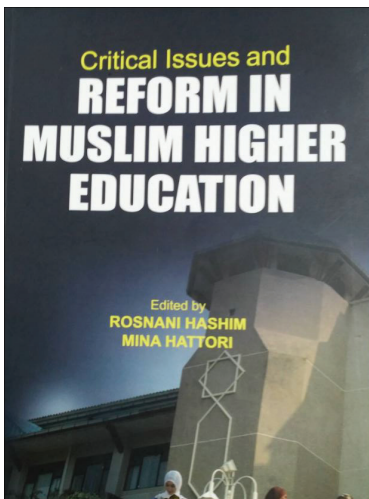


BOOK REVIEW

***Critical Issues and Reform in Muslim Higher Education* by Rosnani Hashim and Mina Hattori, Kuala Lumpur: IJUM, 2015, 246 pp.**



In this book of compiled articles by Hashim and Hattori, different Muslim scholars contributed greatly to delve into the key issues in the field of Islamic higher education. The book consists of eleven chapters; each chapter provides a useful explanation as well as opportunities to explore ideas further with a well-chosen and consumable reading content. Even though these debated issues in the book diverge to discuss diverse topics, they at the same time converge under the umbrella of Islamic higher education and philosophy of education as a whole. Consequently, it can be said that these chapters were ably organized to provide a complete picture about the challenges confronting Muslim higher education. At least, four main issues were discussed in this book, namely, the current challenges driven by globalization, the necessity of

academic freedom, the decline of intellectualism, and the educational dichotomy of science and religion (*Islam*).

First and foremost, the inevitable challenges attributed to the globalization were discussed in the first three chapters. Al-Atari in Chapter one illustrates the topic of privatization in contemporary Muslim higher education, particularly in Arab countries. Here, he describes this issue as an inevitable consequence of the present-day globalization. According to him, this new phenomenon comes with many changes in higher education and in order to have less negative impact he concludes with a good model for coping with the inevitable privatization with a minimum downside. In the following chapter, Rosnani, in her empirical study, discusses another consequence of globalization, which is internationalization of Islamic higher education. She forcefully argues that even though internationalization occurred in the Islamic tradition, unlike the existing internationalization, it was not economy-driven (P.25). Other products of the so-called globalization was raised in chapter three. In this chapter, Kamar Oniah robustly discusses the issue of pluralism and studying about the other religions as an inevitable step for ‘understanding the differences and appreciating the similarities’ (p.55). She concluded with presenting the Malaysian model of pluralistic coexistence, proposing that other countries should follow this model, which is a good suggestion to solve this challenge.

Secondly, the issue of academic freedom was discussed in two chapters. Kazmi in his theoretical discussion in chapter four presents a deliberative debate regarding the prominence of freedom in the higher educational level as a possible condition for creativity. He steadfastly argues that what makes higher education unique from the basic primary and secondary levels which precedes it, is that higher education is considered as a ‘realm of freedom’. By this realm is meant the freedom to use the acquired skills to learn to create, to make, to invent and to explore new meanings (p.68). He maintains that even though the Holy Quran itself teaches us to be creative, our contemporary Islamic education does not do so. Similarly, Saheed, in chapter five, exposes in his empirical study the importance of the learning culture, so that the Muslim *ummah* can reinstate its creative contributions. Thirdly, the

issue of scarcity of Islamic scholars and intellectuals was discussed in the sixth chapter; Hashim argues that due to the poor teaching methods, Islamic higher educational institutions, at best, only produce teachers rather than scholars who can sophisticatedly resolve the problems facing the *ummah*.

Fourthly, the issue of higher education in multicultural societies was discussed in two chapters, namely chapter seven and eight. Akgunduz, in chapter seven, forcefully argues that in order to eradicate the misconceptions about Islam and Muslims in the west, genuine highly educated Muslim elites are needed. He claims that education is the only way of mutual understanding within the Muslim society as well as in other societies (p.152). In chapter eight Hattori, in her analytical study discusses the history and existing situation of Islamic higher education in the west, particularly in the UK and the Netherlands as well as its role in multicultural societies. According to her, universities have developed a broad spectrum of approaches to Islamic studies, because traditionally Islamic studies were offered by non-faith-based institutions with characteristics that were determined by colonial policy, and fairly recently by Islamic faith-based institutions established by Muslim minorities and Islamic organizations.

Finally, the long-lasting issue of educational dichotomy, which is traced to the colonialism period, was discussed in the last three chapters. In chapter nine Sutrisno illustrates the efforts by State Islamic University (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga, Jogjakarta to end the dichotomous challenge between Islam and science. In this chapter, he highlighted Kuntowijoyo's proposed alternative model as opposed to the *Islamization* of knowledge project propagated by Al-Attas and Al-Faruqi. His model is labelled as the scientification of Islam or Enriching Knowledge with Islam, so that the subjective nature of Islam is turned into the nature of objective science. He asserts that the process of enriching Islam is through integralization, that is integrating human science with revelation, and objectification that is making Islamic enriched knowledge as a gift for all people. According to Kuntowijoyo and Sutrisno, the IOK model is less practical and thus, it is difficult to be applied (p.182). However, Sutrisno argued that even Kuntowijoyo's model does not appear

adequately practical due to its difficulty to be implemented. Another model applied to the University Islam Negeri Sharif Hidayatullah Jakarta to end this separation is discussed by Suryadi in chapter ten. This model recommends using the term of 'integration of knowledge' rather than 'Islamization of knowledge' since it gives a positive impression compared to the term 'Islamization' (p.207). As a matter of reality, such a model is good to be taken as reference for other Islamic institutions. According to the writer, however, the integration of science and religion has faced many weaknesses and shortcomings, which can be categorized under the understanding of the concept of integration and its application in the learning and teaching process (p.211). Another exploratory study in this regard took place in Brunei, and is discussed in chapter eleven by Basri. In this chapter, the writer illustrates the harmonization of faith and science through the integrated curriculum in the case of religious teachers' university college which involves a respectable method of integration between rational and revealed knowledge.

This compilation of articles is definitely essential for Muslims, particularly Muslim educationists to help them understand the contemporary issues that face Islamic nations due to globalization and other issues. Without doubt, this book is vital as not many Islamic educationists adequately realize the detriment of these challenges in Muslim higher education. As a matter of fact, it is very good in the way the authors raised critical issues pertaining to Islamic higher education. Yet, there are a few problems with the book. The language in some chapters is too philosophical, which requires more time to decipher so that better understanding can be achieved. In fact, the language differs from one chapter to another in the style of the writing, which is understandable, since different writers took part in this work.

In a nutshell, this book takes a critical look at the major issues concerning Islamic higher education. In spite of being a collection of theoretical and empirical studies which have been written by different Islamic scholars, this book is well written and has a good flow. Such a great work should be appreciated by education students and educationists around the world in general and in the Muslim world in particular as they are supposed to be the main target audience. By

doing so, they can get a deeper understanding and thus, participate in solving these challenges. Additionally, the arguments in this book are powerful, plausible, and substantive. Finally, the scholars who took part in this book have substantiated their claims so that their readers will be convinced and enthusiastic to participate in tackling these problems in Muslim higher education.

Allah knows best

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