

**PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING AT
AHMAD IBRAHIM KULLIYYAH OF LAWS
AND THE INCULCATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES**

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ABSTRACT

Problem-based learning (PBL) serves as an alternative tool in the teaching of law at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). IIUM emphasises on producing well-rounded graduates who are professionally qualified and who practice Islamic values. Problem-based learning has proven to be a very effective complementary tool in achieving this educational aim. The main elements of problem-based learning (PBL) are the study of real case problems, team work, time management, reflective journal writing and peer evaluation. All of these elements form essential parts of the Islamic education system. This paper discusses the Islamic values existing in problem-based learning and evaluates to what extent Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws (AIKOL) in general, and the course Equity and Trust in particular, has successfully harmonised and integrated problem-based learning with Islamic values.

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INTRODUCTION

The changing demands on the range and level of skills which are expected from law graduates have put law schools under considerable pressure to redesign their curricula and central aspects of their programmes accordingly and to achieve the right balance between teaching theory and practice. At Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws (AIKOL), for instance, Equity and Trust has always been considered to be a very conceptual and theory-centered subject. As a result, the lecturers of the subject have introduced problem-based learning as part of the coursework.¹ This paper presents a firsthand account of the effective use of problem-based learning at Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws (AIKOL). It discusses the Islamic values incorporated in the teaching via the implementation of problem-based learning. It also examines the extent to which AIKOL has actually achieved its integration within the framework of a harmonised relationship between conventional and Islamic law in general. This paper illustrates the integration process beyond mere syllabus preparation and teaching. The integration of conventional law and Islamic values has been manifested in all academic and non academic activities including the conduct of tutorials, co-curricular activities as well as programmes for academics and the supporting staff.

THE MANAGEMENT OF LECTURES AND TUTORIALS IN AIKOL

Before discussing in detail the application of problem-based learning at AIKOL in general and in the Equity and Trust course in particular, some background information must be given. The LL.B (Hons.) course is designed for a duration of four years of study (154 credit hours), the LL.B Shari'ah for five years (163 credit hours), with an average of 18 to 21 credit hours per semester (14 weeks). The harmonisation of Common law and Shari'ah is an important niche area

¹ The coursework consists of assignments, tests, quizzes, case reviews, problem-based learning, article reviews or tutorial presentations. Out of the 100% marks allocated for each subject, 40% is based on course work and continuous assessment.

of AIKOL as well as the university as a whole. This is either translated in the syllabuses, teaching methodology or other activities in the university.

The courses are taught in two-hour weekly lectures and one-hour tutorials. In most cases, law courses are taught in the conventional style, where lecturers convey the course content orally and students listen or take notes. The majority of law lectures are held in multimedia rooms and the Learning Management System (LMS) is used to upload and present teaching materials to the students.

The lectures focus on the conceptual understanding of the topic, relevant provisions, case-studies, application of the law, analysis and conclusion. A course section is attended by 50 local and international students,² the majority of them Muslims.³ A course outline is distributed to the students at the beginning of the semester, and the attendance to lectures and tutorials is compulsory.

Tutorials are designed to supplement the lectures where students and lecturers have the opportunity to discuss and apply the substantives and procedures on laws taught earlier. The tutorial system provides a setting in which the students can internalise the material, as well as discuss and develop their argumentative and analytical skills. Tutorial groups consist of 10 to 15 students assisted by a tutor⁴ and are offered once a week to practice on past year's examination questions or reported cases. Students may work independently or in a team to discuss underlying theory, legal definition, applicable legal rules, relevant statutes and case law.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING IN THE COURSE 'EQUITY AND TRUSTS'

Andrew Scott, the advocate of problem-based learning in law, believes that problem-based learning can be used in a number of disciplines

² There are also cases where courses are attended by more than 50 students depending on need and demand.

³ International Islamic University Malaysia is also open to Malaysian non-Muslims.

⁴ The tutor is either the lecturer himself or an assistant lecturer or a part timer, usually a practicing lawyer.

as a way of engaging students in ‘real’ problems. According to him, problem-based learning starts with a problem and requires the student to do research, analysis and apply fact and theory to solve a particular legal problem.⁵

For the course of Equity and Trusts, problem-based learning is regarded as a positive tool to create an environment where planning, review, thinking and teamwork are encouraged. Problem-based learning in teaching law courses in AIKOL has been applied with modifications.⁶ The following features of problem-based learning have been adopted in the Equity and Trust course:

1. Lectures are delivered in the traditional face to face manner using computer assisted learning or mere chalk and talk. The lecturer will begin classes with lectures on specific topics and students will listen and note the contents of the lecture.
2. A copy of the course outline is distributed to all students either through e-learning management system or a hard copy.
3. Tutorials begin in the second week with a set of tutorial problems based on topics in the lectures.
4. In the seventh week, the problem-based learning session begins and the students are presented with a ‘problem.’⁷
5. A multi-disciplinary approach is adopted to solve the problem. It aims to create curiosity and an inquisitive attitude to initiate practice-oriented learning among the students. Students are

⁵ Scott A., “Using Problem-based learning in law” a presentation at the University of Warwick on 20th April 2002, at <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/newsevents/archive/pbl.html>, visited on 20th May 2009.

⁶ To the knowledge of the authors, the majority of lecturers who opt for problem-based learning in AIKOL use a hybrid problem-based learning for various reasons. As for Equity and Trust, we realise that the time factor is one of the causes why full problem-based learning is not practical and viable. Our emphasis on Sharī‘ah elements in teaching is our priority thus requiring the lecturers to allocate sufficient time for the topic as well.

⁷ Either a hypothetical case related to the topic chosen for the problem-based learning period or a ‘problem’ based on decided cases. It is normally regarded as an ill-structured problem as it may consist of various issues with multi-disciplines or cross-topics.

expected to tackle the problem from an Islamic perspective. The 'problem' represents a rich learning resource for the students who are challenged to tackle the following tasks:

- a. Knowing the problem
 - b. Understanding the problem
 - c. Brainstorming
 - d. Creating key information lists
 - e. Identifying issues – primary and secondary
 - f. Mind mapping by applying thinking skills
 - g. Searching the references
 - h. Applying all findings to the problem
 - i. Analysing the problem
 - j. Resolving the problem.
6. Student-centred enquiry process: Students learn how to be responsible and independent learners and how to develop creative thinking skills.
 7. Small learning groups of four to five students: Interpersonal and group skills, cooperation, disciplined and enhanced communication skills are sharpened. For each group a group leader and observer are appointed.
 8. Lecturers act as facilitators to guide the students and continuously monitor the students' participation and involvement.
 9. Students are required to apply and practise professional skills in addressing a problem.
 10. Answers are to be made in writing, and the drafts are submitted to the lecturer for comments and further suggestions.
 11. Presentations are made orally in the form of client-counselling, in-house advise, mootng, power point presentation, debate, legal sketch and consultation.
 12. Continuous peer assessment: the students assess their group members.
 13. Reflective journal writing: students keep a written record of their progress and challenges.
 14. Course evaluation: formative (not summative) method of assessment.

THE ROLE OF THE LECTURER IN PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

In problem-based learning, the lecturer acts only as a facilitator who guides the students by suggesting appropriate material while the students actively explore, learn and grow in teams. Lecturers are expected to allocate specific time for consultation during and outside lecture hours. From experience, it is found that too often, students choose to discuss problems relating to group dynamics⁸ during consultation hours. The lecturers normally allocate two weeks for the students to work on the 'problem' and prepare for the presentation of opinions orally and in writing using a standard format of a client's file with additional learning tools such as mind maps. Students are encouraged to prepare a draft of their oral and written presentation materials and discuss them with facilitators before final submission where a certain percentage of marks are allocated.

STUDENT ROLES IN PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

In problem-based learning, students learn how to become independent learners and problem solvers. The learning progress they undergo in solving the problem is more important than the end result. Apart from the course content, the students are expected to learn time management, develop inter-personal skills, leadership skills, manage human problems, manage budgeting and team-work. Their teams should be organised professionally and detailed reports of meetings and other related materials are expected to be prepared and submitted in the manner in which a legal firm handles a client's file. A sample file is shared with students for reference.⁹ Similarly, a talk on how to do mind mapping

⁸ This normally include problems such as having a student that does not contribute to the groupwork but relies totally on other members of the group ('free-rider'), and not being able to get along with other members.

⁹ It normally contains a sample of a 'problem,' marks for assessment, evaluation form, rubrics for assessment and evaluation form to guide the lecturers and students, selected mind-map (sometimes the facilitator will just take a sample of previous students works which obtained good score), and sample of a reflective journal.

which is open to all Equity and Trust students is normally conducted outside class hours.

ISLAM AND PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Islamic education is to be pragmatic, morally inspiring, developmental, community-oriented and neither too individualistic nor collectivist.¹⁰ As such, International Islamic University Malaysia in general and Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws in particular, supports all types of activities or teaching methodologies that promote educational enhancement which do not violate the *Qur'ān* and the practice of the Prophet (s.a.w.). The first word that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was “*Iqra*” which means “Read.”¹¹ It is commonly understood as ‘to read and memorise’ but must also be taken to mean; ‘to read, think, analyse, select, understand and apply.’ The verse reads as follows:

1. Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher who created,
2. Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congeared blood,
3. Read! And your Lord is the most Bountiful,
4. He who taught (the use of) the pen,
5. Taught man that which he knew not.

(*Al-Qur'ān Surah Al-'Alaq* (96): 1-5)

The meaning of this verse goes beyond its literal meaning. It was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) as a preparation¹² for his mission to lead his *ummah* (nation), and ultimately all of mankind.¹³ It reflects the importance of seeking knowledge as a preparation to play a bigger role.

¹⁰ Mustapha M Tahan, *Muslim Educational Training*, (Darul Wathaeq, Kuwait, 1992).

¹¹ *Al-Qur'ān* (96):1-5.

¹² Preparation for a bigger role is also emphasised by Allah *s.w.t.* in another verse which means “Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into [the hearts of] the enemies, and others besides, whom you may not know, but whom Allah does know.” (*Al-Qur'ān* (8):60).

¹³ This term include Muslim and non Muslim.

In the context of problem-based learning, students should realise that seeking and utilising knowledge are essential.

There are numerous instances in the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) where Muslims are told not only to recite the Holy Book but to ponder on the revelation and apply it accordingly.¹⁴ Muslims are also required to perform prayers at least five times a day and thank God for His blessings.¹⁵ In the context of problem-based learning, students should take the process of learning as part of the path towards realising the journey of life as a Muslim. All the steps in problem-based learning including the reflective journal writing, team work, time management, to name a few, are in line with Islamic teachings. Furthermore, the realisation of one's duty towards the Lord and his fellow beings create a sense of responsibility and trust. Therefore we need to be constantly reminded that we are the trustees of this world and accountable for our actions.¹⁶ Problem-based learning instils the sense of responsibility towards one's duty, the group and the superior i.e. the lecturer. Based on such premise, the Equity and Trust course subscribes to a few principles in the implementation of problem-based learning activities.¹⁷ It is translated into one keyword that is "THINK."

"THINK" stands for:

Teamwork, **T**horough research and **T**ime management
Hardworking, **H**onest, **H**armonious
Independent, **I**maginative, **I**nnovative and **I**T literate
Network and **N**otability
Know-how and **K**ey skills

¹⁴ For example, see, Al-Qur'ān(2):164; Al-Qur'ān (16):44; Al-Qur'ān (12):109.

¹⁵ Al-Qur'ān (42):38.

¹⁶ In one *hadith* it was reported the Prophet (s.a.w.) once said, "Everyone of you is a shepherd and every one is responsible for what he is shepherd of" (Sunan of Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim).

¹⁷ This keyword was adopted as a guiding principle in the introduction of problem-based learning activities the Equity and Trust course between 2004-2006.

‘Think’ is what we want from our students and we can only gain this if we can accept and adapt to changes, as the saying of the universal law goes, ‘I cannot change the direction of the wind but I can adjust my sail to always reach my destination.’¹⁸ Thus, problem-based learning is a good alternative method to adopt in order to produce students who are able to ‘think.’

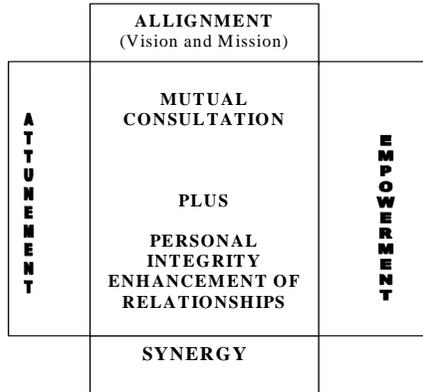
THE ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK IN ISLAM

Islamic education as contained in the teaching of the *Qur’ān* and *sunnah* is diverse in nature. In this paper it is argued that the leadership of the Prophet (s.a.w.) sets a model for developing a well-rounded student in IIUM. One of the ways implement the model is through problem-based learning. In the Equity and Trust course at AIKOL, the lecturers aim to actualise the vision and mission of the university through a model developed by themselves. The model that appears below can be used as a guide for the development of problem-based learning. It follows Prophet Muhammad’s (s.a.w.) leadership paradigm.¹⁹

¹⁸ Jimmy Dean quote at <http://en.thinkexist.com/quotation/>.

¹⁹ Ismail Noor, *Prophet Muhammad’s Leadership: The Paragon of Excellence Altruistic Management*, (Utusan Publication: Kuala Lumpur, 1999) at 2.

Diagram 1



Within the framework of this leadership paradigm, there exists a pragmatic set of workable guidelines for problem-based learning students which they are expected to abide to.²⁰

The framework of action is a combination of three elements: alignment, attainment and empowerment. Fusion of all three will produce synergy. Alignment refers to *tawhid*; the vision of the greatness and oneness of God and the mission to commit to the message of God.²¹ In problem-based learning this refers to the direction-setting process. In AIKOL, this process begins with the understanding of the vision and mission of the university.²²

²⁰ *Ibid.* In the implementation of problem-based learning in AIKOL, students are advised to appoint a group leader. They are guided by a certain set of guidelines and timeframe which they are required to follow.

²¹ Ismail Noor, *ibid.*

²² IIUM holds firm to its vision and mission of attaining IIICE which stands for Islamisation, integration, internationalisation, comprehensive excellence. All new students in IIUM will be briefed on the philosophy, vision and mission of the university during the introductory (*taaruf*) session at the beginning of their entry to the university.

Attainment is reflected in the sense of *ibadah* (worship) by doing good and forbidding evil. It involves total commitment, trust, honesty, support, mutual respect and courage to work in a team.²³ Attainment is the *esprit d'corps*.²⁴ In problem-based learning, apart from fostering the spirit of teamwork, with everyone contributing towards the objective, students are expected to observe good conduct (*husn al-khuluq*) which shall take place especially in fostering the relationships with all members in his or her group. In Islam, everything should be done in this spirit of shared responsibility and togetherness (*jama'ah*), not only the obligatory prayers.

Empowerment is the trust conveyed to man as *khalifah* in this world (vicegerent).²⁵ Under this principle, man is regarded as a leader who has been entrusted with certain duties. This is translated in problem-based learning into the leader and follower principle by appointing a group leader. Team working produces good leadership and committed followers. The Prophet (s.a.w.) is reported to have said:

“Everyone of you is a shepherd and everyone is responsible for what he is shepherd of.”²⁶

The implementation of the above framework takes place throughout the process. Empowerment allows students to acquire skills and have them use their skills effectively. When all the three elements have been developed, synergy (*falah*) can be achieved.²⁷ Synergy is derived from the old Greek word *synergein*, meaning to work together.²⁸ It entails the attainment of success and prosperity for all who share a common vision²⁹ - the outcome of problem based learning. The team's energies are combined to produce a greater achievement than the sum

²³ Ismail Noor, *ibid.* at 3.

²⁴ *Id.*, at 23.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Sahih Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

²⁷ In Islam, the relationship of the three elements can be seen through the verses recited for the call of prayer (*adhan*) which is repeatedly pronounced that “Lets perform the prayer, lets establish success.”

²⁸ Ismail Noor, *ibid.*, at 23.

²⁹ Ismail Noor, *ibid.*, at 3.

of separate individual efforts.³⁰ The philosophy of the University³¹ aims to make the students realise that all their efforts shall be assessed and rewarded not only in this world but also in the Hereafter.

The team leader consults every member of the team, and the team acts upon mutual consultation (*shura*). It ensures equal participation and fairness in the problem-solving and decision-making process.³² Mutual consultation aids in the development and consolidation of personal integrity and enhances interaction among the members of the group.

The Islamic education through problem solving has been practiced since the period of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). When he allowed his followers to be actively involved in problem-solving and decision-making, he ensured a heightened sense of shared commitment and responsibility for any action the group under his leadership had decided upon. It also created a high level of trust and provided them with the *raison d'être* for the continuing of an operation with speed and efficiency. Every member felt accountable for its ultimate success.³³

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING AND PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Reflective writing in the form of journal writing has become a popular educational tool, especially in the field of problem-based learning. It is considered an excellent way for a student to conduct self assessment and for a facilitator to assess his/her students' learning progress.³⁴ As such, the preparation of a reflective journal earns marks and students are encouraged to share their feeling on the process. Sometimes lecturers may discover that the reflective journal has been used as a poison-pen

³⁰ *Id.*, 24. During the introductory lecture on problem-based learning, students are briefed about the purpose of problem-based learning, its benefits and the methodology. Students are made to understand that about the important of team spirit and its significance from the Islamic point of view.

³¹ See www.iiu.edu.my

³² Ismail Noor, *ibid.*

³³ Ismail Noor, *ibid.*, at 25.

³⁴ See, Boud, D; Keogh, R & Walker, D, *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, (Kogan Page, London, 1995).

paper against a particular member in the group. It is also quite common for students to share their opinions on the process in the journal rather than voicing their grievances to the lecturer personally. All in all, during the process, the lecturers or facilitators will learn that reflective journals provide knowledge on problem-based learning which has not been taught in any textbook.

FORMAT OF THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

There is a general agreement³⁵ on what a student's reflective journal should contain, namely:

- summary of learning activities and topics
- observations of learning experience, incidents or events
- analysis of incidents and developments
- progress reports of problem-based learning presentations
- understanding and perception of the learning process

A proper reflective journal should contain matters which are beyond immediate reporting and should address the student's personal observations. As mentioned earlier, a lecturer may gather a lot of information about the process and the outcome of problem-based learning in the reflective journal. Very often, this information helps to assess and evaluate the process of problem-based learning better and provide further improvement by adjusting the method to suit the needs of the students. For example, a student may complain about being overburdened by tests or other assignments. The students may offer suggestions as to the appropriate time for the implementation of problem-based learning.

In assessing problem-based learning, the lecturers are given the discretion to allocate marks depending on how important the process is for the problem-based learning. Thus, apart from being a method of assessing the problem-based learning process, reflective journal writing trains the students to be self-disciplined, self-critical and objective.

³⁵ See, Ballantyne, R & Packer, J. (1995) *Making connections: Using Student Journals as a Teaching/Learning Aid*; HERDSA ACT; Boud, D; Keogh, R & Walker, D, *ibid* and see also, "Keeping a Reflective Journal" at www.clt.uts.edu.au/Scholarship/Reflective.journal.htm.

The writing process includes various stages. Entries have to be made frequently and consistently so that the recorded events are still fresh in the students' minds. It should reflect accuracy and a proper understanding of relevant details to ensure a complete record of what has been taught and learned. Besides, the reflective journal should also contain implications for future learning to ensure that all processes have been addressed correctly, honestly and vividly.

Students may use the reflective journal as a means of critical self-assessment which helps them to identify how far they have achieved the aims of the learning objectives. Reflection warrants a special attention particularly if the results of a study do not show improvement.

Reflective journals mirror the level of proficiency and knowledge of a student and help identify his/her areas of interest. They also reflect a student's weaknesses and areas that need his/her attention to remedy a lack of academic or technical knowledge of the subject matter.

Functions of a Reflective Journal include that of:

1. A diary: Throughout school and university students are mostly passive learners. Keeping a reflective journal is in essence similar to having dialogue with one's self.
2. A record of assessment: It is a compilation of the assessment for the subject or assignment that a student undertakes
3. Thinking tool: It helps the student to develop an individual and critical way of thinking.
4. Progress report: The entries reflect how much effort a student has put in to resolve a particular problem, and also show the duration of time the student needed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING FROM AN ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT

God is All-Seeing, All-Hearing and All-Knowing.³⁶ Being aware of that instils in the students the right mentality to prepare them for their future responsibilities. problem-based learning teaches the students to

³⁶ Al-Qur'ān: *Surah al-Hujurat* (49):2.

develop teamwork, working towards fulfilling the team's target rather than for personal gain or interest, and fulfilling one's responsibility and the expectations of other group members.

It is reported that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) said: "The hand of Allah is with the *jama'ah* (team or congregation). Then, whoever singles himself out will be singled out for the Hell-fire."³⁷

Journal writing trains the students to be objective, share information and act in an open and transparent manner. By use of the record, a student is able to assess him/herself, learn from his/her mistakes and develop a better strategy for the future. This process of continuous self-assessment and reflection (*muhasabah*) is spiritual practice and expected from every conscious Muslim.

It is reported that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) said: "He whose two days are equal (in accomplishment) is a sure loser."³⁸ This *hadith* stresses the vital importance of self-improvement, and there can be no improvement without prior reflection and assessment. A reflective journal should not only serve as an instructional tool but as an invitation to serious self-commitment. A Muslim or any other God-fearing individual is certain that his actions are witnessed and judged by God. The objectives, whether successfully put into practice or otherwise, carry a reward from God:

"Not a single dawn breaks out without two angels calling out: "Oh son of Adam, I am a new day and I witness your actions, so make the best out of me because I will never come back till the Day of Judgment."³⁹

Furthermore, in Islam it is considered praiseworthy to share knowledge, advise others and trust others, as Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) meant when he said "Religion is sincere advice."⁴⁰ Reflective journal writing thus serves a spiritual as well as a practical purpose in learning and teaching.

³⁷ Reported in *Sunan al-Tarmidhi*.

³⁸ *Sunan al-Daylami*.

³⁹ *Al-Ma'thur* of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

⁴⁰ On the authority of Abu Ruqayya Tameem ibn Aus ad-Daaree, Hadith No. 7 of Forty Hadith, <http://muslimways.com/library/quran-the-sunnah/imam-an-nawawi-s-forty-hadiths/hadeeth-7-the-religion-is-naseehah-sincere-advice.html> retrieved on 19th Dec 2008.

Reflective journal writing helps the students to manage their time effectively. In the *Qur'ān*, the passage of time is again and again emphasised, and those who ignore the importance of time shall fail.⁴¹ It also emphasises the importance of recording or putting in writing anything that is of importance, such in the case of contracts (*'uqūd*) and transactions (*mu'āmalāt*), since it ensures fair dealings between two or more parties.⁴²

Problem-based learning involves group work and a record of all activities and events to enhance efficiency and outcomes. A reflective journal is not only an individual record of one's own progress and assessments, but also something which requires group participation. The record keeps track of each participant's roles and duties. In *Surah al-Dharyyat* (51):55 Allah states: "And remind, surely reminding benefits the believer."

TEAMWORK IN ISLAM

The term 'teamwork' is defined as "the ability to work together toward a common goal" and "to direct individual accomplishment towards organizational or institutional objectives."⁴³ A team comprises of people working together, trusting one another, complementing each other's strengths and compensating each other's limitations.⁴⁴ In problem-based learning, students are made to realise their religious duties in the process of becoming professional lawyers.

Groups are collections of individuals that work together to achieve certain common objectives. The reference to the term 'group' with this connotation can be found in numerous verses of the Holy Qur'ān. For instance in *Surah Al-Imran* (5):104:

"Let there arise among you a group that invite others to good work, enjoining what is right and forbidding

⁴¹ *Sunan al-Daylami*.

⁴² Al-Baqarah (2): 282-283.

⁴³ Mohammad Naqib Ishan Jan, "Teamwork Towards Excellence," paper presented on the Principal and Fellow Induction Course 2003, International Islamic University Malaysia, May 2003.

⁴⁴ Ismail Noor, *ibid.*, 51.

what is wrong. They shall indeed be granted success.”

The best way to succeed and lead the law faculty towards excellence is to work through ‘*jama’ah*’ (congregation or togetherness):

“And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah, and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah’s favour on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in faith); and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His signs clear to you, that you may be guided.”⁴⁵

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is reported to have said: “The hand of Allah is with the community (*jama’ah*).” In the decision making process, it is well known that he never neglected his companions’ views on a matter. Abu Hurayrah (r.a.) reported: “I have not seen anyone to be more diligent in consulting the companions than the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself”.

In another *hadith*, the Prophet (s.a.w.) is reported to have told Abu Bakr and ‘Umar that if they both agreed upon a council, he would not oppose it. In fact, on a number of occasions, the Prophet (s.a.w.) consulted his companions on private and public affairs,⁴⁶ and at times he gave preference to their opinions over his own views. He said: “Cooperate with one another in the pursuit of virtue and beneficence, but cooperate not in fostering hostility and transgression.”⁴⁷

Teamwork is developed through a sound and healthy relationship based on covenantal understanding through sincerity, mutual trust and brotherhood. “No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.”⁴⁸ The key to success is sincerity

⁴⁵ *Al-Imran*, (3):103.

⁴⁶ <http://www.islamicperspectives.com/Shura.html>, retrieved on 19 Dec 2008.

⁴⁷ *Surah Al-Maidah* (5):2.

⁴⁸ Sahih Al-Bukhari Volume 1, Book 2, Number 12.

which can only be nurtured if one is sincere to oneself and God. It is a very tall order to develop sincerity in a spiritual vacuum. Love for Allah promotes the development of good intentions and practices in human behaviour. Without the spiritual dimension, it is nearly impossible to build and retain a high level of team spirit in an organisation or institution.

Every member of the team is accountable for his/her assigned task, and every member of the team is responsible for his/her own performance level. "Every person is accountable for what he earns, for no bearer of a burden bears the burden of another."⁴⁹ Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is reported to have said in this respect "I am accountable for my actions and you are for yours."⁵⁰ In problem-based learning, students are provided with evaluation forms to assess his group members. Students are reminded to be objective in their assessment and all forms are treated with confidentiality. Students are required to assess their peers based on the level of cooperation, willingness to help and sacrifice and contribution to the success of the project. Though it is difficult to accurately assess one's attitude, the process teaches the students to be honest, to work based on trust, and to be responsible and grateful.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING AND IIUM'S PHILOSOPHY

When problem-based learning was introduced to the faculty members in the year 2000,⁵¹ the majority of the academic staff appreciated this new development, despite the heavy workload.⁵² Nevertheless, the

⁴⁹ *Surah al-An'am* (6):164.

⁵⁰ *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*.

⁵¹ It began with a briefing from a representative from the University of Malaya of their experience in implementing problem-based learning. AIKOL has decided to embark on the methodology of self learning but it left the matter to its academic staff to decide whether they wished to adopt problem-based learning in their teaching. At the beginning, to our knowledge, only two subjects were involved i.e. criminal law and equity and trust courses. It has now been applied in family law and land law.

⁵² Each lecturer (with exception of full professors or faculty members with administrative duties) is required to teach between 9-12 hours per week.

implementation has been done with a slight modification as most lecturers merely adopt a hybrid or partial problem-based learning. In fact, it is admitted that lack of full implementation of problem-based learning at AIKOL or other faculties of IIUM is not due to rejection of the teaching methodology. The preparation work including briefing and discussion on problem-based learning has been done from time to time not only at faculty level but also in foundation studies. Altogether, problem-based learning has earned itself a place in the philosophy, vision and mission of the University as an Islamic institution.

According to IIUM's mission and philosophy, knowledge is a universal treasure that demands it to be propagated in the spirit of faith and the recognition of Allah which represents the apex in the hierarchy of knowledge. Knowledge is understood as a form of divine trust (*amanah*) to mankind, and hence mankind must utilise knowledge according to His will. Seeking and propagating knowledge is regarded an act of worship.

IIUM's vision is to become an institution which offers a holistic approach to education. It aims at becoming a leading international centre of educational excellence which:

- Revitalises the intellectual dynamism of the Muslim community;
- Integrates Islamic revealed knowledge and values in all academic disciplines and educational activities;
- Seeks to restore a leading and progressive role of the Muslim community in all branches of knowledge; and thereby
- Contributes to the improvement of the quality of human life and civilization

AIKOL - being one of the foremost law schools in Malaysia⁵³ which has earned several titles in international law student competitions⁵⁴—provides its law students with hard and soft skills. Apart from the core

⁵³ IIUM was placed seventh in the world varsity rankings in 2003. The IIUM mooting team became champion at the Monroe E. Price International Media Law Moot Competition 2008, Best Oralist 2005 and also in 2007, one of the mooters was ranked 7th in the world at the Jessup International Law Moot Competition in Washington D.C.

⁵⁴ These also include the titles of Best Orator in 2002 during the Jessup Moot Competition, the Champion for Moot Competition as well as other titles at the national level.

subjects, law students are also required to attend co-curricula courses for added skills in public speaking, community service, sports activities and arts and crafts. The subjects involve theoretical and practical aspects and are supervised by qualified full time and part-time academic staff.

Problem based learning methodology aids in their development as capable and professionally trained Muslim lawyers. The university aims at producing a new class of intellectuals, professionals and scholars by integrating the qualities of faith (*iman*), knowledge (*'ilm*), and good character (*akhlaq*) to serve as agents of comprehensive and sustainable progress and development in Malaysia and in the Muslim world. Problem-based learning complements this aim by instilling a heightened sense of commitment for life-long learning and social responsibility among the staff and students. The process in problem-based learning goes beyond textbook and readings. It is a process of learning acquisition cum development of human capital. It provides mental exercises and strengthens spiritual and emotional development. There are cases where students almost fail or give up in the process simply because they cannot cooperate with other group members. In problem-based learning, they are made to realise that factual knowledge alone does not guarantee success but emotional and spiritual quotients are equally important.

The main obstacle to the full implementation of problem-based learning at AIKOL is the assumption that law has always been taught using a problem-based methodology. After all, law is about legal problems, real or hypothetical. Although problem-based learning is considered a more creative and effective way of teaching, the argument against it is that law lecturers and students are already overloaded with the standard curriculum.⁵⁵ Problem-based learning may add to the existing workload but the benefits that students gain by being exposed to an alternative method of learning is worth the extra energy and time invested into it. In AIKOL, the emphasis on the application of substantive law to a problem takes place in all subjects, conventional and Shariah. As such, the focus of self learning as promoted by problem-based learning is in line with the faculty's objectives. The common challenge faced by the lecturers is

⁵⁵ As part of the IIUM curriculum, all students are required to take elementary Arabic language courses and a selection of Islamic subjects in addition to the regular academic requirements shared with other Malaysian universities.

time constraint. Besides the Shariah subjects, students are required to fulfil other compulsory courses such as Arabic language, *qur'ānic* studies and other revealed knowledge subjects. The implementation of problem-based learning requires proper planning and syllabus adjustment so that it will produce a win-win situation for both, lecturers and students.

CONCLUSION

Problem-based learning requires serious commitment from lecturers and students. Students are given the opportunity to actively explore, learn and grow in teams. They learn how to become independent learners and problem solvers. It is an excellent way for a facilitator to assess the students' learning progress and is a means of critical self-assessment of individual capacities and performance levels for each member of a working team. In the context of IIUM as an Islamic institution, problem-based learning plays an essential role in raising the level of commitment to religious and moral values. It also helps to produce capable graduates exposed to self learning, the employment of soft skills, the emphasis on life-long learning and emotional development. Despite constraints and challenges, problem-based learning remains a practical and advisable tool in line with the philosophy, vision and mission of the university. At least, it is part of our *jihad* or – striving for the best in everything that we do.