findings on corruption, bribery and white-collar crimes

Universities also serve as the source of reference by providing experts on various issues, conducting short course/workshop on ethics for the public and linking with institution to help develop their own code of ethics. Ethics is an integral component of broadly based

knowledge which is supposed to be developed and disseminated widely for social purposes and Malaysian universities, *qua* universities, are more than engines for economic productivity.

In addition, cooperation with the other government and non-governmental bodies in terms of assisting them to set up their own code of ethics has been consistently done. Some of these are the Medical Research Ethics Committee, Financial Planning Association of Malaysia, Institute of Engineers Malaysia, Institute of Marketing Malaysia, and National Malaysian Computer Federation.

The experience of most universities in Malaysia, distilled into a handful of practical lessons has led to the identification of the possible cooperation with related governmental and non-governmental bodies. These are organizational concepts which, translated into appropriate structures, processes and methods of work, have proved conducive to a higher degree of policy coherence in governments from different political and administrative traditions. This includes a close link between universities with corresponding bodies such as a ACA (Anti Corruption Agency), SUHAKAM (Suruhanjaya Hak-Hak Asasi Manusia), Consumer Associations, and Yayasan Penyayang Malaysia.

University is a public trust. Citizens expect university staff to serve the public interest with fairness and to manage public resources properly on a daily basis. Fair and reliable public service inspire public trust and created a favorable environment for business, thus contributing to a well-functioning market and economic growth. Public ethics especially on the issue of accountability, therefore serves as a prerequisite to public trust and a keystone of good governance in any university.

The UKM, for instance, is currently undertaking a review of accountability documentation for students and staff alike with the aim of developing a clearer performance and accountability framework. Concerns about the performance and accountability documents center on both their clarity and efficacy.

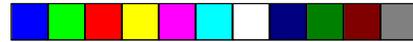
In so far as the students are concerned, education on the concept of justice are likewise provided at the tertiary level. Students are required to take general studies for at least ten percent of their overall credit unit requirement and the exposure on the concept of justice are integrated in these courses. In the outline of vision 2020, it states that:

The eighth is the challenge of ensuring an economically just society. This is a society in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation, in which there is full partnership in economic progress. Such a society cannot be in place so long as there is the identification of race with economic function, and the identification of economic backwardness with race.

As we very well know, there are fundamentally two parts of justice, i.e, corrective and distributive. In a developing, multiracial country like ours, justice is a paramount issue. In would be injustice if any act is carried out at the expense of the survival, peace and stability of the nation. The concept of fairness, the notions of treating similar cases similarly are so vague that reasonable people often disagree about their application. There seems to be no universal consensus on the criteria of justice and all traditional religion preach that only God is the most just. While it is difficult to have a consensus on a regulative principle of justice at the abstract level, it is much easier to implement justice at a more mundane level. Thus the pursuit for 'an economically just society'. It should not be the case that one percent of the population enjoyed between twenty to twenty five percent of national income while more than ten percent live below poverty line. As a consequent of the government's affirmative action, identification of race with economic function is becoming increasingly difficult. There is an increasingly large number of Chinese, Malay and Indian in the middle class strata compared to ten years ago. This is not to say that there is no room for further improvemtn. Surely there is no end in goodness.

The exposure to ‘the end of the law’ is integrated in courses in ethics. Students are taught on the various theories of the purpose of law, from the Hobbesian pursuit of peace, Cicero’s morality, Locke’s natural rights, Aquinas’ common good, Bentham’s good of humanity or the Kantian quest for freedom. Taking all these theories into account, arguments are presented to give the reasons why none of these theories can fit squarely with the vision of the country. The task then is to adopt and to adapt the relevant aspects based on the outline of 2020. For instance, the good of humanity is indeed a noble objective. To promote the well-being of every human being is certainly not evil. But is it morally right for a local legislator to put the welfare of noncitizens with that of citizens? Surely he ought to be guided by the welfare of the citizens he is representing.

In addition to ‘the end of the law’, the notion of ‘a right’ is discussed more in depth at tertiary level. The vision 2020 lucidly states that “the fifth challenge is to ... [establish] a tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practise and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs...”. Yet the concept of development is holistic. Malaysia should be “fully developed in terms of national unity and social cohesion, economy, social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride and confidence”. All of these equally important facets of development must be considered in circumscribing what a right is for the citizens of this country. In vision 2020, the aforementioned primary rights are guaranteed. It is secondary rights, for an example the *limits* of the right of free speech, as distinct to the right of free speech, that has to be outlined and guided by the overall interest and welfare of the nation which needless to say, varies throughout the world. General courses on ethics contain discourses on the various theories of right, with a comparative approach to the end that students will have a broader knowledge about the concept of right. The emphasis is that what is good for others is not necessarily good for us basically because there are no two countries in this world which is or can be an exact copy of the other.



Let us take the case of civil disobedience which is usually associated with the concept of 'a right'. It is usually argued that what makes civil disobedience right is the utility to the society. Still, it has only a specious efficacy because in the long run, the goals of civil disobedience are imposed upon the majority by the minority that engages in it and worst of all, these goals may or may not reflect the real needs of the people of the country as a whole. Rocking the boat maybe exciting but it does not necessarily advance the ship of state. Clearly it is not a mean of social progress sanctioned by the majority in a democratic country that have legally elected representatives. Exposing such an issue to matured students will make them more beholden to the state and more politically matured.

Finally, on the issue of globalization, university is facing unexpectedly rapid changing of the expansion of e-knowledge. This transformation has led to demonstrate how university operate hand in hand with the national governments for fulfilling their societal role. Of time, Malaysian Universitites headed by the Vice Chancellor has established committees to study what the function of the government should be in the twenty-first century, to examine how the university and colleges should be reorganized and to make a concrete proposal for strengthening the role of the university in the development of society envisioned in the Vision 2020. The university is tarting the necessary preparation for the shift to the new organizational set-up, including legislative measure, with the aim of beginning to move to the new system in few years to come. Echoing vision 2020, the spirit is to "aspire to the highest standards with regard to the skills of our people, to their devotion of know-how and knowledge upgrading and self-improvement, to their language competence, to their work attitude and discipline, to their managerial abilities, to their achievement motivation, their attitude towards excellence and to the fostering of the entrepreneurial spirit".

In so far as academic staff are concerned, the challenges faced by the universities are driven by the academic environment and organizational needs. The competition in the students market is getting more intense solely because the public is more aware of education

as a life long learning experience. Universities have to be more innovative and focused. The UKM for example, is currently focusing on graduate studies in its effort to promote the university as one of the region top-notch graduate school.

Globalization tends to give the competitive advantage to the big over the small organization. Consequently this is the time as far as Malaysian universities are concerned, for right-sizing, consolidation, and to be more efficient in the use of resources. With shorter cycles and faster turnarounds, the ability to execute strategy, service students and getting new programmes into the mainstream of the society matters a lot. Universities will quicken the pace as they adopt new technologies, universities, are getting more connected and hence 'smaller', with products, ideas and staff flowing easily across virtual boundaries. Malaysian Universities are staying relevant in the midst of all these changes. Currently each are trying to add value that is inline with organizational priorities. Each are inculcating deep appreciation of their business (which has to be non-other than education), in all its complexities. This guided 'corporate' repond, however, will not convert universities into a purely economic instituion. Following vision 2020 in a holistic manner ensures that managerialism will not dominate Malaysian collegiate culture because it is clearly stated in the blueprint that "the comprehensive development towards the developed society... cannot mean material and economic advancement only" and "economic development must not become the be-all and the end-all of our national endeavours".

Malaysian universities are making changes aligned with each of their missions, visions and vore values. This attitude of managing change, is, by and large, correspond to the blueprint of vision 2020 which lucidly states that managers "must ensure the correct mix with regard to professionals, sub-professionals, craftsman and artisans, and the correct balance with regard to those with competence in science and technology, the arts and social sciences". In short, the top leadership is responsible to respond to changes, adopt and adapt, orchestrating them and managing the entire process. Currently all Malaysian



public institution of higher learning are spelling out tasks, roles, and last but not least, restructuring. The UKM for example is undergoing structural changes in order to optimize resources and serve the students. Restructuring is done to the end that the university can motivate and develop staff who can deliver results. This contemporary measure is not singular to this campus, rather, it reflects similar trends at comparable universities across Malaysia.

5. AREAS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

In view of the above discussion, there are three major project where regional cooperation may be feasible. First, the establishment of regional academy of education. Second, the establishment of ASAIHL university and thirdly, the smart partnership with the cross-national private sectors.

The establishment of Regional Academy of Education

We have a strong feeling that an academy of education for this region could play an important role in nurturing and expanding the knowledge. The establishment of the academy could be a similar kind of academy set by the scientific community in many years before. We have seen the continuing existence of National Academy of Science in United States, for instance, as a gathering place for diversified scientific activities. Siekevitz (1975) reiterates that the original aim of such establishment was to 'promote useful knowledge for developing technologies of the era among the natural philosophers'. The member of the academy organizes and promotes research, providing avenues of publication, conducting public lectures for people to realize the importance of science in their life, and also providing a place for intellectual discourse among those interested publics. Past reports on the attendance of the people to scientific talks and show were surprising. Many non-scientific community members receive informal but accurate information about environmental concern, new technologies in gene manipulation and even the discoveries of cure of certain diseases. Society appreciates science and technology

through the role played by the academy. Some ideas may be of plausible to set up a similar kind of academy specially tailored to the preservation of knowledge as man's great wisdom and heritage.

Setting up of a Regional Academy of Education, so to say, is naturally an intellectual effort towards making a regional educational enterprise in line with the globalization phenomenon. More collaborative work can be conducted among different nationalities which can contribute towards the cross-cultural aspects in psychology, sociology, national philosophies and other fields of studies. Current trends in cross-cultural research indicate that the study on indigenous value system,s psychological make-ups, sociological diversity within the region is far from complete. This is where an academy of education plays the role. While becoming a center for educational exchange and experience, it may also serve as a clearing house for every areas of research related to this region, particularly Asian and Austrolasian geographical areas. In addition, regional academy of education may also help students to pursue their doctoral cross-cultural research.

The proposed ASAIHL university

Future higher education seems to be shaped by the current conception about what university should be. It is quite alarming to read the discussion of Weber (1999) that some may predict that the university may have no future in the age of globalization of knowledge though the widening use of internet. However the real question that is more realistic is what sort of university we should have in the future to come? One of major stream of thought is that universities possesses an intrinsic unity. Universities in many countries have different local philosophies, missions and visions. While these differences remain valid at the level of language and how they are expressed, the gist for the idea underlying the philosophy remain indifferent. That is why we think of converging the ideas and expertise of the university teachers in this region at one single university, probably, suitably know as ASHAIL University. Newman (1996) purported the idea of university being a place of teaching universal

knowledge and for that matter, our proposal for such a university is a plausible agenda.

We may look at the United Nation University (UNU) set at Tokyo, Japan as the model. UNU gathers experience and prominent scholars all over the globe to provide an international standard of education for all. Thus, university is no longer a closed system, rather it is an open system by its international and cross-national nature; so much so of the education itself. Taking similarity of the conceptual idea of a university and UNU as the existing model, the establishment of ASAIHL university is not a strange idea. Perhaps ASAIHL University may concentrate on research and teaching of universal knowledge with special emphasis on knowledge synthesized from indigenous, emictyped of research and knowledge. Diverse aspects of research on ethical norms, justice and governance from different part of the countries in this region could be pursued.

Smart partnership with the regional companies

As knowledge become increasingly important, requiring basic education and skills is indispensable. Educational institutions worked for better quality of education in many developing countries like Malaysia and Thailand. To certain extent, however, not all students receive the proper education in comparison with their counterparts in developed and developing countries. Recent report by the The Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) reveals that the gap is still there and in fact widening. One of the suggestions mentioned in that report is that more opportunities should be given to students particularly from developing countries to get access to higher education with specialized skills. Since the demand for professional expertise like IT and engineering are increasing, we suggest that smart partnership is one considerable solution.

Smart partnership refers to the opportunity given by the developed or developing countries to provide professional experience to graduates from lower developing countries. Students from Malaysia, for example, may be allowed to experience a short stint in companies in

Australia. Such work or internship experience will indeed reward the students with real, up to date information and skills, needed for the local use once the students completely graduate. A similar form of partnership has been established between Engineering Faculty of UKM and Petronas and MIMOS. Providing research funds and other sort of financial resources to the students through an adequate and clean governance is also within the smart partnership program. In other words, smart partnership is a form of cooperation as well as competition whereby human and physical capital, knowledge and ideas, can be profitably shared within the system. The partnership also will encourage higher education institutions to develop knowledge sharing links with business and deepen the dialogue with society that will lead to stronger democracy and more resilient states.

6. CONCLUSION

In retrospect, universities are the custodian of learning and civilization precisely because there is no progress without knowledge and the traditional core business of universities are wholly founded upon the knowledge enterprise. Issues of ethics, justice and governance are some of the best examples of the kind of knowledge with high degree of originality and relevance.

It is interesting to note that vision 2020 ends with a statement that no formula is perfect and the least perfect and the least productive formula is the perfect agenda unimplemented. Regional cooperation in the area of education, if implemented, will certainly be a perfect agenda for this millennium.

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