

ISLAMIC ECONOMICS EDUCATION  
IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN UNIVERSITIES

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This book discusses and analyzes an area of contemporary Islamic economics and finance that is relatively under-written, i.e., Islamic Economics Education. It provides a conceptual introduction by experts in Islamic Thought and Education on the urgent need for curriculum reforms in university education that is represented by integration between Islamic heritage (*al-Turath al-Islami*) and modern knowledge/disciplines. In this context, the Islamization of knowledge agenda, properly understood and undertaken by qualified academics, is a legitimate process required in the teaching of economics. *Islamic Economics Education in Southeast Asian Universities* presents the case studies and experiences of selected universities in Malaysia and Indonesia offering Islamic economics programs, reflects critically on these experiences, identifies important issues and challenges, and offers recommendations for the future progress of Islamic economics education.

### Editors

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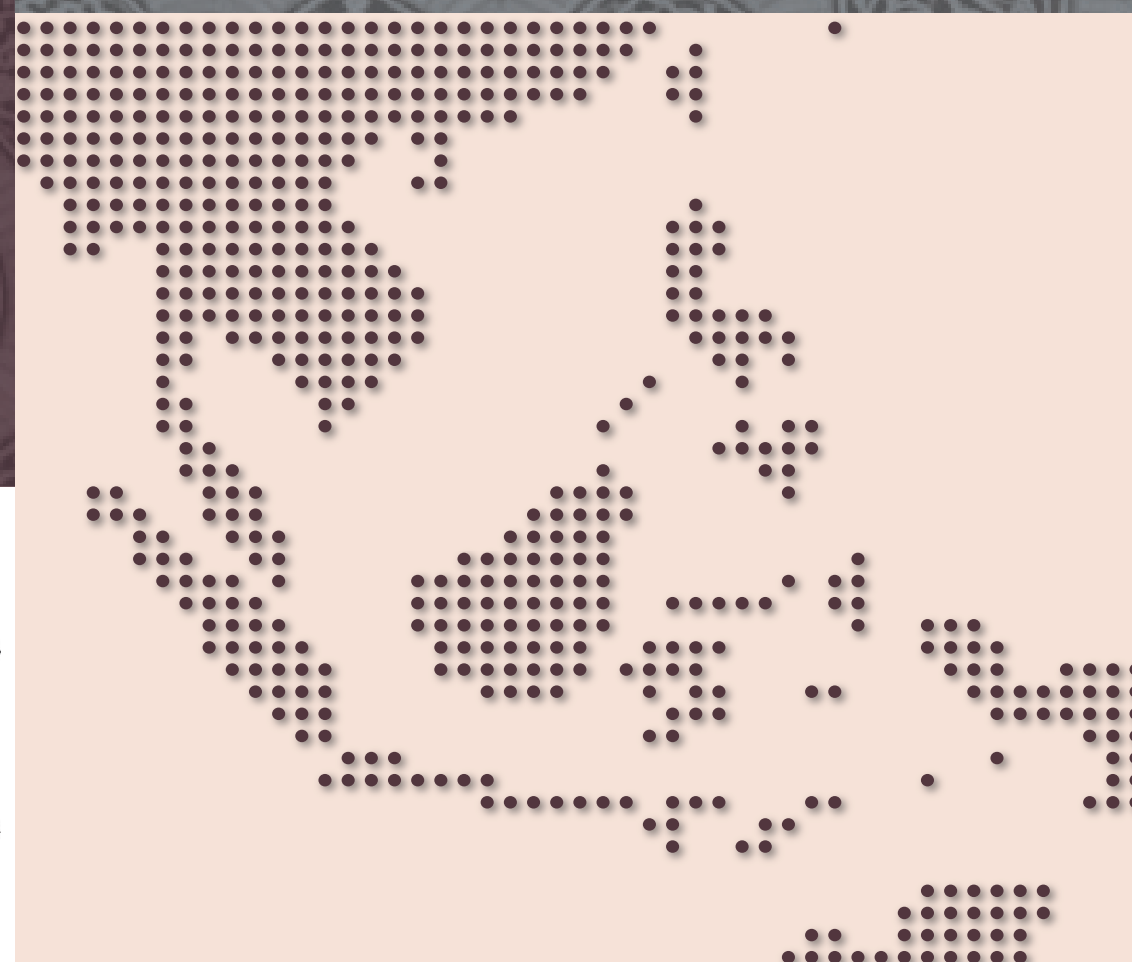


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## Chapter 4

# Integrating Al-Turath al-Islami to Modern University Curriculum: Issues and the Need for a Benchmark

**Mustafa Omar Mohammed**

### **1. Introduction**

Generally speaking, *al-Turath al-Islami* or Islamic heritage or *al-turath* in short refers to all the legacies left behind by Muslim individuals and societies throughout Islamic history (Sultan, 1991; Muhammad, 2004). Such legacies can be physical, for instance arts, buildings and they can be abstract such as intellectual properties – on which this chapter will focus. *Al-turath* constitutes an important reference point for the Ummah. The two primary sources of *al-turath* are the Quran and the Sunnah. Both connect the Muslim Ummah to their origin and past, provide them with a sense of identity and belongingness and, give them guidance on how to conduct their lives. Both sources also define and explain the relationships of the members of the Ummah with their creator, with one another and with their environment. In short, *al-turath* is itself the foundation of the Ummah's existence, direction, development and prosperity. The success of the Muslim Ummah throughout history has primarily depended on them being steadfast in adhering firmly to and integrating the lessons from *al-turath* in its letter and spirit to their day to day affairs. This of course is in line with their

understanding of the prophetic *hadith*, “I have left for you two sources that you will never go astray if you hold them steadfast: the book of Allah and the Sunnah of his prophet” (al-Imam Malik, *Muwatta*). Today, the integration of *al-turath* has assumed different names such as *aslamah al-ma’rifah* (Islamization of knowledge), *al-tasil* (Going back to the origin-heritage), reconstruction of knowledge (Abu Bakar, 2010) and of recent *al-tasil al-mu’asarah*<sup>1</sup>. Whereas the Muslim Ummah have achieved glory by integrating their *turath* to their daily affairs, studies have also shown that the plight of the Ummah today is because of their ignorance about their *turath* and their inability to avail its treasures and integrate them to their lives. The Ummah today is at the cross road of utter confusion. They are in search of their lost identity from *al-turath* on one hand and wishing to be seen as ‘modern’ on the other. Theoretically there should be no contradiction between *al-turath* and changes due to the so called modernity from other civilizations. But the problem is when the Muslim Ummah adopt what Kasule (2008) termed as a dualistic approach between *al-turath* and these changes. Abu Sulayman (1993) argues that the Muslim mind is in crisis due to, among others, his failure to articulate intellectually the right method of dealing with his *turath* and integrating it to modern discipline to address contemporary challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> This term was mentioned by Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman during question and answer session at 1<sup>st</sup> World Congress on Integration & Islamization of Acquired Human Knowledge (FWCII 2013) held at Prince Hotel & Residence, Kuala Lumpur, 23-25 August 2013. He also mentioned during the Congress that the process of integration of *al-turath* should go beyond the curriculum. It should extend right from the developmental stages at the family institution and early formal education at the primary level. Abu Sulayman is the former Rector of IIUM, from 1988-1998.

The issues of dealing with and integrating *al-turath* are more prevalent in curriculum development. These issues primarily relate to the process of integrating *al-turath* and its evaluation in all the important elements of curriculum, namely worldview, content or courses, epistemology, methodology and benchmark or evaluation. There has been noticeable progress in the process of integration relative to worldview, courses and to some extent methodology.

However, much work still needs to be done in developing a benchmark to measure the effectiveness and levels of these integration processes although some of the impact of these processes are intangible and can only be felt in the long run. Few studies have tried to develop such benchmark, for example Haneef and Amin, (2005); Manal (2011) and Harun et al. (2013), but these efforts need further research to crystallize the constructs or dimensions of the measures.

This chapter discusses issues that have arisen in the processes of integrating *al-turath* to university curriculum and the need for benchmark to measure these processes. The discussion is divided into eight sections. The subsequent section two presents a generic structure of a curriculum. This is followed by sections three, four, five, six and seven, which respectively discuss issues of integrating *al-turath* in the curriculum in relation to the worldview, vision and mission, courses, epistemology and methodology and benchmark elements of the curriculum. Section seven concludes the chapter.

## **2. Structure of a Curriculum**

Curriculum is a vital component of an education system. It spells out the worldview, vision and mission upon which the educational processes operate. From the conventional perspective, curriculum is referred to as a plan for learning whose major elements comprise the objective, contents, method and evaluation (Taba, 1962). These

elements are intertwined and inter-related such that any decisions on one of them have direct impact on the other elements. For example, a change in the worldview will affect the educational processes in all the other elements.

This generic structure also applies in the case of curriculum in most Muslim universities. Ideally, the curriculum in Muslim universities, at the philosophical level, is expected to be influenced by the Islamic worldview, which also determines the curriculum's vision and mission. At the operational levels, the courses and their objectives are supposed to be designed in a manner that achieves the formulated vision and mission of the university. In practice however, several discrepancies are noticeable in the curricula of Muslim universities as well as in conventional universities that offer Islamic courses such as Islamic finance. Take for example the case of a conventional university XY offering a course in Islamic finance. The following is its vision statement [paraphrased to conceal the identity of the university], "It aspires to produce graduates that are highly regarded internationally and can contribute towards prosperous communities". Another university ZZ has the following mission statement, "to nurture intellectual development and creativity by generating, disseminating, applying and preserving knowledge". Both vision and mission statements are operational in nature and in the absence of any explicit philosophical norms several issues may arise on the way the courses are designed. For instance, what is the worldview upon which the objectives of these courses are formulated? What are the epistemological and methodological principles that are used to develop the courses? Figure 1 below proposes the channels of integrating *al-turath* into the various elements of curriculum.

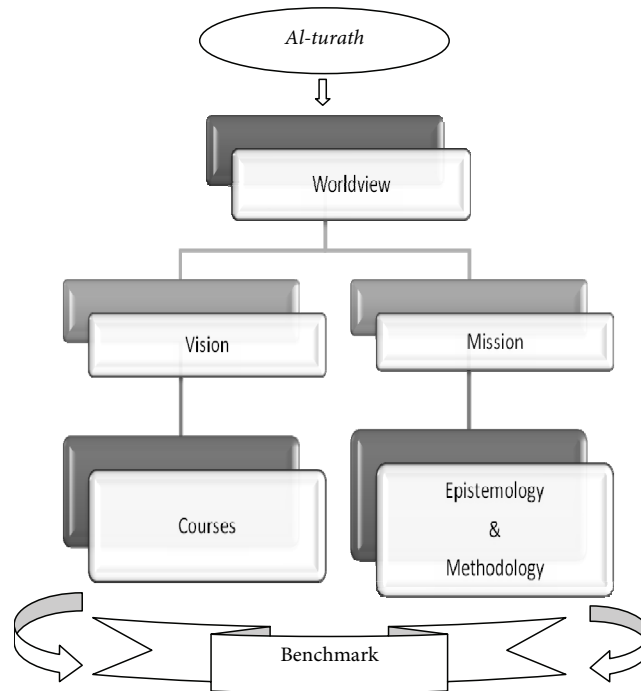


Figure 1: Channels of integrating *al-turath* into the Curriculum

From Figure 1 above, the *turath* is expected to be integrated into the first element of the curriculum, the worldview, which will propose its vision and mission. The courses, epistemology and methodology will then be developed based on the world view to realize the proposed vision and mission. A benchmark then needs to be developed to measure the processes related to the different elements of the curriculum. The following subsequent sections discuss obvious issues that normally arise in the integration of *al-turath* into the elements of curriculum shown in Figure 1 above.

### 3. Worldview

Worldview literally means the view of the world. It raises the question of what view and what world we are talking about. Is this view based only on the external material senses or it can also be based on senses

beyond the material world. Similarly, what world are we talking about? Is it merely the material visible secular world or it also includes the invisible world? The existing curricula in most of the universities of Muslim countries are the products of western civilization. These curricula have been designed based on the reductionist, positivist, and empiricist euro-centric materialistic secular worldview. In contrast, the Islamic worldview emanates from the concept of *tawhid*, which has normally been wrongly translated as oneness or unity of God. This is a static definition. From the linguistic and Qur'anic perspective, *tawhid* is a dynamic concept. It is derived from the verb "*wahhada*", which denotes the process of unification. That is unifying one's thought, words and action towards the same source – Allah the almighty. As mentioned previously, progress has relatively been made in few universities in the Muslim world to integrate the Tawhidic worldview into their curricula. For example, the Tawhidic worldview is engrained into the IIUM philosophy. According to this philosophy, knowledge shall be propagated in the spirit of *tawhid*, leading towards the recognition of Allah as the Absolute Creator and Master of mankind (IIUM website, 2013). However, the worldview in the curricula of many universities in the Muslim world is still suffering from dualism. The philosophical foundations of these dualistic systems need to be addressed to avoid mere dilution of the two systems (Al-Attas, 1979 and Al-Faruqi, 1988).

#### **4. Vision and Mission**

A vision statement identifies what an institution aspires to become in the near future and a mission statement spells out the purpose of the institution. It guides the activities of the institution and spells out its overall objectives. As stated earlier, the vision and mission are guided by the worldview. In the case of IIUM for example, in line with its Tawhidic worldview, the University's vision is 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. While its mission is summarized as: Integration, Islamization, Internationalization, and Comprehensive Excellence. In contrast the vision and mission statements of many Muslim universities have clear dichotomy with their worldview. Their vision and mission statements are mostly operational in nature lacking clear normative direction that is in harmony with the Tawhidic paradigm.

### 5. Courses

Similar to the worldview, courses in the curricula of several Muslim universities are largely conventional. The process of integrating *turath* into these courses has largely relied on the experiences and expertise of individual lecturers. There is almost total absence of systematic scheme of integrating *turath* into those conventional courses. The case of IIUM is slightly better as integration of *turath* forms an integral part of the university's vision and mission. In 1990, IIUM established a Kulliyyah (faculty) of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. The new Kulliyyah was intended to provide a platform for the experiments of integrating revealed knowledge to human sciences. In spite of this progress, there are still difficulties in terms of the level of confidence among the teachers. Many of them shy away from the challenges of either teaching the existing Islamic courses to enhance their knowledge and level of confidence or inculcating the motivation to undertake integration of *turath* in the courses of their expertise. There are still a lot of rooms for improvement in integrating *turath* to this element of curriculum.

### 6. Epistemology and Methodology

Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge. What knowledge are you dealing with? How do you derive it? How do you test its validity? (Haneef, 1996). Meanwhile methodology generally spells out ways of studying the discipline from within. In this chapter both epistemology and methodology are used in the context of integrating *al-turath* into



the curriculum. The discussion on epistemology focuses on three areas: what are the sources of *turath*? How do you derive economic concepts and principles from those sources and? What are the issues? Meanwhile, methodology is used here with reference to andragogy, that is, the instructional approach undertaken towards incorporating *turath* in the teaching method.

Needless to say, the primary sources of *turath* are the Quran and the Sunnah. The scholars of Usul through *ijtihad* have derived secondary sources of *al-turath*, which they referred to as sources of *shari'ah*. These secondary sources include inductive methods such as *qiyas* (analogy) and *istihsan* (juristic preference) and deductive methods such as *maqasid al-shari'ah*. Several issues have arisen regarding the integration of *turath* to modern disciplines particularly the social science disciplines. These issues are: 1) Sources of *turath* have been narrowly defined to mean *shari'ah* or Islamic law, 2) *fiqh* has been confined to legal matters. The tools of *usul al-fiqh* have been confined only to matters related to deriving rulings or *ahkam*, 3) *ijtihad* lacks creativity and 4) the scholars of integration have several limitations. Figure 2 below shows the classical model of deriving *shari'ah* rulings.

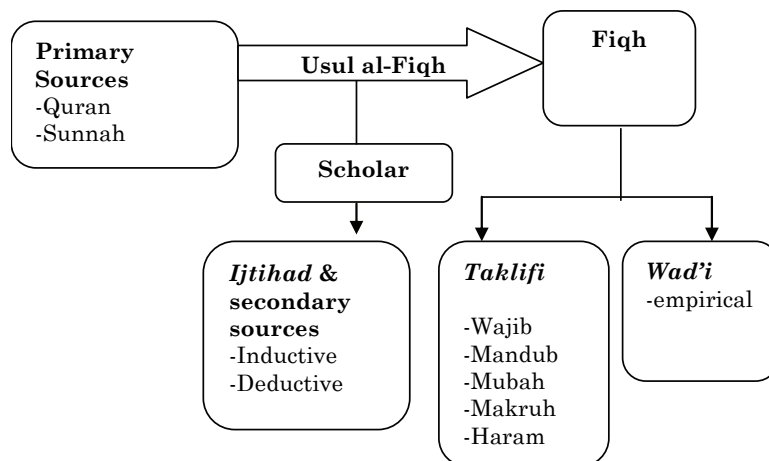


Figure 2: Classical Model of Methodology

From Figure 2 above, the two primary sources are al-Quran and al-Sunnah. The scholar uses *usul al-fiqh* to derive rulings from the two sources. *Usul al-fiqh* requires the scholar to apply his *ijtihad* through the secondary sources of *turath* to derive rulings. The ultimate result is *fiqh*, which is classified into *taklifi* and *wad'i*. The former sets the parameters or boundaries that constrain the choices of *mukallaf* (responsible adult). For example, it is *haram* (forbidden) for the *mukallaf* to consume pork and to engage in transactions involving *riba*. Meanwhile, the *wad'i* aspect of *fiqh* relates to cause and effect phenomena. For instance, fulfilling human needs is the cause for their earnings, and the effect of *riba* transactions is exploitation. The following subsections will discuss the four issues raised in the epistemology and methodology section above.

### **6.1. Sources of *turath* has been narrowly defined**

The Quran defines *shari'ah* as guidance (al-Quran, 45:18) to all the affairs of this world as means of attaining *falah* (success) in the hereafter. In fact early Muslim scholars such as Ibn Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyyah looked at *shari'ah* in relation to higher human goals such as justice and wisdom (Al-Raysuni, 1992). Confining *shari'ah* only to legal matters is a reductionist approach that may not fare well when dealing with social sciences like economics, which focuses on decision making. Therefore, concepts in economics such as choice, rationality, scarcity and opportunity cost cannot be contextualized from the *turath* only from the legal perspective. These concepts also relate to moral and ethical matters, which must be given due emphasis. Therefore, there is a need to explore economic concepts in Quran and Sunnah from their various dimensions besides *ahkam*.

### **6.2. *Fiqh* has been confined to legal matters**

From the *hadith* perspective, *fiqh* refers to deep understanding of *al-deen*, "Whomsoever Allah wishes good, he makes him learned in

matters of *deen*” (al-Bukhari). This understanding is comprehensive. It includes all matters related to *al-deen*. Hence deeper understanding of *turath* to Islamize economics is essentially *fiqh*. Rather, all the researches from Islamic perspective fall under the realm of *fiqh*. This comprehensive understanding of *fiqh* degenerated rapidly after the era of Imams of the school of *fiqh*. Muslim leaders became despotic and started persecuting scholars with dissenting views to public policies. As a result, these dissenting views and their scholars were ostracized from public life and confined to the four corners of the walls of mosques. They no longer provided *fiqh* that were relevant to public policies. On the contrary, *fiqh* rulings were now issued on matters related to individual affairs of the *mukallaf*; hence, *fiqh taklifi* as shown in Figure 2 above. Furthermore, not much work was done by the scholars thereafter in the empirical aspects (*wad'i*). Thus, due to these historical legacies, most of the *fiqh* books compiled have focused on individual micro issues and may not serve as good reference materials for research in social sciences. Despite these constrains, there are continuous efforts towards redefining *fiqh* for economists. The curriculum in the department of economics at IIUM is among the few cases in that direction.

### **6.3. Ijtihad lacks creativity**

*Ijtihad* is best defined by al-Ghazali as exhausting all reasonable effort in the pursuit of the truth. Many scholars have relied on *shari'ah* tools of *usul al-fiqh* to derive *ahkam*. Some of these tools in their present form have limitations when they are applied in the area of social science. The inductive tool such as *qiyas* can only be used when the phenomenon under study has similar '*illah* (cause or reason) in both the old and new cases. This is good for deriving rulings. In situations of new cases that has no similar '*illah* or case in the past, the use of this tool becomes inhibitive. That is why al-Shatibi (1341H) preferred to look at '*illah* from its macro original context that refers to objectives,

wisdom and meaning of *shari'ah*. Following al-Shatibi's view, one important deductive method that can be useful to social sciences is the *maqasid al-shari'ah* whose dimensions and elements can be applied in various disciplines; particularly, economics.

#### **6.4. Limitations of the scholars**

As stated previously, many scholars of integration suffer from dualism. Those who are educated in the West largely lack the knowledge of *turath*. On the other hand, those from *shari'ah* background lack the modern methodological tool to derive concepts and principles from the primary sources, let alone the inability of undertaking empirical research (*wad'i*). An interim report on the status of teachers in the areas of Islamic economics and finance reveals that the majority of them are from *shari'ah* background (Haneef, 2013). Therefore, the existing imbalance among Western educated and pure *shari'ah* scholars can be counter-productive relative to the quality of teachers needed in the area of integrating *turath* to modern disciplines; in this case, economics.

### **7. Benchmark**

As mentioned earlier, there have been several progresses in the process of integration. But hitherto, there is no concrete yardstick that can be used to take stock of what has been achieved thus far. There are only few works in the area. For example, a work by Haneef and Amin (2005) computed the levels of integration in selected courses in IIUM. They benchmarked their research on course outlines, looking at terminologies used, references, among others. Another work by Harun et al. (2013) conducted a survey to solicit the perception of IIUM lecturers at the various Kulliyahs. They employed mixed method to investigate the extent to which these staffs integrate Islamization of knowledge in their teaching. Manal (2011) conducted survey on IIUM students to examine the extent to which they set

Islamization as one of their learning goals. Whereas Haneef and Amin (2005) focused on course outlines, Harun et al. (2013) concentrated on the teachers themselves, Manal's study looked at the students' perspective. These three works have provided foundations for further research in the area.

Herewith, we propose a Framework for Integrated Islamic Turath Curriculum Index (IITC-Index) that can serve as a benchmark to measure the extent to which *turath* has been integrated into the curriculum. The author has benefitted from the works of Haneef and Amin(2005), Manal (2011) and Harun et al. (2013) to develop the framework, which has the input and output dimensions. The input basically relates to the major elements of the curriculum, namely vision, mission, courses, epistemology and methodology, students and faculty members. They are referred to as inputs because it is through them that *turath* is integrated into the curriculum. For example, the *turath* provides the worldview that shapes the vision and mission statements of the curriculum. The courses with their objectives are then designed to achieve these vision and mission. Meanwhile, students are expected to set their learning goals in line with the vision and mission statements. How then do you measure the extent of integration into the vision and mission statements and the courses? How do we determine the extent to which students have incorporated the integration of *turath* into their learning goals? On the other hand, the outputs are the products of integration. They are basically two: research and graduates. Hence the benchmark will measure the number of integration related research projects, publications and dissertations that have been produced by the faculty members and students. Figure 3 below presents the proposed framework for IITC-Index model.

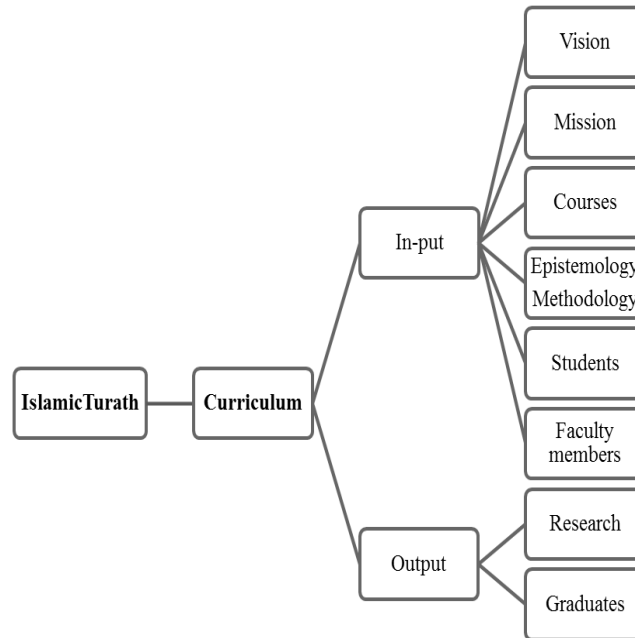


Figure 3: Framework for Integrated Islamic Turath Curriculum Index (IITC-Index)

Figure 4 below presents the proposed dimensions of measures for each input. For example, the vision statement can be measured through the extent to which it has integrated the Tawhidic paradigm into the curriculum. The mission statement is evaluated based on the extent to which it has overall operationalized the integration of *turath* into the curriculum. Integration activities in the courses are measured via their objectives, learning outcomes, contents, references (Haneef and Amin, 2005) and question papers. Measuring epistemology and methodology would focus on the extent of integration in developing new programs and courses and on how these courses are taught. Students as input will be measured by the extent to which they set integration of *turath* as a learning goal (Manal, 2011). Finally, the benchmark will be used to determine the competency levels of faculty members (Harun et al., 2013) in integrating *turath* to disciplines in their respective areas of specialization.

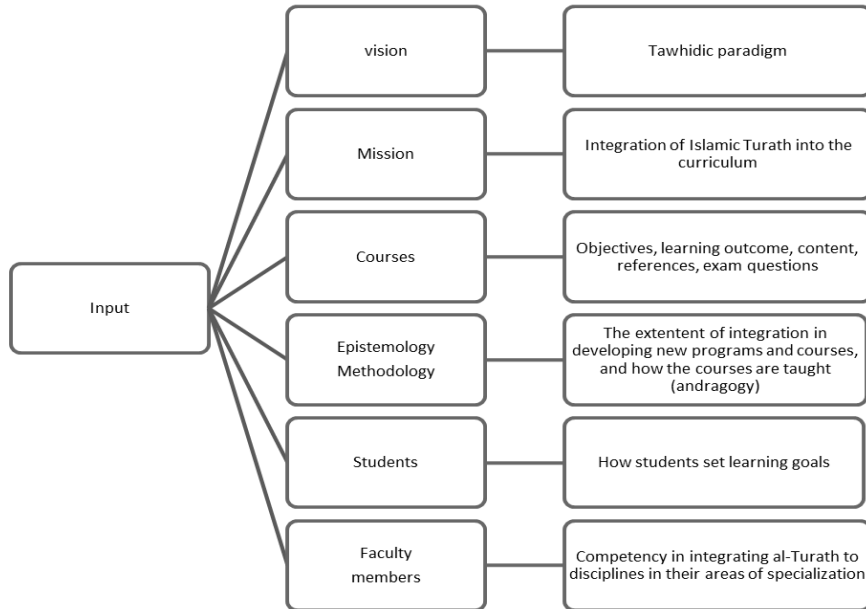


Figure 4: Measuring the Extent of Integrating *al-turath* into the Curriculum [Input]

Figure 5 that follows below shows the dimensions of measures of the two outputs, namely research and students. As stated previously, the impact of integration can be measured from the number of related research projects, publications and dissertation produced by both the faculty and the students. Meanwhile, the impact of graduates can be measured through ratings provided by the institutions employing the graduates as well as from influential members of the society where these graduates reside.

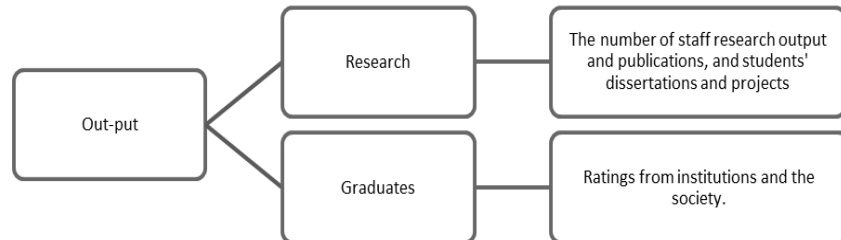


Figure 5: Measuring the Impact of Integrating *al-turath* into the Curriculum [Output]

## 8. Conclusion

Although it has been more than 35 years since the experiment of integration of *al-turath* into modern sciences, following the Makkah conference in 1976, there are areas that still need to be reviewed. These include the quality of *ijtihad*, uses of the tools of *usul al-fiqh*, the abilities of the Islamizers and the narrow definition of Shari'ah and *fiqh*. Other important ingredient of integration should include critical thinking. Extending integration beyond the curriculum provides opportunities for the Muslim to develop a holistic worldview based on the Tawhidic paradigm. Above all, there is a dire need for taking stock of the progress of integrating *turath* into the curriculum. This requires a benchmark. Thus, we propose a framework for Integrated Islamic Turath Curriculum Index (IITC-Index) that can serve as a benchmark to measure the extent to which *turath* has been integrated into the curriculum. This humble initiative is expected to stimulate interest and discourse in the area with the hope that they would lead to refining IITC-Index into a viable benchmark for measuring integration related activities.

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